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Arguing for the poor: elites and poverty in developing countries*

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Summary

Aid donors and other external agents could usefully engage more actively with developing country elites in defining national anti-poverty strategies. This does not depend on those elites being altruistic or especially 'pro-poor'. Elites have some self-interest in reducing poverty. They are more likely to appreciate, explore and be willing to act on that self-interest if they are sympathetically and constructively engaged in drawing up policies designed to reduce poverty, and in shaping the ways in which they are labelled and justified. History supports this case. Contemporary elites in developing countries are in some ways more likely to be 'pro-poor' than nineteenth century European elites and in some ways less so.

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1 Problem: national elites in developing countries are not as 'pro-poor' as we would wish

Elites are the most powerful 3–5 per cent of people within any national political system. They are the people who make or shape the main political and economic decisions: ministers and legislators; owners and controllers of TV and radio stations and major business enterprises and activities; large property owners; upper-level public servants; senior members of the armed forces, police and intelligence services; editors of major newspapers; publicly prominent intellectuals, lawyers and doctors; and – more variably – influential socialites and heads of large trades unions, religious establishments and movements, universities and development NGOs. Even the most democratic nations are directly governed by an elite of some kind. Between elections, members of the elite exercise a great deal of influence on the political and governmental agenda. They can help define: what issues are to be taken up as political and policy problems and which are to be ignored or sidelined; how these issues are to be tackled; and what count as legitimate and feasible policy options. Less directly, they exercise a great deal of influence over how their fellow citizens understand their own country, and how it compares with others. In most developing countries, governing elites tend to be especially powerful. They often command a particularly large slice of the national income, and the influence that goes with it. The same individuals or families may remain elite for decades or generations. Especially in Asia, current political divisions sometimes reflect differences between elite families rooted in a previous generation.[1] National elites may have a high degree of coherence, with the same individuals, or members of the same family, found in the higher reaches of business, politics, public service, property ownership and the professions.[2] Privileged connections with the rich world and the international system – linkages of language, travel, educational experiences, and family connections, as well as commerce and public business – often help perpetuate elite dominance.

The elites that have governed most OECD countries for the past century or so have, in comparative historical perspective, been markedly 'pro-poor', where 'pro-poor' means willing to support two separate but related types of lines of public action: (a) policies and programmes that promote relatively broad-based national economic development, and thereby tend to benefit poorer people within the nation; and (b) fiscal measures and other public programmes to redistribute income or assets toward the poor. Why this historically anomalous behaviour? Why have rich-world elites been so relatively willing to promote a broad vision of the national interest and to share with the poor? The central component of any credible explanation is clearly the dominance of a configuration of economic arrangements that we can label *industrialism*. *Industrialism*:

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1 This is notably the case in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

2 There is always a degree of visible political competition among elites. When elites are relatively coherent, the competition appears to take place mainly between occupants of different political and bureaucratic positions: between 'ins' and 'outs', and between those who control different political or governmental organisations. Elites lack coherence if this competition coincides with either (a) important differences in socio-economic background (language, class, ethnicity, region, religion etc.) or (b) domination of distinctively different economic or bureaucratic sectors, i.e. political-bureaucratic v. private sector; civilian v. military bureaucracy; agricultural v. urban enterprise; or industry v. trading. The less coherent the elite, the greater the chances that other groups will be able to exercise influence.

(i) Led to the creation of a relatively concentrated, organisable, and potentially threatening urban working class;
(ii) Encouraged elites to believe that the economic pie was likely to expand sufficiently fast that they could afford to buy off this threat by ceding some material resources and political influence to the working classes without themselves losing anything in absolute terms;
(iii) Fostered the growth of a large government apparatus whose employees were generally supportive of pro-poor policies.

More precisely, *industrialism* fostered five important social forces whose interaction tended jointly to produce *democratic* pro-poor attitudes, policies and outcomes. For the sake of brevity, we will label these attitudes, policies and outcomes 'national class compromise.' These five forces were:

(i) Ruling elites sufficiently invested in industrial and commercial enterprise that they could (a) imagine making material and political concessions to the working classes that would leave everyone better off and (b) occasionally be persuaded that improving the livelihoods of the poor would be in their own interests through improving the efficiency of the labour force.
(ii) Industrial working class organisations that struggled to improve incomes and living conditions of the poor, saw widespread suffrage and electoral influence as one means to this end, were perceived as threatening by other sectors of society, and could also see a mutual, national benefit in the expansion of the industrial economy.
(iii) Expanding middle classes eager to share political influence through the vote.
(iv) More specifically, a growing white collar public service middle class with an interest in (a) the extension of publicly-funded welfare, health and education programmes, and (b) the provision of these services through bureaucratic and professional procedures and organisations, rather than through clientelism, 'charity' and patronage.
(v) A cadre of senior public servants, recruited and promoted on ability and merit – so that they could manage a large and complex public sector – who enjoyed some autonomy from politicians, capitalist classes and business interests in formulating and implementing public policy, and developed and represented a relatively broad and long-term conception of the national interest.

The political context for the emergence of these political and welfare consequences of *industrialism* was specifically *national*: the ('nation') state was the framework within which the politics were conducted, and ideas about identity and obligations were developed and extended. The notion of 'the national interest' was powerful. 'Pro-poor' measures were argued in terms of whether and how they might affect poor (and rich) Americans, Britons, Germans or Swedes, not 'the poor' in general. The arguments and the policy instruments used emerged from specific national circumstances. Those circumstances might include a strong sense of rivalry with or threat from other nations (see below).

Contemporary developing countries are politically extremely diverse. They do *not* generally share the history of benign social, political and economic interactions sketched above that have led most OECD

countries to be 'pro-poor' in the sense we have defined it. And the major reason for that is the absence or fragility of *industrialism*. In developing countries, urban, industrial working classes have been demographically and politically weak,[3] as have white-collar middle classes. The public service is often highly politicised. Significant wealth sometimes derives from 'niches' that are created or need to be protected through the direct exercise of political power – control of mineral resources or large land holdings; or exploitation of political and bureaucratic position for 'rent-taking' – rather than from skill in the deployment of capital and enterprise across a range of potential activities. High levels of ethnic diversity, the prevalence of foreign capital, the influence of donors, the broader cultural dimensions of globalisation – all help to reduce the salience of the specifically *national* political arena, and the chances that national level political bargains over issues of social and economic policy can be forged in the way they previously were forged in the OECD countries.

This sounds like a highly pessimistic story. If the elites of contemporary developing countries are so relatively powerful, and the pressures on them to be 'pro-poor' are so weak, is this then a case either for giving up hope, for by-passing elites in assistance policy, or for designing ways of strong-arming them into submission in relation to anti-poverty policy? Not so. For we have sketched one strand of history with a broad brush, that enables us to characterise the problem of developing country elites in general terms. However, if we examine history in the finer detail and look at other dimensions of the story, we become more optimistic:

- Take first the history of the OECD countries; it was neither as simple nor as uniform as outlined above. The achievement of national class compromise was at various points far from secure. Virulent class conflict and repression threatened or occurred much of the time. The most immediate explanation for the benign outcome is that, in a series of two actual World Wars and one global Cold War during the twentieth century, the countries of Northwest Europe and North America, that most securely embodied the institutions and values of national class compromise, were better able to marshal global economic resources to defeat authoritarian central and eastern European regimes founded on class conflict. On a regional scale, class compromise was developed most effectively, productively and enduringly, in Scandinavia, in part because of the role played by another numerous class we have not so far mentioned – small family farmers. The 'pro-poor' outcomes of *industrialism* in the OECD countries were much less pre-ordained than a current reading of history would imply. Therefore, we can infer that the minor role – past, present and probably future[4] – of *industrialism* in

[3] Where they have been strongest, as in the wealthier parts of Latin America, substantial components of welfare state systems were created during the twentieth century. However, Latin American working class political organisations have generally experienced adversarial relations with other political forces, especially those representing elites and middle classes, have often suffered oppression and exclusion, and have never enjoyed a sustained period of political dominance (Collier and Collier 1991).

[4] The prospects for the old-style industrialisation of developing countries are now very limited because of the general shift of the world economy toward the (new) service sector. South Korea and Taiwan, the two countries that did undergo a classic and thorough process of industrialisation during the second half of the twentieth century, were guided by authoritarian governments. However, as they have become wealthier, they have become substantially democratic and have developed more of the institutions and practices of class compromise.

contemporary developing countries is not fatal to the prospects that elites there will be attracted to 'class compromise' attitudes and policies.

- In Section 3 we argue the other side of the same coin: that political and ideological conditions in contemporary developing countries provide real opportunities and stimuli for the adoption of attitudes and policies by national elites that are pro-poor in outcome, if not always in intent. Those opportunities and stimuli arise mainly from the continuing normative and ideological priority accorded 'development', and the current prevalence of a 'human resources' concept of development. However, these opportunities and stimuli are not always self-evident. And there is a danger that donors, driven by values and perceptions stemming from the recent history of the OECD countries, might both fail to recognise those opportunities or, worse, behave so as to help close them off. Before going further with our analysis of elites and poverty, it is useful to say a little about the relationship between developing country elites and aid donors.

2 Dilemma: can national elites and aid donors engage constructively over poverty?

We have for several years been engaged in research on elite perceptions of poverty in poor countries, and have often discussed this with staff of aid agencies. They sometimes doubt whether (a) mere researchers can discover as much as aid professionals learn through doing their job or (b) any information that researchers can produce on this subject can ever be policy-relevant. However, they nearly all agree that there *is* a real problem: that developing country elites are unsupportive of, or hostile to, the efforts of aid donors to promote pro-poor policies. No surprises here. Given that donor staff mainly come from countries where the values, practices and language of national class compromise are the norm, those of them concerned about poverty are likely to be sensitive to the fact that similar views and attitudes – a general presumption against high levels of inequality, and in favour of 'inclusive' economic growth, and specific public actions to assist the poor and deprived – are often not found in developing countries.[5] And, where such attitudes are formally espoused by developing country governments and elites, they are not matched by actual commitment.

How can donors and donor staff react to this mismatch between the 'pro-poor' attitudes and policies they are trying to promote and the passive resistance they perceive that they are encountering on the ground? The three more frequent reactions appear to be:

(i) Maintain a *neutral* or *diplomatic* stance: accept that recipient governments and their personnel are the unquestioned representatives of a sovereign nation and that their views on how poverty reduction can and should be done are as authoritative and legitimate as their views on, for example, the harmonisation of international telecommunications protocols.

(ii) Combine the neutral stance with the kind of private scepticism (cynicism, realism etc.) mentioned above.

[5] This sentence is not intended to imply that donors always support or espouse policies that are 'pro-poor'.

(iii) Espouse a *radical* position, arguing that national elites and governments really do not understand the poor and poverty, and that (the only?) valid knowledge on the topic is to be obtained through direct face-to-face consultations with the poor themselves. This is the implicit logic behind the donors' current insistence on consultation with and participation by the poor and civil society in the process of producing Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs).

The first and second reactions take us nowhere. The third, that is recent in most aid relationships, has both positive and negative potential. The positive potential is obvious, and constitutes the grounds on which donors support the PRSP process. The negative potential has yet to receive little comment, but clearly exists: the danger that national elites will feel excluded from and even threatened by a process that has questionable democratic legitimacy, and, as a result, will feel even less commitment to anti-poverty actions.

There is a fourth possible donor response to the problem of uncooperative elites. It may already be practised sporadically and tactically on a local scale, but is certainly not part of donors' standard strategies: to involve national elites in a constructive dialogue about the nature, causes of and solutions to poverty, in ways that will maximise their empathy and engagement with the issue, and minimise the danger that they will feel railroaded into responding to yet another donor fashion. Four arguments, that are treated in Section 3, *jointly* underpin this strategy:

- Current representations of 'poverty' by donors and international development organisations are not framed in ways that are likely to engage the empathy of developing country elites (Section 3.1).
- Concepts and definitions of 'poverty' and related terms are relatively *plastic*: there is considerable potential to frame and present issues and 'facts' of poverty in a variety of ways (Section 3.2).
- Many developing country elites might benefit from – or at least not suffer from – the reduction of the incidence of poverty (Section 3.3).
- Therefore, there is considerable potential to frame and present poverty such that, within specific national contexts, developing country elites feel a stronger commitment to policies that would reduce it. In particular, this commitment can be forged around the idea of 'development' itself (Section 3.4).

3 Potential: elites, poverty and 'development'

3.1 'Poverty' without engagement

The current concern about poverty reduction in developing countries is significantly driven by international forces and organisations.[6] There are many advantages to this situation, but also a downside: poverty is predominantly defined and discussed in 'neutral', economistic and quantitative terms that may

[6] This sentence too may easily be misunderstood. We do not intend to imply that developing country elites and governments are unconcerned with poverty. Indeed, much of the impetus and the concepts behind international anti-poverty debates and policies over the past half-century have come from South Asia. Our point is simply that the current global emphasis on poverty depends heavily on donor initiative – and ironically comes at a time when the rhetorical and political commitment to poverty reduction in South Asia in under increasing question.

not resonate with or engage developing country elites. It is now widely accepted that poverty is multi-dimensional: insecurity, vulnerability, indignity and repression may merit at least as much remedial action as material deprivation. But this multi-dimensionality cannot practically be represented in standard measures of poverty, the debates that revolve around them, and the policy priorities that they imply:

> The dominant conceptualisation of poverty thus remains the narrow economistic one of private consumption (or income poverty), albeit now with the headcount indices for the traditional upper and lower poverty lines supplemented by the calculation of the poverty gap and the index of poverty severity on Foster-Greer-Thorbecke lines … The measures are *narrowly* economistic because they usually exclude even economic variables like the value of private assets, the use of common property resources, and the social dividend (public spending benefits minus taxes). They are economistic because they exclude social and political aspects of well-being such as leisure, personal security, cultural goods, social recognition, and political rights.
>
> (Toye 1999: 7; emphasis in original)

In sum, the international development community aggregates under one term a whole set of *deprivations*: the acute undernutrition and persistent hunger of the millions who routinely fail to get enough to eat; the anxieties of many millions of others whose daily bread depends on the breadwinner not falling ill and on the opening of another construction site once the current job is completed; the destitution of people who are too old or sick to work and lack a family willing to support them; the dread of powerless women that they will be harassed or raped outside the relative security of their household; the burdens heaped on members of minority social and ethnic groups excluded from schools, places of worship and sources of clean drinking water; and the exploitation of illiterate bonded labourers by employers who know how to manipulate the police and judicial systems. There is nothing in the fact that Sombodistan has 42 per cent of its population below the poverty line to suggest to the elites of Sombodistan (a) that *they* should be concerned about the issue; or (b) that there is a particular population that in some normative sense merits sympathy and policy attention.

3.2 The idea of 'poverty' is plastic

Why should we expect that the way in which poverty is presented to the Sombodistani elites will affect their response? Because there is abundant supportive evidence. Poverty is not just a set of facts. It is, in policy terms, primarily a perception. People, especially policy elites, respond very differently to the same 'facts' about poverty. Their views can sometimes change quite fast. Here are a few examples of ways in which perceptions of poverty differ across contexts or change over time, partially or totally independently of changes in the 'facts' of poverty:

(i) The political cultures of the industrialised nations have featured, in different ways at different times, a concept of poverty as essentially a minority phenomenon that has strong cultural or behavioural dimensions or causes, generally located in the absence of 'regular' patterns of employment in normal occupations. This was the core meaning behind the concept of *pauperism*, which generally framed and

drove national 'poverty' policy in Britain until the late nineteenth century. *Pauperism* had strong negative moral and normative implications. It was often self-inflicted, by those who chose to wander, to idle, to drink, or to engage in crime and prostitution rather than in a regular, settled existence and employment: 'vagabonds, discharged soldiers and jailbirds, escaped galley slaves, swindlers, pickpockets, tricksters, gamblers, pimps, brothel-keepers, rag-pickers and beggars.' To the extent that this condition was believed to reflect a voluntary choice, it merited condemnation or punishment. To the extent that *pauperism* was not self-inflicted, but the result of *individual* livelihood failures – death or illness of breadwinners, old age in the absence of caring relatives – it might merit 'relief', but on unattractive or even punitive terms – classically, in Britain, the workhouse. Karl Marx's concept of the *lumpenproletariat* and the contemporary notion of the *underclass*[7] are very similar in essence to *pauperism*. There is the same core conception of an undeserving minority, defined by the 'irregularity' of their livelihoods, whose miserable condition has self-inflicted cultural and behavioural causes and consequences. Unimpeded by any contemporary liberal sensitivities, Marx described the *lumpenproletariat* as 'a mass sharply differentiated from the industrial proletariat, a recruiting group for thieves and criminals of all kinds, living on the crumbs of society, people without a definite trade, vagabonds …'[8] These notions of *pauperism*, *lumpenproletariat* or *underclass* have ambiguous political implications and uses. They can be employed to help mobilise positive action by appearing to identify a problem that (a) merits some urgent response to protect the rest of society and (b) is, at least in terms of the numbers involved, potentially soluble. This has happened in contemporary Britain in part because the government has refrained from using the highly stigmatising concept of the *underclass*, and has instead deployed *socially-excluded*, a more 'scientific' term that implies a shift of blame to 'society'. In other contexts, notions of *pauperism*, *lumpenproletariat* or *underclass* have been employed to justify policies that have a coercive or punitive element – classically, forcible clearance of slums and squatter settlements. These are the 'dangerous classes', whose rights might be subordinated to the perceived need to protect society more broadly.

These concepts of *pauperism*, *lumpenproletariat* and *underclass* do not appear to be a typical feature of the discourse on poverty in most developing countries. This is presumably in part because 'regular' employment is not the norm: there is not the same practical scope for separating out a minority on the basis of the irregularity of their lifestyles and values.[9] Insofar as the elites of developing countries have notions of distinct groups that are poor because of their own fecklessness or criminality, these groups are likely to be defined in ethnic terms.

(ii) In 1889, Charles Booth published the first of a seventeen volume collection called *Life and Labour of the People in London* that grabbed the attention of the comfortable classes of late Victorian Britain. The readers were told that one-third of the population of London lived below something called a 'line of

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7 The *underclass* is often viewed as enmeshed in a *culture of poverty* or (inter-generational) *cycles of deprivation*, as in Oscar Lewis' work on poverty in Mexico (1959).

8 This is Karl Marx's description of the nineteenth century Parisian *lumpenproletariat* (in his 1850 *Class Struggles in France*).

9 For example, the 'informals' in Brazil – those people living from the informal sector – are the majority of the population.

poverty'; that these were not lazy or undeserving folks, but 'hard-working, struggling people, not worse morally than any other class' (Booth, cited in Himmelfarb 1991: 11); that they were struggling against the threat of descent into *pauperism*; and that both government and wealthy people should do something to alleviate this threat. Charles Booth and his co-workers changed the terms of the debate about poverty and public policy in Britain. They helped make governments, the comfortable classes, and even suspicious trades union leaders, sympathetic to the idea that government both could and should do something about the 'normal poverty' that affected a large swathe of the population. We cannot give Booth all the credit for the foundation of the British welfare state less than two decades after his first book was published. Other factors were important: the implications of industrialism (see above), and international economic and military rivalry (see below). But Booth played a significant role. He was influential in part because he appeared to be backed by the authority of a massive fact-gathering exercise.[10] What is especially important here is that Booth led the comfortable classes to see the *poverty* of the poorest 30 per cent as a deserving and actionable problem where previously they had thought mainly in terms of *pauperism* (see above) – the destitution of a distinct, exotic, and morally-suspect minority, including street performers, beggars, prostitutes, who were unwilling or unable to improve their own lives (Himmelfarb 1991). British public authorities had for centuries been concerned about paupers and destitutes. The policies they adopted were shaped by perceptions that pauperism merited condemnation, blame, and sometimes punishment. Those trades unionists opposed to government action to alleviate poverty were reflecting long experience of the harsh regimes of the Poor Laws, the workhouse, shame and stigma. Booth persuaded British society to pay attention to the needs of the 'normal poor' at a time when, far from being in some especially deep crisis, the poor had been enjoying improved living standards, relatively and absolutely. He was able to change attitudes – essentially to provide us with our normal contemporary conception of *poverty* – by re-framing the word in ways that would resonate with the comfortable classes. His prime emphasis was not on poverty as material deprivation, but on notions of *class* and *respectability*. Booth presented the poor in terms of different classes, defined in particular by how close they were to the descent into *pauperism*, and the loss of *respectability* that this entailed. The poor were continually struggling to stay above a line, both material and moral, that divided the respectable and deserving from the unrespectable and undeserving. Ideas of *respectability*, and fear of losing it, resonated strongly and positively in the minds of the comfortable classes of late Victorian Britain. Taken alone, figures about the family budgets of the poor meant little. The figures were the evidence that Booth had done his stuff and could speak with scientific authority. What moved members of the comfortable classes was the image of fellow Britons striving to maintain *respectability* and haunted by fear of shameful descent into *pauperism*.[11]

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[10] In reality, there was a high degree of subjectivity in this fact-gathering exercise. Although the notion of different classes among the poor was central to his analysis, the lines between them were defined in loose and impressionistic terms.

[11] The price of persuading the comfortable classes of the worthiness of the anti-poverty cause was an implicit reaffirmation of the old prejudice that the 'poorest of the poor' were often the least deserving.

(iii) Contemporary regular full-time male American blue-collar workers tend to make harsh moral judgements about what they perceive as the 'underclass' in general, including that component they perceive themselves to interact with: temporary or part-time workers – those who are not doing their best to make a living for themselves and their families. By contrast, comparable French workers, exposed to a different political culture, are more sympathetic toward similar people below them in the status or income hierarchy, and more likely to attribute the problems those people have to structural socio-economic causes – provided only they perceive them to share 'mainstream' cultural values and attitudes (Lamont 2001).[12]

(iv) More generally, enquiries around the contemporary world about 'what is poverty?' might elicit the following range of types of response – and many more:

- Poverty follows when the working man is exposed to the temptations and examples of idlers, bars, drugs, gambling and prostitution. Abolish these temptations, enforce the discipline of the labour market, and every home will be provided for.
- Poverty is lack of respect. If I am not respected and cannot respect myself, can I eat my food?
- Poverty is a family income 40 per cent or more below the minimum wage.
- Poverty results from the shortage of jobs for women who lack educational or professional qualifications.
- Poverty is the result of exploitation within the capitalist system.
- Poverty is the inability to access the great world cultures because of inability to understand French.[13]
- Poverty is the fear that, any time I walk to market, I might be humiliated, harassed or assaulted by gangs (the police, thugs, paramilitaries etc.).

Perceptions of the character, causes of and solutions to poverty are heavily shaped by culture, values, language and context. This is a demonstrable fact, not an abstract academic point. Whether or not elites perceive that they have self-interests in poverty reduction will depend in part on how they understand the language and terms employed. The term *poverty* is itself often plain wrong. It can be derogatory in European languages. Elites from developing countries sometimes find the term deeply troublesome, especially when they are virtually forced to adopt it – as is the case at present with *Poverty* Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). As Nigerian policymakers recently suggested in a meeting with aid donors to discuss their PRSP, it is simply more productive to talk of 'national wealth' than 'poverty'.

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12 In practice, French workers are likely to empathise with poorer white or black Frenchmen, but to place Muslims outside their moral community.

13 Such responses were given by Haitian elites in the survey of elite perceptions of poverty mentioned in the main text (Thomaz 2001).

3.3 Elites may perceive benefits to themselves from poverty reduction

It is evident that developing country elites often lack the commitment to reducing poverty and inequality that aid donors now urge upon them. Elites typically enjoy a luxurious life style yet pay little of their income in taxes. We don't have to look far for stories of rural landlords paying police or private militias to intimidate the poor and landless, or urban elites condoning the brutalisation or murder of street children. One can always find apparent winners in a situation of misery. For example, the fact that poverty enables elites to hire labour cheaply is often taken as evidence that they have an interest in the perpetuation of poverty. But none of these observations is evidence that elites are actually committed to the perpetuation of poverty. Were this the case, they would be unusually irrational and, in historical context, anomalous. Let us first look at the historical record.

There is plenty of evidence from past centuries that public action to spread the gains of economic growth and relieve poverty were stimulated or supported by perceptions among elites that they too stood to gain. We can loosely classify these perceptions into *negative* and *positive drivers*, where a *negative driver* is a perception that the elite might actually be worse off if they fail to do something about poverty, and a *positive driver* is a perception that there are potential gains from poverty reduction that can be shared and make most people better off. The underlying distinction here is whether elites were primarily driven to take action through (a) *fear* – an emotion that has the power to stimulate urgent action but also to justify repressive and coercive behaviour toward the poor (e.g. harsh policing or sentencing, forcible clearance of urban squatter settlements); or (b) *expectation of common gain*, that does not have the same mobilising power, but is less dangerous. It should however be understood that motivations and emotions were mixed in all cases, and that 'naked' self-interest arguments were rarely deployed, in public at least. As in public policymaking generally, the more powerful arguments were those that simultaneously tapped into both perceptions of self-interest and beliefs about what is morally right.

Generally speaking, the further we go back in history, the more the arguments deployed to stimulate European elites to support significant pro-poor policies fall into our *negative* category. It was the *threat* of disease in particular that stimulated major municipal and public health/sanitation reforms in Western Europe from the early nineteenth century, and helped give momentum to continuing public health improvements (Evans 1987). 'Plagues' of communicable diseases continued to afflict even peacetime Europe into the twentieth century. Elites were not immune. The threat of crime and of social and political unrest were also continuous elements in elite responses to poverty. The first modern welfare state was established in Germany under Bismarck in the late nineteenth century, in large part to undercut the appeal of the world's premier working class organisation, the German Social Democratic Party. There was however in addition a broader and less explicit motivation: to try to consolidate a coalition of national interests in support of the national project – industrial, commercial and military rivalry with Great Britain. In Britain, growing unease at German rivalry coincided with the emergence of the age of mass industrialised warfare. The likely outcome of European conflicts was increasingly seen to depend on the capacity of states to mobilise into the armed forces the large numbers of young men who could be shifted

around by modern railroads and equipped from modern armaments industries. The physical fitness of ordinary working class men became an important strategic concern. The Boer War initiated in Britain something of a panic that the typical working class male, reared in poverty and unhealthy urban conditions, was medically unfit to bear arms. It was more than coincidence that, in 1905, the same national budget that marked the introduction of the welfare state in Britain made provision for a big increase in military expenditure, directed against Germany (Searle 1971).

Nineteenth-century elites were not driven to take action against poverty only by invocations of self-interest. We have explained above the power of Charles Booth's arguments, that did not rely principally on a notion of an elite interest in poverty reduction, but appealed instead to something close to altruism: an empathy with the poor arising from a common British concern with fear of loss of respectability. Even earlier, American governments had introduced more extensive 'welfare' programmes than is generally credited, and had been persuaded to do so by arguments that combined appeals to both altruism and common interest. Some proponents of welfare were able to exploit the traumatic Civil War of the 1860s. A substantial national pensions programme was later constructed around the idea of honouring the injured veterans (of the victorious army) – although the links between actual access to these pensions and war injuries or service were often tenuous. Also in the nineteenth century, many state governments in the US were persuaded to fund substantial family welfare programmes on the grounds that a country like the US could not afford, ethically or materially, to allow its future citizens to grow up in poverty, ill-health or ignorance (Skocpol 1992).

It makes sense that the *negative drivers* (narrow appeals to the self-interest of elites) should have been more prevalent in the earlier nineteenth century and in less democratic contexts, while *positive drivers* (appeals to common interests) and *national altruistic arguments* (invocations of obligation to others within the same *national* community) should be more prominent later and in democratic contexts. For more representative and democratic government changes the character of politically persuasive argument: there are strong selection pressures against arguments that do not credibly justify public policies in terms of broad and inclusive benefits. The case that public health needs to be improved to protect the rich against diseases carried by the poor is not very useful in a democratic environment.

The limited usefulness of *negative drivers* in a relatively democratic environment helps to both explain and to offset potential concerns about the fact that elites in contemporary developing countries do not appear much motivated by these *negative drivers*. They do not seem to fear that the prevalence of poverty will have very marked, direct, adverse effects on their own lives and lifestyles. We make this general claim on the basis of participation in a cross-national research project on elite perceptions of poverty in Bangladesh, Brazil, Haiti, India, the Philippines and South Africa. The differences in elite perceptions among these countries are sometimes substantial, and are mentioned below. But, in comparison with European and American history, what stands out is the relative insignificance of the *negative drivers*. Especially since the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, the threat of organised class-based revolution has disappeared from most of the world; the elites we interviewed were unconcerned by this possibility. The nature of modern military technology is such that the poor are generally not needed in large numbers to

fight inter-state wars. Cash to purchase arms, a strong national economy and a relatively small but educated and trained cadre of professionals are the immediate sources of military strength. Threat of crime does pre-occupy some elites, especially those in highly unequal countries like Brazil and South Africa, but they tend not to view the poor as the major culprits, and point the blame instead at combinations of 'non-poor' urban criminals and thugs and see politicians and police as implicated, either by omission or commission. There is some element of mystery about why elites do not appear concerned that they are at risk from disease that is transmitted from the poor. This issue was never spontaneously mentioned during our interviews. One can certainly rationalise this in terms of the partial 'conquest' of most infectious and contagious diseases, the fact that poor country elites are vulnerable primarily to the lifestyle diseases of the rich, and their access to expensive private curative medical care. Yet, on objective grounds elites should perhaps be concerned. The World Health Organisation is concerned that old communicable diseases like TB and malaria are re-emerging, some in virulent drug-resistant forms. New communicable health threats such as Ebola and HIV/AIDS are also receiving increased publicity.

Contemporary elites appear irrationally unconcerned about the threat to their own health from the prevalence of poverty. That may be regarded more as an opportunity than a problem: as the world in general becomes more concerned about the resistance of some major diseases, new and old, to drug treatment, there is likely to be scope to persuade elites that it is in their interest – as well as the interests of society generally – to tackle public health issues in a more comprehensive way, and to place less faith on specific curative interventions. Equally, there is little doubt that the re-emergence of something like an international communist movement, actively recruiting the poor, would on balance do a great deal to focus the attention of elites on poverty.[14] However, we need not, for three reasons, be too depressed by the apparent impotence in the modern world of some of the classic *negative drivers* of elite concern for the poor: perceived threats of disease, crime, revolution and military weakness:

- *Negative drivers* are not very consistent with democratic politics (see above).
- They have ambiguous and contradictory political implications, and may be employed for perverse ends (see above).
- Above all, there is evidence of the potential influence of *positive drivers*: perceptions that there are synergies and mutual benefits, shared among different groups, from reducing poverty. We explore these *positive drivers* in the next section.

3.4 There is scope to present poverty reduction in a positive way

In interviewing developing country elites about poverty, and in interpreting their responses, we have *not* been aiming for hard evidence about what they 'really' believe. It was never our intention or expectation that we would end up with conclusions of the nature: 'Brazilian elites really do/don't care about poverty'. Judgements of that kind can only be made in specific situations where real choices have to be made

[14] We say 'on balance' because the Cold War had some adverse effects in relation to poverty: while helping to mobilise some elites – as under the US-led Alliance for Progress in Latin America; it also helped (in Latin America and elsewhere) to stimulate and legitimate the repression of political movements based among the working classes and the poor.

between alternative courses of action, with actual implications in terms of politics and resources. What carefully conducted open-ended interviews can achieve is (a) some insight into basic attitudes and (b) considerable understanding of mental maps around poverty, especially of the language and terms employed. These kinds of insights enable us to answer the question; 'What kind of arguments about the character, causes of and solutions to poverty in Sombodistan are likely to constitute *persuasive narratives*, i.e. interpretations that are likely to engage the Sombodistani elite in thinking sympathetically about poverty reduction – because they see it as being in their own interest, because it is likely to benefit Sombodistan, or simply because it is the right thing to do?'

It is important to clarify that we are not suggesting:

- That there is some kind of formula for the presentation of poverty that, when perfected, will be usable globally. While, on this as on many issues, there is scope for cross-national inspiration and learning, persuasive narratives will have to be national. We explained above that the present (largely implicit) narratives about poverty deriving from international development organisations lack appeal in part because they are standardised and global. It so happens that elites in Brazil expressed surprisingly strong and general support for the idea of land reform. This reflects particular historical circumstances in Brazil: (a) the recent success of mass membership political movements – the Landless Workers Movement and the Workers Party – in placing this issue on the political agenda in a democratic fashion; (b) a strong desire to be and to be seen internationally as a modern industrial country, and to erase traces of an older image of Brazil as a country of oppressive rural landlordism; and (c) a rather optimistic expectation that land reform might reduce migration into Brazil's large and crowded cities. Land reform might constitute part of a persuasive narrative about anti-poverty policies in Brazil. This would not work in Bangladesh, where the dominant perception is of an absolute scarcity of land and all other resources.
- That aid donors engage in anything like a campaign to shape the thinking of developing country elites about poverty. That would be a mistake for several reasons. It is rather a matter of engaging elites in discussion and debate, inviting them to frame poverty and anti-poverty policies in their own terms, but all the time encouraging them to think of the scope for joint and widespread gains from poverty reduction.

This strategy makes sense because we see, from the elite interviews and other sources, real potential for the construction of persuasive narratives around notions of joint gains. It would be easier – and most consistent with our insistence on nationally-specific approaches – to illustrate this from one national example. However, because we are making a general case about donor strategy, we will talk in more general terms. Qualifications and some comments about why some countries have more potential than others are found in Section 5. Why, in general, are we optimistic that developing country elites might be willing to help create and to internalise narratives that persuasively and positively link poverty reduction to their own well-being? Leaving aside the point made previously about the increasing potential to link elite

welfare with poverty through health threats, there is a sequence of observations based around issues of education, population, modernisation and development.

Let us begin with the observation that the most consistent element in the responses of different national elites to our questions was the idea that 'education' was the main solution to poverty.[15] Other information from the interviews supports the following interpretation of this response:

(i) There is probably here an element of pragmatism, based on the perception that, whatever else governments failed to do – and our interviewees were very sceptical about the capacities of their governments – they were relatively capable of putting up schools and appointing teachers. The quality of output may not have been very good, but at least something positive appeared to emerge at the end of the process – more visibly in relation to education than, say, health services. That is not a point to be dismissed lightly: elites are unlikely to support public action against poverty if they do not perceive a feasible route through which governments can act and achieve results.[16] Similarly, one of the attractions of education as a solution is that it is not controversial. Opposition to the principle of expanding educational provision is rare. That too is important. More often than we tend to believe, proposals for policy change fail not because they lack support, but because they generate opposition (Ascher 1984: 34. 310–1).

(ii) 'Education' was implicitly presented as a cure for a variety of ills, including: (a) the enmeshment of the poor in fatalistic, traditional, lazy, unenterprising or narrow-minded attitudes; (b) their exclusion, through lack of access to the right languages and literatures, from the great world ideas and civilisations; and (c) their lack of technical, scientific and vocational skills and aptitudes. These distinctions are made by us, not in most cases by our interviewees, who generally had broad and imprecise notions of how education might help reduce poverty. Particular linkages were context-specific. For example, our Bangladeshi interviewees were generally well aware that their country stands out internationally for the record of its (non-government) organisations in providing stable micro-credit services to large numbers of people in rural areas, especially women. Many linked education – as a means of equipping people to manage credit and become small-scale entrepreneurs – with an image of a successful bootstrap operation to lift the country out of poverty through widespread enterprise and market-led improvement in the productivity of scarce non-human and abundant human resources.

The general implications of the prevalence of this positive attitude toward education for the poor emerge through a sequence of argument. The first point to be made is that developing country elites still believe strongly in 'development' as the priority national and governmental mission and target. Despite concerns about environmental impacts or the adverse effects of globalisation, 'development' remains the common value and goal framing most policy debate, and a primary criterion for legitimating governments and

15 Family planning was also popular, probably for similar reasons.

16 Policies to widen access to education may be generally more politically feasible than those which aim to improve the quality of education (Corrales 1999).

assessing their performance. Education for the poor is justified principally in terms of its instrumental value – promoting development – rather than in terms of its intrinsic worth. Arguments for education that might elsewhere be classified as 'intrinsic' – notions of opening up minds, increasing awareness and realising human potential – in developing countries are, or can easily become, largely instrumental and subordinate to 'development'.

The second point is that, while at the global level many critics are calling for more diverse and pluralistic conceptions of development, the opposite appears to have happened within elite and policy circles in the developing world. There is more fundamental agreement now about the character of the development enterprise than there was two decades ago. And this agreement is around what one might call a 'human resources' conception of development: a notion that development involves, both as cause and effect, the improvement in the general *quality of human resources*. This concept is highly instrumental. It can be interpreted, variously, as a matter of people who are physically fit enough to work regularly, dextrously and efficiently; psychologically adapted to the routines and procedures of modern organisations; emotionally attuned to self-seeking enterprise; and intellectually skilled in terms of both basic literacy and numeracy and more demanding and creative abilities.

Why is there now more consensus around this 'human resources' concept of development than in previous decades? There appear to be three main reasons:

(i) The first is most concrete: actual evidence that it works. The evidence perhaps comes most clearly from the experiences of the East Asian economic miracles, especially South Korea and Taiwan, which have been widely scrutinised by developing country elites. While there is continuing dispute about the relative contributions of markets and state guidance to these 'miracles', there is broad acceptance that widespread, high quality education played a very important role. Other support for the 'human resources' approach stems from the fact that, in most countries, large scale private investors, including transnational companies, appear much concerned about 'quality of labour' issues. More generally, developing country elites are exposed to the notion of a global shift to a 'knowledge economy' that is especially demanding in terms of quality of labour, including both the competence of individual workers and the capacity of organisations to organise human relations efficiently.

(ii) The second reason is essentially negative: a distinctively different set of understandings of the essence of development, that were previously influential in many countries, have largely lost credibility. Let us label them the 'conspicuous construction' approach: the idea that much of the essence and motor of development lay in the construction of massive buildings and other physical facilities, whether purely symbolic (palaces in the jungle); largely symbolic (giant sports stadiums; massive plazas-cum-parade grounds in capital cities); or instrumental with a large prestige dimension (mega-dams; major highways; large mechanised state farms in smallholder societies; uneconomic steel plant and papers mills). This notion of development was certainly not very congruent with any idea of development as 'investing in people', and was often directly contrary. The priority investment needs of large national projects justified and necessitated lower mass living standards and the relative neglect of education, health, and other 'investments in (ordinary) people'. Few countries that pursued these strategies

achieved sustained economic progress. The developing countries that have been nominated as developmental successes at various points over the past decade differ in many ways, but have in common a rejection of 'conspicuous construction': Chile, Ghana, Mauritius, Uganda and the various Asian Tigers.

(iii) The third reason for the broader acceptance of the 'human resources' approach to development is similar to the previous, but somewhat more broad: the rejection in developing countries and in development theory and discourse of a view, strongly held in previous decades, that the needs of the economy had absolute priority over people and human relations. It has until relatively recently been virtually the norm for developing country elites – whether engaged in centralised, statist 'forced development', or in vigorous promotion of markets and private investment – to argue that 'people' (popular welfare or consumption; the quality of existing human relations) would have to take second place to the imperatives of the economy. For the economic mechanism was both too important and too delicate to run the risk of permitting any intervention driven by short term human needs. In most developing countries, these kinds of arguments – that are so easily deployed against pro-poor policies – lack the plausibility they enjoyed in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.[17]

Our general point is that there is a clear affinity between (a) 'human resources' conceptions of development and (b) pro-poor policies. The two overlap sufficiently that there is scope to construct persuasive narratives that justify policies that might reduce poverty in terms of the achievement of other broadly accepted goals. The character and content of persuasive narratives about poverty-reduction will vary very much from context to context; that is essential if they are to be persuasive. They are however likely to contain mixtures of two or more of the following generic elements:

- Relatively specific arguments linking policies that will be pro-poor in outcome – whether they concern education, health, sanitation, social insurance, vocational training, environment, crime, security, housing, etc. – to the advancement of this widely-accepted (human resource-based) conception of development. One well-known example already in use is the argument that girls' education is the best means of fertility control. Immunisation may be linked to development via, for example, its contribution to (a) making female labour more reliable and efficient by alleviating the burden of caring for sick children, or (b) protecting national investments already made in educating children. Improving housing for the urban poor can similarly be linked to development as a means of (a) again, improving the health and reliability of workers; (b) facilitating planned as opposed to unplanned urban expansion; (c) protecting the vulnerable poor from crime or 'infection' by criminal tendencies.
- More general assertions about the essential incompatibility of poverty, destitution, degradation, oppression etc. with the achievement or condition of 'development' or some other urgent national

[17] For a detailed discussion in relation to Latin America, see Hirschman (1981: 98–135). Some readers may be surprised by this claim, and view contemporary arguments for global economic liberalism as giving a similar priority to 'delicate economic mechanisms' over human needs. They do, but are, in most developing countries, less plausible and more contested than were their earlier equivalents.

goal. For example, the contemporary Indonesian elite – that has an impressive record of poverty reduction over the past two decades – is most likely to be engaged by an anti-poverty programme that is framed in a language that addresses its urgent concern: 'national unity'.

- Appeals, explicit or implicit, to a sense of rivalry with other similar countries, especially neighbouring countries, and to the sense of national pride that can be evoked through the belief that one is doing better than one's neighbours. National pride matters a great deal. People like to show visitors that they are doing well in something, and especially doing better than neighbours. The concept of 'development' provides many opportunities for displaying some kind of achievement.
- Arguments totally lacking visible instrumental content, that justify particular courses of action in terms of some variant of *national altruism*, i.e. doing what is right for the people of one's country. The most persuasive narratives have 'moral' as well as instrumental content.
- A plausible account of how particular objectives might in practice be achieved through public action. Persuasive narratives need to demonstrate not just that there is a problem that needs solving, but that there is a feasible solution.

Donors cannot construct the most persuasive narratives linking poverty reduction to broader national goals. Politicians within developing countries are the more appropriate people, and are better skilled. Constructing persuasive narratives is what good politicians do continually:

> As politicians know only too well but social scientists often forget, public policy is made of language.
>
> (Majone 1989)

Donors can contribute by helping to provide a supportive environment: tolerating positive representations and understandings of poverty that do not conform to standard global discourse; and encouraging discussion of the linkages between poverty reduction and broader development goals.

4 Bias: what anti-poverty policies do elites prefer?

We noted above that the motivations for nineteenth century European elites to take action against poverty were often *negative* and driven by fear. In contemporary developing countries, these *negative drivers* appear relatively weak. *Positive drivers* – expectations of common gain – are potentially more useful. One generic reason for this is that, in democracies, there is limited political leverage to be squeezed from arguments that poverty should be tackled to assuage the fears of elite groups about its negative consequences. However, another reason why *negative drivers* are currently relatively fragile and *positive drivers* are more potent seems to lie in the tendency for contemporary elites to see education as a more effective weapon against poverty than improved health care. Education is seen as an opportunity. In historical context, the ill-health of the poor is not seen as much of a threat to elites. In order to provide a little more insight into how elites appear to think about poverty – and how their thinking might be influenced – we explore this contrast in some detail. In sum, we suggest that contemporary elites tend to prefer education over health for the poor because:

- Education is the most evident and direct underpinning of the influential notion of *human resources-based development* (Section 3.4).
- Mass education has been an effective instrument of social and ideological control, notably in East Asia, and may widely be perceived to have this potential.
- In Africa in particular, a post-Independence push for mass education has been fuelled by a sense of racial exclusion from a valued resource under colonial rule.
- The task of providing education seems easier from policy and administrative perspectives. Especially where public services are poor and public finances severely stretched, public education systems appear more robust than most public health systems – even if the quality of the service provided is low.
- Modern medical technology, allied to money, provides contemporary elites with a greater sense of direct personal protection against diseases emanating from the poor than that enjoyed by their nineteenth century European comparators.
- Given that most epidemic diseases are largely under control, many of the most severe health problems experienced by contemporary elites are indeed those amenable to individual curative care.

These arguments are explored in more detail in Annex One, where we also demonstrate that, in comparative historical perspective, the governments of contemporary developing countries have been more successful in extending mass educational provision than in improving access to most kinds of health care.

5 What kinds of elites are most likely to be 'pro-poor'?

Whether and how national elites respond to poverty probably depends mainly on the broad political situation: the threats and challenges that elites perceive they face; and the scope they have for finding support and alliances. However, the character of the elites themselves also makes a difference. The evidence available enables us to make a few generalisations:

(i) The clearest general conclusion is that agrarian elites – groups whose income and status derive (in part) from their control of large landholdings – tend consistently to be the least sympathetic to the poor, the least supportive of democracy, and the most virulent opponents of political and social movements that promote the interests of poor people. The evidence on this point has been assembled most comprehensively in relation to democracy (Rueschmeyer, Stevens and Stevens 1992), but the same arguments apply to the attitudes of these elites to poverty. Typical agrarian elites are anti-poor for a mixture of three main reasons: (a) because their own livelihoods depend heavily on keeping low the price of agricultural labour; (b) because they fear that any empowerment of rural labour or small farmers will lead to demands for redistribution of large landholdings; and (c) because rural class subordination tends to be embodied in monopolistic local, face-to-face personal relationships, and to become an important component of the identity, self-image and status of the dominating elites. It is agrarian elites that are most likely to exercise broad-ranging 'feudal' control

over the lives of their employees and tenants, to dominate local religious organisations, to engage in elaborate local level clientelism and patronage, or to assume sexual rights over 'their' own people. Accordingly, it is agrarian elites who feel most threatened by – and are especially likely to be the targets of – any kind of empowerment of poor people. Agrarians are also the most visibly-shrinking (or shrunken) component of developing country national elites. Agrarian elites were prime targets of agrarian reform in most of the South (and Eastern Europe and Russia) during much of the twentieth century. They have largely disappeared, including from much of Latin America, stereotypically the region of the *latifundia*. This is not to say that the kind of 'anti-poor' attitudes traditionally associated with *latifundia* have disappeared. Any large scale landowners, whether 'modern' corporates or land-grabbers in the Amazon Basin, are likely to have adversarial relations with the landless or smallholders potentially competing for the same pieces of land. Even if they do not employ private armies to control and coerce 'the masses', such elites rarely exhibit empathy for the poor. Agrarian elites are however a small and declining class.[18]

(ii) It seems likely that, the more unequal is income distribution in any given society, the less willing are the elites actually to redistribute resources or otherwise assist the poor. Inequality appears to breed something of a commitment to the maintenance of inequality – or, at least, reluctance and resistance to reducing it. The evidence on this is not conclusive. It is strong enough to notice, but not so strong that one should give up on any expectations of redistribution in very unequal societies. We summarise it in Annex Two.

(iii) Impressionistic evidence suggests that 'bureaucratic elites' are likely to be relatively pro-poor. By 'bureaucratic elites' we mean in particular people in the upper echelons of a classic civil service:[19] recruited and promoted on merit, and destined for a lifetime career in public service. Such people tend to have a relatively broad and long-term conception of the national interest, and a bias in favour of public intervention.

(iv) Conversely, where states are relatively ineffective, central authorities exercise little effective authority, and considerable power is enjoyed by locally-based elites who rely heavily on 'informal' (illegitimate, illegal, coercive) techniques of rule, it may be difficult to identify pro-poor sympathies and attitudes.

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18 See Herring (2000) on agrarian elites and the politics of poverty.

19 Military bureaucracies can often also be relatively pro-poor in attitude, especially where experience of internal conflict against rural-based radical movements has exposed them to the reality of the living conditions of poor rural people, and to the difficulties of eliminating rural radicalism without socio-economic or political reform.

6 Conclusions

1 We do not know how 'pro-poor' developing country elites are. There are very good reasons to believe that they could play a greater role in framing and supporting policies that would be pro-poor if they were engaged in a more constructive and sympathetic way by aid donors or other external agents.

2 This potential exists in large part because 'poverty' is such a plastic concept. There is a considerable scope to present 'poverty' in different ways, and to choose to tackle it through public interventions that can be justified in terms of their contributions not (only) to poverty, but to the achievement of broader national development goals.

3 In general, the leaders of states tend to pursue the following six main objectives – with varying degrees of relative urgency according to circumstances: (a) autonomy (from other domestic or external sources of power and authority); (b) hegemony (over socio-economic or other groups and classes); (c) revenue; (d) legitimacy (in the eyes of the people over whom they claim to rule); (e) external recognition (by other states and international organisations); and (f) accumulation (of capital and productive assets, that will increase state power). It is in relation to objectives (d), (e) and (f) that there is the greatest scope to argue or construct congruence between anti-poverty policies and broader national goals.

4 Developing country elites tend to compare themselves and their countries with others, and can feel strong senses of shame or pride at their perceived relative performance, including 'development' performance.[20] There is however a high degree of contingency about (a) who they compare themselves with and (b) the 'information' they use to make the comparison. Facts may not be very sacred. These comparative references tend to weigh more heavily in (a) smaller countries, especially countries that are perceived to be small in relation to neighbours and comparators; and (b) countries where elites and middle classes enjoy little international travel. Larger countries with stronger and more deeply rooted national traditions – notably China and India – tend to be relatively immune to comparisons.

5 The following are the conditions under which there is most likely to be positive and direct response from (wide sections of) national elites to the phenomenon of poverty and deprivation:

- The condition of 'the poor' is perceived to pose a threat to the elite (and the existing order), in terms of social and political unrest, large-scale migration to cities, crime, weak national military capacity, or disease.

[20] A major stimulus for sections of national elites to take pro-poor stances have been what might be termed the 'modernising imperative': the perception that the country was backward because ruled by 'backward' elites, notably rural landlords, religious organisations and, in some cases, old-fashioned bureaucracies. The modernising (and nation-building) imperative has, in different ways, led 'new' (bureaucratic, military) elites to promote mass welfare in a wide range of countries, including, for example, Mexico, Brazil, Turkey and Peru – sometimes effectively, sometimes not.

- Political entrepreneurs and intellectuals tell stories about poverty that persuasively link these threats to the condition of a relatively defined sub-set of 'the mass of the population'. In other words, the problem of poverty needs to be presented as relatively bounded.
- Similarly, there are persuasive stories that link 'solutions' to poverty to 'solutions' to other perceived problems: strong national military capacity; nation-building; economic growth; reducing fiscal burdens over some limited time frame; crime or disease reduction. ('More education' often meets this criterion, and several others below.)
- Proposed actions against poverty will not be perceived as the 'thin end of the wedge', exposing sections of the elite to threat – unless of course dealing with poverty is partly a tactic in intra-elite conflict.
- The proposed actions against poverty will directly benefit other significant sections of the population, and thus garner wide support.
- The proposed actions against poverty are viewed as administratively and financially feasible.
- The proposed actions against poverty are consistent with what relevant successful comparator countries are understood to have done or, for heavily aid dependent countries, the things that aid donors advocate and support.

6 The conditions listed above are never met in practice. There remains considerable potential to harness elite support for policies that reduce poverty even in much less ideal circumstances.

7 Most staff of aid and development agencies, spurred by researchers and by recent changes in assistance policy, are now aware of the problem of elite bias in many developing country governments, and favour putting elites under some kind of pressure to be more responsive to the needs of their own poor. We share those attitudes. However, there is a need to be aware of the other side of the picture. Albert Hirschman, one of the most distinguished development thinkers of the twentieth century, has provided a convincing but disturbing partial explanation of why, in the 1970s, so many elites in Latin America supported truly vicious right-wing movements and regimes. Hirschman (1981: especially 98–135 and 142–66) describes how the prevalent development ideologies and theories of the 1960s sent the message to elites that development was an extremely difficult affair, that they had failed on virtually every count, and that any achievement would necessitate major change and sacrifice on their part. This induced what he called *fracasomania* – a hopeless sense of inability to do anything right. That in turn predisposed elites to listen to the ideologues who told them that salvation was at hand, but only after a total change of direction: firm government, the eradication of critics and leftists, the crushing of popular political organisations, the elimination of mass politics, and radical economic liberalisation. The era of 'the disappeared' followed. Nothing similar is likely to occur in developing countries in the foreseeable future. But that experience is a reminder of the potential costs of attempting to exclude elites from participation in the framing of national development strategies.

Annex one: why do contemporary elites prefer education over health as a remedy for poverty?

The obvious difference between how contemporary elites perceive poverty and its possible solutions and the views and preferences of their historical European counterparts is that 'negative drivers' – motivations to tackle poverty out of elite self-interests – appear to be less potent for contemporary elites. One reason for this difference has already been noted, namely that the increasingly democratic contexts in which poverty policies are framed makes negative, narrowly self-interested arguments less publicly possible. Comparing contemporary elite policy preferences or biases against those of previous elites highlights two other possible explanations for why negative drivers have less power in the present day. First, that something like a 'late development effect' affords contemporary elites some protection against the negative consequences of poverty feared by nineteenth century European elites, mainly through medical scientific developments. Late developers may also take positive 'pro-poor' lessons from the development experiences of other countries, such as the importance of mass education for national economic development. Secondly, the state is not the sole or perhaps even the primary actor against poverty in the developing world. Because many states are weak and/or declining in importance, particularly when compared to the strong nation-building European states of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, contemporary elites are less likely to conceptualise poverty and its solutions in ways that rely heavily on large-scale, authoritative state intervention. They may depend instead on their ability to pay for private protection against the negative consequences of poverty, and to support only those interventions they consider the state or other actors to be capable of implementing. In any case, poverty within a country is no longer a problem limited to that country: its consequences may spill over into the rest of the world, and solutions may be designed at a transnational level to be implemented by international actors. A comparison of elite social policy preferences highlights these broad differences.

Let us start by repeating that the education of the poor was widely considered a priority by developing country elites: it was spontaneously raised as a solution to a range of problems associated with poverty, and its lack was cited as a major cause of poverty. Even elites who were reluctant to see an enlarged role for their states seemed to view the provision of education as a basic responsibility of government. By contrast, matters relating to the health of the poor – other than fertility – were rarely discussed as an urgent policy priority. That the potential for the communicable diseases associated with poverty to negatively affect elites or public health was not, apparently, a pressing concern. The representatives of developing country elites that we interviewed seemed, on the whole, to be biased in favour of mass educational rather than public health interventions.

Primary education is something of a social policy success story across the developing world, if we consider the pace at which educational access has been expanded (see Table A). The gross enrolment ratio of 102 indicates that overall, developing countries were able to provide a primary school place for all primary school age children in 1997, although access is unevenly distributed across regions, by gender, and

in all countries includes children of more than primary school age[21]. Importantly, the majority of educational provision is state-provided, and much of the rest is directly or indirectly subsidised by the state. Despite significant and continuing problems with quality and equality of access to schooling, states in very many developing countries have, it seems, been highly supportive of the expansion of primary education for the masses; in comparative and historical perspective, developing countries have been even more enthusiastic in their pursuit of mass education than developed countries (Boli, Ramirez and Meyer 1985).

Table A Global primary school access

	Primary gross enrolment ratios				
	1960	**1970**	**1980**	**1990**	**1997**
World	81	86	96	99	102
Developed countries	106	104	101	102	–
Developing countries	72	80	95	98	102
Sub-Saharan Africa	35	46	78	68	77
Arab states	46	60	76	83	85
Latin America & the Caribbean	72	91	105	107	114
East Asia	96	92	112	124	118
South Asia	63	78	85	95	95

Source: UNESCO 1993; 1990 and 1997 figures from UNESCO 2000

Explanations of why states and elites support the expansion of mass education are not easily amenable to straightforward calculations of threats and benefits. Some theoretical positions on the motivations for educational expansion[22] come close to offering explanations based on the need to preempt threats to social or political stability from the poor. Both (a) class-conflict (education as a means by which dominant groups can impose economic or ideological structures on the masses) and (b) social control (education as a mechanism for legitimating social inequality or building social cohesion and national integration etc.) approaches are applied to the interpretation of the rapid expansion of education in the immediate post-colonial era in developing countries. Extreme, racialised inequalities of access to education had been highly politicised in many African countries as a major source of discontent in the Independence period.

21 The Gross Enrolment Ratio (number of children attending as a proportion of the school-age population) is shown instead of the Net Enrolment Ratio (number of school-age children attending as a proportion of the school-age population) as a better indicator of the total availability of school places; it also forms a better point of comparison with the data on access to improved sanitation and safe water supplies, as these are also data on access, rather than on use or quality.

22 Definitions and critiques of these broad theoretical perspectives are drawn from Boli, Ramirez and Meyer (1985) and Fuller and Rubinson (1992: 10–2).

Nationalist elites, themselves the privileged few beneficiaries of colonial education systems,[23] had committed themselves to broadening education provision which they saw as the basis for economic and social development as well as an important means of achieving national integration and reducing regional and racial inequalities and tensions (Cooksey *et al.* 1994). For the masses, formal education was correctly seen as the ticket to formal sector employment, and popular expectations of improved welfare and access to education from the new nationalist governments ran high. Their legitimacy and hold on political stability was felt to rest heavily on increasing educational access for the masses, and many countries dramatically increased provision in the Independence period (see Court 1976; Buchert 1994: 105–6; Cooksey *et al.* 1994 on the Tanzanian and Kenyan experiences). These expansionary policies did not always endure – economic crisis and the poor quality of many schools affected the supply of and the demand for schooling in many countries – but they were, nevertheless, indicative of the political gains to be secured from expanding access.

The urgency with which post-colonial regimes attempted to expand mass education is less evident nearly four decades on, yet education remains an unquestioned high priority in most developing countries, and one of the few areas in which significant progress can be said to have been made. It is likely that mass education remains attractive to developing country elites because of faith in its disciplining effects, as well as because of its role in legitimating social inequalities by providing – at least in theory – a channel for upward social mobility. Increasingly, however, a third explanation for the motivations behind the support for mass education needs to be made, that (c) mass education is recognised to be a necessary condition for national economic development and international competitiveness. This is partly the result of the lessons absorbed by developing country elites about the experiences of East Asia (Corrales 1999).[24] One final set of explanations for the appeal of expanding primary school access may be that (d) it is, or appears to be, politically and administratively feasible. There tend to be few important opponents to the mass education of the poor, and expanding access is usually politically popular because the benefits are direct and concentrated, whereas the costs of doing so tend to be spread diffusely (ibid.).[25] Post-colonial states were initially faced with the mammoth tasks of dismantling racist and highly elitist educational systems and of supplying depleted civil services with educated staff, on top of mass popular demands for schools. But in most contemporary developing countries, governments of almost any strength and authority appear to be capable of implementing expansion programmes, even if the quality and endurance of many such policies leaves much to be desired.

While the idea that mass education is necessary for economic development now has the quality of a truism, it should be noted that the connection has not always been so readily accepted: although the

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23 See Hopkins (1971) on the impact of the Tanzanian ruling elite's experiences of colonial education on their perceptions of development.

24 In our research, some Bangladeshi elites drew direct comparisons between the development prospects of Bangladesh and the experiences of East Asian countries, concluding that because Bangladesh was, like Japan, a small, densely-populated, ethnically homogenous nation, the only feasible development strategy was massive investment in human resources through education.

25 Improving the quality of schooling tends to be more difficult, having the opposite characteristics – costs concentrated on specific, vocal groups such as teachers, and benefits distributed diffusely across the population.

earliest European nations to industrialise, France and Britain were not the first to adopt national policies of mass education, nor to develop national education systems (Boli, Ramirez and Meyer 1985). Education for the masses was seen as a project of nation-building, rather than as economic investment. But developing country governments and elites are in a position to perceive the education of the poor as a matter of national economic interest, thereby connecting the interests of the poor to their own through a broadly shared set of national goals. The dissemination of knowledge about the impact of education on the Asian 'miracle' economies by international organisations and donors seems to have had some of the desired impact. There is potential here: further connections between tackling poverty and national economic prosperity could be exploited to harness elite support for pro-poor policies, as was noted above, with little fear that such arguments would encourage repressive policies towards the poor. On the other hand, arguments linking national economic interest to the education of the poor are, on their own, distinctly lacking in the urgency that might prompt action against poverty as an immediate priority. In the absence of any such threats from the poor, developing country elites may be content to allow the longer processes of economic development tackle poverty without any more immediate or direct intervention by states or civil society.

But threats from the poor which might make poverty seem more urgent to developing country elites are now rare. Some plausible explanations for why crime and insurrection presented weak threats to elites in developing countries were noted above. But that the health threat from poverty-related diseases failed to concern elites was striking, and perhaps less easily explained. Cholera, tuberculosis and malaria remain serious health threats to the poor in developing countries (WHO 1996; 1998), and the non-poor are never entirely immune (WHO 1999: Annex Table 7). Yet elites rarely independently mentioned poverty-related diseases. When pressed, South African elites displayed surprise at being asked about poverty-related disease: it had occurred to very few that these might present a risk to their own health. They were unaware of the extent of the health problems of the poor, and in particular of communicable diseases. When questioned directly, the Bangladeshi elite displayed distaste but no sense of fear about the unsanitary living conditions of the urban poor. When local elites were asked about the relationship between poor living conditions and the prevalence of tuberculosis, the more or less unanimous view was that the disease was caused by smoking, that is, it had no connection with poverty.[26] No sense of a threat from the physical proximity of the poor was detected: contemporary developing country elites apparently do not fear poverty-related diseases.

In their lack of fear of the communicable diseases that primarily afflict the poor, contemporary developing country elites differ markedly from their nineteenth century European equivalents. At least until the early twentieth century, even rich and powerful Europeans feared the epidemic diseases which mainly afflicted the poor (see Durey 1979 on 'choleraphobia'), not only because they could – and sometimes did – themselves suffer fatally from the plague or cholera or tuberculosis, but also because of the social and economic disruption that periodic outbreaks of killer diseases could result in. The fear of

[26] Interviewees included a local government medical officer who was at great pains to stress that there was no connection between poor living conditions and tuberculosis, although he did not connect the disease to smoking.

cholera, for example, was not just the fear of death from a deadly and initially mysterious disease, potent though that was. Wherever cholera spread, the poor believed that they were being targeted by the rich, and conspiracy theories about poisoned water and body-snatching for medical research were rife across Europe (Durey 1979; Evans 1987). The official response, to establish harsh regimes of quarantine and *cordons sanitaire*, was resisted by the poor. Cholera thus engendered chaos and violent social upheaval, often destroying the carefully maintained stability of relations between the rich and the poor (Briggs 1961).

By the mid-nineteenth century, time-honoured responses to killer diseases (the comforts of religion, blaming foreigners and minorities, folk theories and remedies) were increasingly replaced by preventive policies shaped by 'miasmatist'[27] and contagionist theories of disease transmission. Most states had not been strong or centralised enough to act comprehensively to prevent or protect against the earlier cholera epidemics, and there was little initial pressure on governments to do so. Instead, the poor tended to suffer while the rich fled or installed draconian domestic hygiene regimes; both groups blamed the usual culprits – foreigners and the medical profession. There had to be faith in the institutional means to respond, unless efforts to protect against epidemics were to remain private domestic efforts. But as European states became stronger, more centralised and authoritative in the later 19th century, elites increasingly expected state action on epidemic disease (Evans 1987). As both miasmatist and contagionist schools of thought pointed to the living conditions and general ill-health of the poor as breeding grounds for disease, action on disease entailed action on poverty. The mid-century British sanitary reformer and miasmatist Chadwick, in a well-known example, saw disease as arising directly from poor living conditions, sanitary arrangements and housing. The efforts of the sanitary reform movement he founded were directly related to concerns about poverty: sanitary reform 'encoded changing beliefs about the nature of poverty, linking it theoretically and practically with environmental degradation as well as population growth' (Turshen 1989: 135).

It is important to note that efforts to protect against epidemic diseases were not initially 'pro-poor' in any meaningful sense: quarantine and *cordons sanitaire* were neither designed to protect the poor, nor could they be said to have had 'pro-poor effects'. This was particularly true of colonial policies, where the goal was to protect colonial officials, who were accordingly housed in well-drained, sanitary areas at a distance from the indigenous population[28] (Stock 1988). But even when containment and protection measures failed to tackle the problem adequately, the 'pro-poor' sanitary and housing reform efforts that followed were also impositions, rarely welcomed by the masses, even though they ultimately resulted in vastly improved health outcomes and life expectancies for the poor. So while negative concerns about poverty in the form of threats to the lives and livelihoods of elites could result in repressive measures against the poor, they could also have dramatically pro-poor outcomes (even if they were not immediately perceived as such). Crucially, the welfare of the poor was an urgent problem for society as a whole; elites feared the

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27 'Miasmas' were foul-smelling vapours or gases associated with unhealthy environments believed to carry diseases (from which we get 'malaria' for the disease once associated with the bad air above swampy areas).

28 If post-colonial nationalist elites settled in these distinct residential areas of former colonial officials, as was often the case, this could help to explain the contemporary sense of elite insulation against the health problems of the urban masses.

potential consequences of extreme deprivation within their society, and acted to prevent these consequences when they recognised that they could not effectively insulate themselves against them.

What makes contemporary developing country elites immune from such fears? There are a number of plausible explanations.

(a) Developments in medical science and the clinical approach to disease. Already by the end of the nineteenth century the poverty-reducing reforms characteristic of early public health policy – improvements to the sanitation, water supply and housing of the poor – were being replaced by the clinical medicine approach of the bacteriological era (Turshen 1989). In many developing countries this stage of public health reform was, in effect, skipped: the general health and living conditions of the poor are felt to pose far less of a threat to contemporary elites. Individual diseases now appear far more specific, targetable and scientifically manageable than when disease was linked to 'miasma' or unsanitary living environments, both of which entailed a complete overhaul of the living conditions of those most vulnerable in the interests of the protection of society in general. After a century of dramatic advances in medical scientific understanding of disease transmission, immunity and cure, it would be hardly surprising if developing country elites had enough faith in medical science to feel safe from the diseases of the poor.

(b) Elites may be misinformed about potential health threats. As noted above with respect to tuberculosis, there is anecdotal evidence that elites may be unaware of the potential links between poverty and communicable diseases.

(c) Feelings of insulation afforded by physical distance and access to high quality curative care. Although never completely isolated from the poor – elites may have contact through domestic servants, for example – a sense of physical distance seems to provide many with a psychological immunity from the diseases of poverty.[29]

(d) Contemporary elites worry more about the diseases associated with wealth. Unlike in nineteenth century cholera epidemics, contemporary elites are likely to worry more about degenerative and cardiovascular diseases than communicable diseases against which they believe, with some reason, that they are in a better position to prevent or cure. The health problems of twentieth century elites may have the effect of making the more indirect threats posed by epidemic disease look weak in comparison.

In any case, it is unlikely that contemporary elites would have sufficient faith in the capacity of their states and health bureaucracies to undertake the broad public health reforms – sanitation, housing, water supplies – that had so many wide-ranging benefits for the poor in nineteenth century Europe. And even if they did, it is not clear that they could be galvanised in support of these as their earlier European counterparts were. The vague threats from the living conditions of the poor are, at present, far too weak

[29] Nations and Monte's (1996) account of the 1993 cholera outbreak in Northeastern Brazil illustrates how contemporary elites attempt to insulate themselves against such threats to their health. Their strategies are remarkably reminiscent of elites in cholera epidemics elsewhere, see for example Evans (1987) on the last major European cholera epidemic in Hamburg in 1892.

in the elite imagination. One-shot scientific solutions in the form of immunisation campaigns, are both more likely to garner elite support, and to be seen as successful solutions to single diseases, than are the broad social, economic and political reforms that previously characterised responses to public health threats.[30] Immunisation campaigns have been generally more successfully implemented as public health interventions than sanitation, or to a lesser extent safe water supplies, in most developing countries (see Table B).

Table B Public health and health outcomes

	Water supply % population served (a)			Sanitation % population served (a)			Infant mortality rate per 1,000 (b)		Children immunized against measles %	
	1970	**1980**	**1990**	**1970**	**1980**	**1990**	**1978**	**1998**	**1987**	**1997**
World							87	57	53	82
Africa	23	26	34	24	24	30	121	91	41	57
The Americas	31	81	69	31	15	39	56	28	66	93
SE Asia	27	48	70	19	18	31	121	68	57	83
E Mediterranean	30	36	50	22	18	33	118	69	65	87
Western Pacific	31	41	57	30	55	58	53	38	40	85
Europe							35	21	62	94

Source: (a) WHO 1992; (b) WHO 1999

The dire state of sanitation in developing countries, in particular rural South Asia, is all the more remarkable when it is recognised that (a) statistics are not even collected for most OECD countries because of the assumption of universal access to sanitation as the most basic of amenities; (b) diarrhoeal and related diseases account directly for about 2.2 million deaths annually, mostly of children in developing countries; and that (c) access to sanitary facilities is a matter of dignity, privacy and safety for poor people, not just of hygiene and health (WHO/UNICEF 2000). Although improvements are evident over time, as few as one-third of rural Asians now have access to some form of improved sanitation facility. The absolutely low level of public investment in sanitation, and the nature of the access to such facilities (less than half of all Asians, Africans and Latin Americans had household water connections and a mere fifth had sewerage connections over the 1990s) suggests that even this low level of existing may be predominantly individual and private. One obstacle to the use of affordable, locally-appropriate technologies in these sectors seems to be the tendency to adopt standards of water supply and sanitation used in more developed areas (UN 1989). The dramatic achievements of immunisation in the developing

[30] The success of smallpox eradication compared to the singular failure of the malaria eradication campaign illustrates the difficulties of tackling health problems that require fundamental political institutional changes and social reforms, as opposed to those that can be neatly tackled with a one-off campaign from above. Weak states and poor health bureaucracies are far better suited to immunisation-type approaches to public health than to alternative, often more effective, preventive social reforms (Turshen 1989).

world may obscure the fact that public health policies with less political appeal and fewer visible indicators of success – mass provision of sanitary pit latrines for instance – also tend to have numerous health, economic and general wellbeing knock-on effects.

That negative motivations appear less likely to drive contemporary elite policy preferences is a somewhat mixed finding, with respect to arguing for the poor. Because the poor may be less threatening to elites, there are also fewer motivations for repressive action to protect elite interests, but there is equally less urgency about the need to tackle poverty, which can instead be seen as a longer-term project of national economic development. The (perceived or actual) weakness of many developing countries compared to nineteenth century European states may be one reason that pro-poor, large-scale public health infrastructural reforms are relatively neglected, whereas immunisation campaigns led by international actors to target individual diseases have achieved some success. More positively, policies that elites believe their states capable of implementing do appear to engage their support and interest. The effects of having skipped some of the stages of public health policy that now-developed countries went through may also be mixed. The shared benefits of medical scientific progress have led to dramatically improved health outcomes across the developing world, but they also appear to have encouraged faith in strategies of tackling diseases individually and scientifically, rather than through the provision of basic sanitary and water facilities with their wider health, social and economic benefits for the poor. No less importantly, the effective insulation of elites from the health problems of the poor has broader implications for elite-poor relations: such threats tended to encourage recognition of other interdependencies between the poor and the rest of society, with implications for other policies to tackle poverty. Many contemporary developing country elites appear to lack any sense of interdependence with the poor in their societies; policies to tackle poverty often appear to them to have no impact on their own interests or wellbeing. Again, more positively, contemporary elites are in a position to support positive pro-poor policies learned from the development experiences of successful countries that they wish to emulate.

Annex two: does inequality lead to greater concern to reduce poverty?

Will high levels of national income or wealth inequality make elites more or less willing to redistribute some income toward the poor? Economists have recently paid some attention to this question, do not agree on the answer, and have a theory to back both positive and negative conclusions. There is on the one side a set of 'median voter' models of the politics of the taxation process. The core proposition is that the more unequal the distribution of income (or wealth) in a country, the poorer would be the 'median' (electorally decisive) voter in relation to the average voter. All else considered, in situations of high income inequality, median voters would be relatively likely, it is argued, to vote for taxation policies that would redistribute income in their favour. The same basic logic might hypothetically be applied to non-democratic political systems ('popular pressure') and to other modes of income redistribution. However, the empirical evidence is weak:

> Empirical studies, however, offer no strong support for the predicted positive relation between pre-tax inequality and redistribution. For instance, Perotti (1996), in a survey of growth, income distribution and democracy, concludes that 'there is very little evidence of a negative association between equality and fiscal variables in democracies'.
>
> (Bjorvatn and Cappelan 2001: 2)

The contrary proposition – that inequality lessens the predisposition to redistribute toward the poor – is supported by proponents of 'residential segregation' theories (Bjorvatn and Cappelan 2001). Here the core proposition is that inequality leads to more residential segregation between income groups. The rich therefore interact very little with the poor, in school or elsewhere, and have little empathy with their condition. This argument may be viewed as a variant of the broader view that, the more that stakeholders in public policy issues have the opportunity to engage with one another and present their perspectives and concerns, the more likely it is that they will be willing to compromise and to pay attention to the needs of the disadavantaged.

Note that these theories are deductive. They are based not on actual observation of the behaviour they posit, but on claims that the patterns of public policy predicted by these deductive models is found in reality. In other words, even if the empirical evidence pointed conclusively one way, we would still not be confident that we had the right explanation. As it happens, the evidence is mixed. However, when dealing with national differences across developing countries, the weight of evidence seems to support the idea that high inequality leads to a resistance to redistribution:

- A broad regional comparison at global level suggests that there is more government commitment to do something for the poor in the regions where income is relatively equally distributed (Scandinavia, most of Western Europe, East Asia, South Asia) than where it is unequally distributed (most of Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, the US).

- We conducted an impressionistic exercise at the national level, categorising those developing countries that we felt we knew something about according to whether we believe they have or have not in recent decades had in place substantial anti-poverty programmes, directed at the poorer (rather than 'middle) sections of the population. There was a very strong correlation between high degrees of income inequality and the absence of significant anti-poverty programmes. We felt able to classify 38 countries, either as *positive* (i.e. having substantial anti-poverty programmes in place), or *negative*. Within this total of 38 countries, 16 had a low degree of inequality (a gini coefficient of income distribution of less than 0.4). Of these 16 cases, 12 (75 per cent) were classified as *positive*. Of the 19 'average inequality' countries, with gini coefficients in the range of 0.4 to 0.54, 9 (47 per cent) were *positive*. In the 7 high inequality countries, only 1 (14 per cent) was positive.
- There is persuasive, published evidence that the more unequal countries allocate relatively more public expenditure to tertiary than to primary education – to the evident benefit of their wealthier citizens (Addison and Rahman 2001).

It is reasonable to assume that, all else being equal, elites in countries with very high levels of inequality, like South Africa and Brazil, are unlikely to be very supportive of attempts to redistribute income (or assets) to the poor.

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