

# Economics, Politics, and the “Third World”



This online project presents videos and articles to build a larger context for readings from Paul Collier’s influential book *The Bottom Billion*. We will focus on six leading people in development economics—the so-called “big three” being Jeffrey Sachs, Paul Collier, and William Easterly. Collier is said by many to fall in between the “saintly” Sachs and the pessimistic Easterly. To these three I would add Hernando DeSoto, Esther Duflo, and Dani Rodrik, and—if we had time—about a half-dozen others. But before these the first section below highlights just two of the many problems in the “developing” or “Third” world.



## I. Affluence and Inequality Traps

- A) Ricardo Lagos on avoiding [Inequality after Poverty](#).
- B) A *NOW* episode, “India Rising,” on the problems of [Rising Middleclass Affluence](#).

## II. The “Big Three”

- A) A mashup (!) contrasting [Sachs-Collier-Easterly](#).
- B) And—in an attempt to continue lightening up a heavy, often gloomy topic—a satire on the [Sachs-Easterly debate](#), complete with a great flow chart.
- C) A good review article summarizing the main points of the [Major Books](#) of the Big Three.
- D) A debate: [Bill Easterly vs. Owen Barder](#). It’s over an hour long, but you need only watch from about the 7:45 to 53:00 minute mark—or after the long introductions and just before the audience questions. There’s a “who-won” poll on the resolution, roughly paraphrased: “Experts and technocrats ignore the people they’re trying to help, focusing on narrow solutions rather than major issues like corrupt governance. They therefore make matters worse.” This is Easterly’s position. Spoiler alert: he loses, 43% to 57% for the much more optimistic Barder.

## III. The Next “Big Three”

- A) A TED talk by Esther [Duflo](#).
- B) A short documentary on [DeSoto](#) called “Capitalism at the Crossroads.”
- C) A short interview with [Rodrik](#). Rodrik’s ideas on globalization’s “tradeoffs” bring us back to some of the issues in Section I above. He is also an apologist of sorts for the necessity of the “nation-state,” an entity that Arjun Appadurai and many others have argued is on—or *should* be on—a definite decline. (If interested, you can hear a long lecture on this topic by Rodrik [Here](#).) As an *indirect* rejoinder to Rodrik, and to put a slightly different spin on the economic and political focus of all the material above, this online learning project ends with...

## IV. Anthony Appiah on the “Cosmopolitan”

A philosopher, novelist, and cultural theorist focusing on political and moral theory, language and mind, and African intellectual history—Kwame Anthony Appiah holds a dual appointment in New York University’s philosophy department and its School of Law. Here Appiah delivers a [Chicago Humanities Festival lecture](#), adding nuance to his concern for the *long-term* political and economic development of nations.



**WRITING:** In an extended response paper (400 instead of just 250 words), first respond to anything in Collier’s work. Next reflect on Collier by making any one or two major connections to any of the reading or watching above. Do you think they agree with Collier, or, if you focus on areas of disagreement, how do they “correct” or modify Collier *or* your view of Collier?