

COMEST

The Ethical Implications of Climate Change

GE, X Designation

Discuss the notion of common but differentiated responsibilities for mitigating climate change in light of differing contributions and capacities

What do you think China and India should do to combat climate change in comparison to the US and Europe?

http://wiki.umt.edu/odccss/index.php/India_and_Climate_Change

Article 3, 1992 U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change

“The Parties should protect the climate system for the benefit of present and future generations of humankind, on the basis of equity and in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. Accordingly, the developed country Parties should take the lead in combating climate change and the adverse effect thereof.”

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Questions

What do we know?

What is to be done?

Who is responsible for doing what?

What is the criterion for proper (good, ethical) action?

What is the state of knowledge on climate change?

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change



Climate Change Impacts: Arctic



Climate Change Impacts: Bangladesh



Shafiqul Islam/WPN

Climate Change Impact: Virginia



Science and Ethics

Science → Ethics → Policies & Laws

What do “we” know about this problematic situations?

What *should* “we” do, if anything, about this problematic situations? What ethical principles should guide “our” actions?

What policies and laws should “we” institute to resolve the problematic situation?

The Basis, Nature and Scope of Ethics

“Ethical values form the basis of decision-making and action in accordance with the an ideal accepted in a given moral system. They express notions of good and evil, right and wrong, just and unjust, what deserves respect or not, etc.”

Nature and Scope of Ethics

Ethical values are *universalizable* and *prescriptive*

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 3. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4. No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Ethical Domain: Human Agency

Fact/Value or *Is/Ought* Distinction

Climate Change: Amoral or moral?

Does it fall within the realm of human agency
or realm of nature?

Climate Change and Human Agency

Is climate change human-caused and can humans do something about it?

Even if climate change isn't human caused we still must adapt to it, and adaptation involves human agency.

Climate change is an ethical issue.

Why does climate change involve human agency?

- Analytic and predictive knowledge
- Causal link between human action and climate change
- Human capacity to affect climate change
- The scope and nature of ethical concerns
- Growing realization of the connection between human well being and biodiversity
- Ability to predict the consequences of our actions

Foreknowledge

- Duty to gain knowledge about the effects of climate change, particularly on vulnerable populations
- Duty to share knowledge
- Duty to act appropriately and timely on knowledge

Moral Philosophy, Collective Action Problems, Climate Change and Polarization

Cultural world-views explain more than science literacy about a person's position on climate change.

Individualistic worldview: climate change is a low risk

Egalitarian, Communitarian worldview: climate change is a risk

Kahan, et al., The polarizing impacts of science literacy and numeracy on perceived climate change risk, *Nature Climate Change* (2012)

Approaches to moral philosophy and worldviews

Individualistic world-view

Libertarianism

Free-Market Individualism

Egalitarian, Communitarian worldview

Liberalism

Utilitarianism

Virtue Ethics

What's the right thing to do?



- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsoE6gkrO_Q

Climate Change involves Ethical Dilemmas

Present generation versus Future Generations

Developed Countries versus Developing Countries

National Interests versus Global Interests

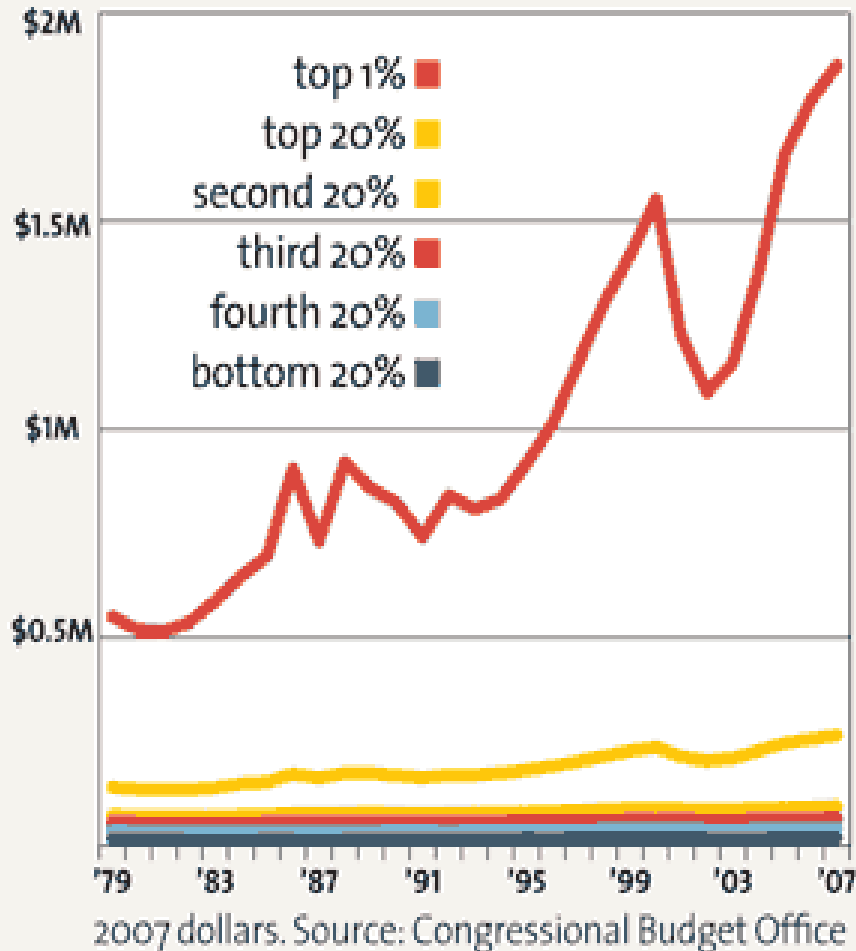
Humans versus Non-humans Species



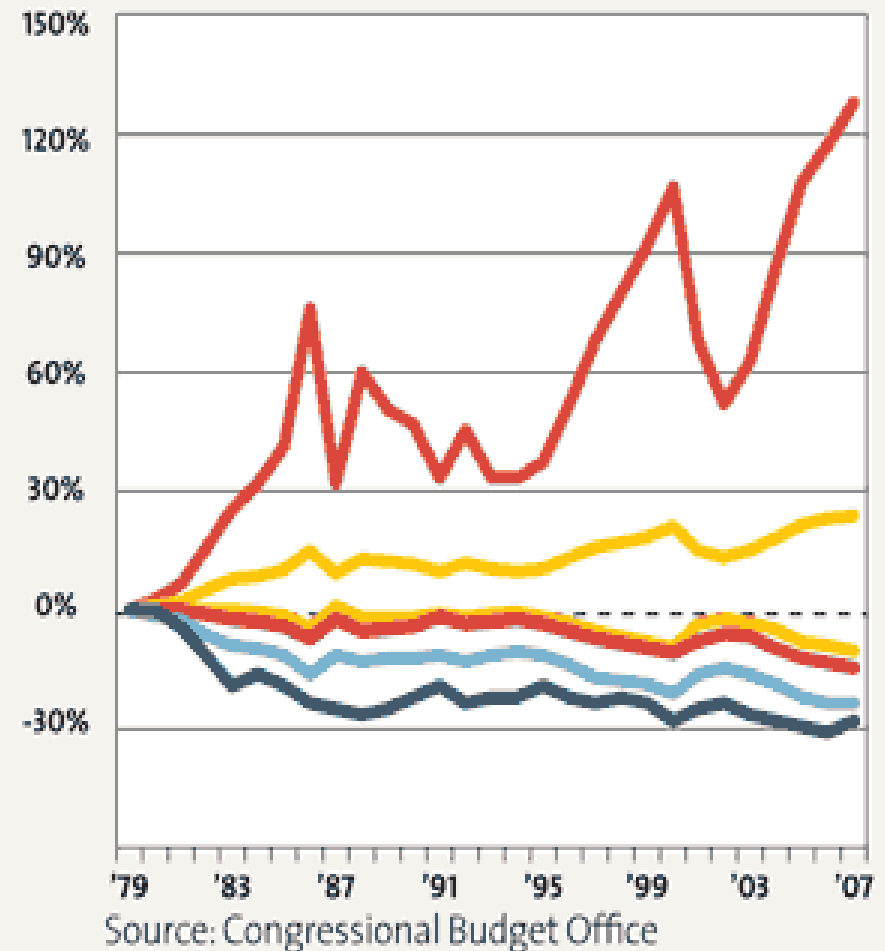
The **99%**
Will Not Be
SILENT!

Income Disparity

AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME
before taxes



CHANGE IN SHARE OF INCOME
vs. 1979, after taxes



Is income disparity just?

Utilitarian: Does it maximize happiness (utility) for the greatest number?

Libertarian: Did it arise without force or fraud?

Free Market (Libertarian-Utilitarian): Are the markets free?

Liberal (Rawlsian): Does it benefit the least well off in society?

Virtue Theorist: Does it promote the good or just society?

The Afghan Goat Herders: Ethics, Time and Uncertainty



Time, Risk & Uncertainty



<http://www.dbcca.com/dbcca/EN/?jsessionid=6AFFDC6A10605EC4742161D9C8410FEB.internet1>

Risk Management and Climate Change Policy

“The really vital issue does not concern the presence of scientific uncertainty, but rather how we decide what to do under such circumstances (Gardiner).”

<http://test-globalchange.mit.edu/resources/gamble/index.html>

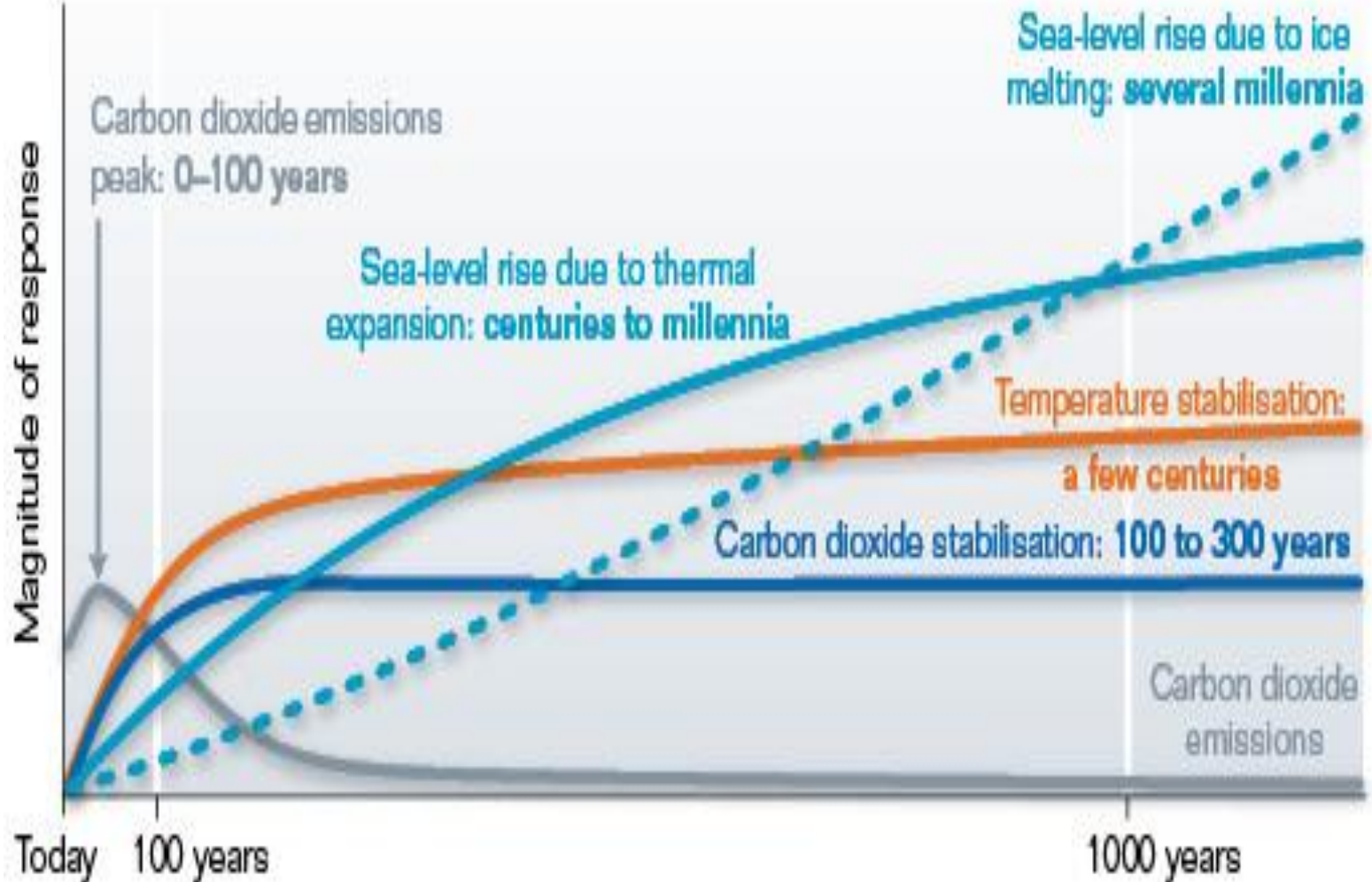
Unstoppable



UNSTOPPABLE

1,000,000 TONS. 100,000 LIVES. 100 MINUTES
IN THEATRES NOVEMBER 12

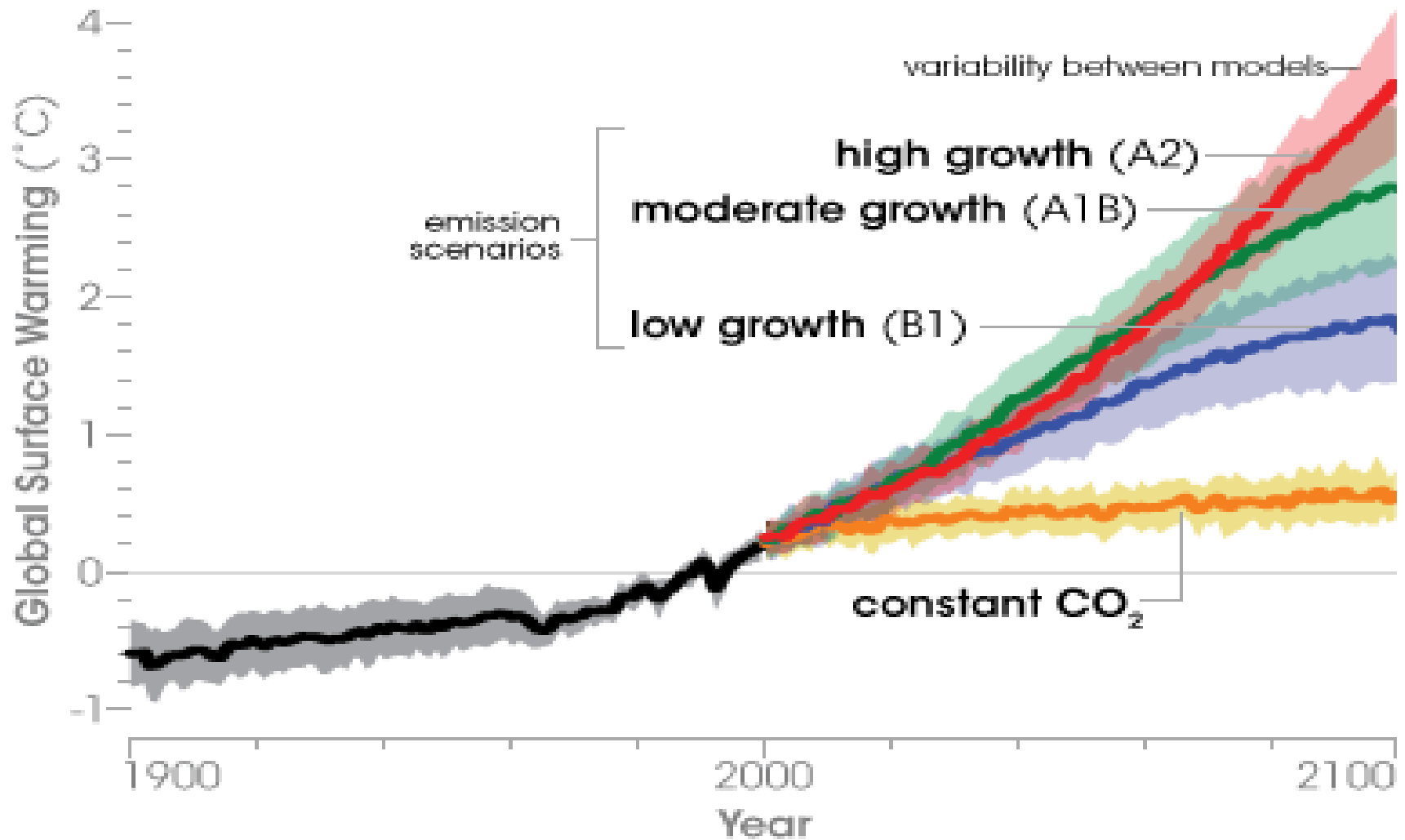
Inertia in the Climate System



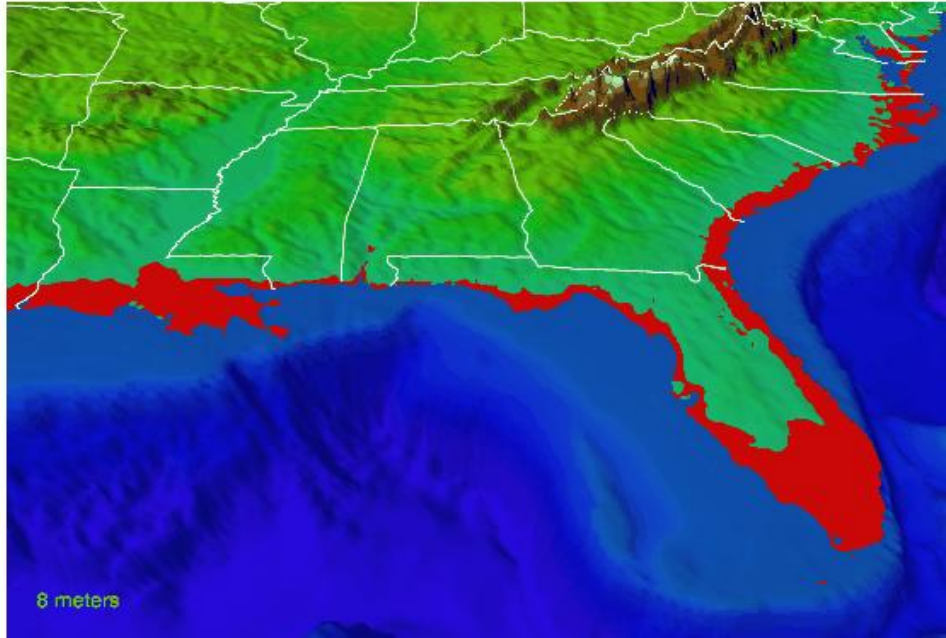
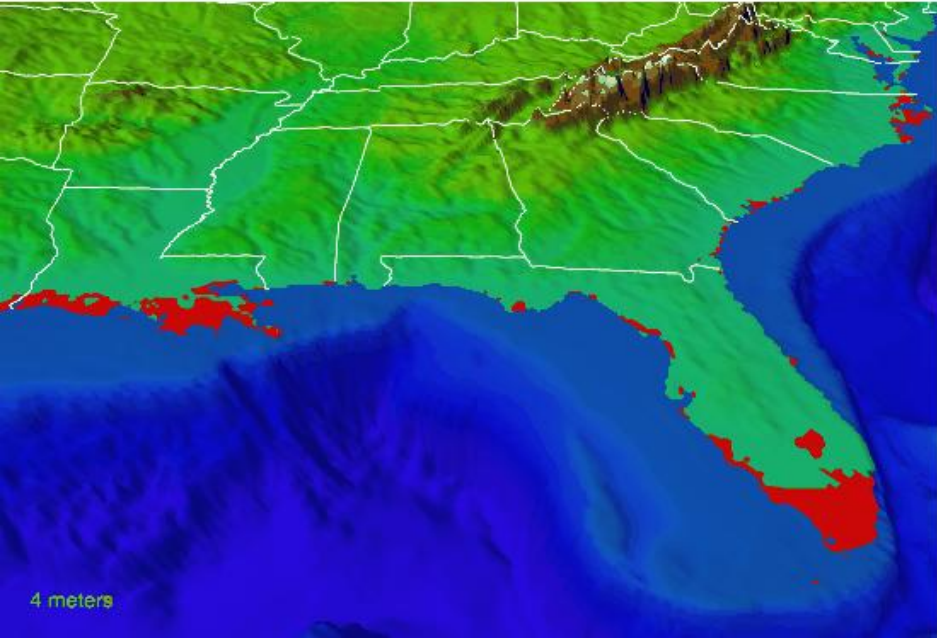
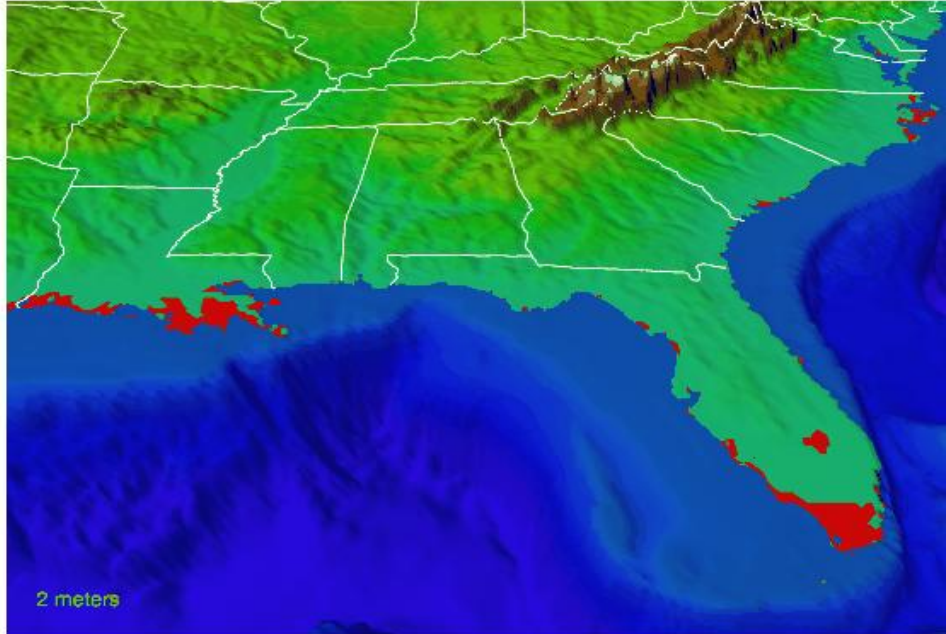
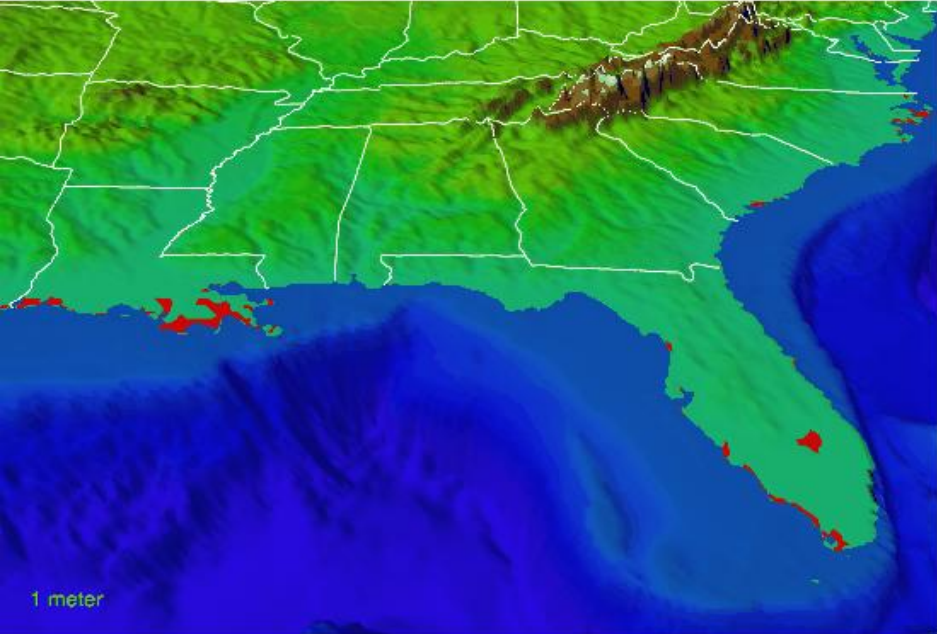
Unstoppable



Climate Change Scenarios



Sea Level Rise



“Stoppable”



Uncertainties in scientific knowledge

- Incomplete factual data
- Limitations in science (predictive capacity of models, e.g., tipping points)
- The boundaries of conceptual schemes (assumptions)
- Epistemological constraints (to error is human)

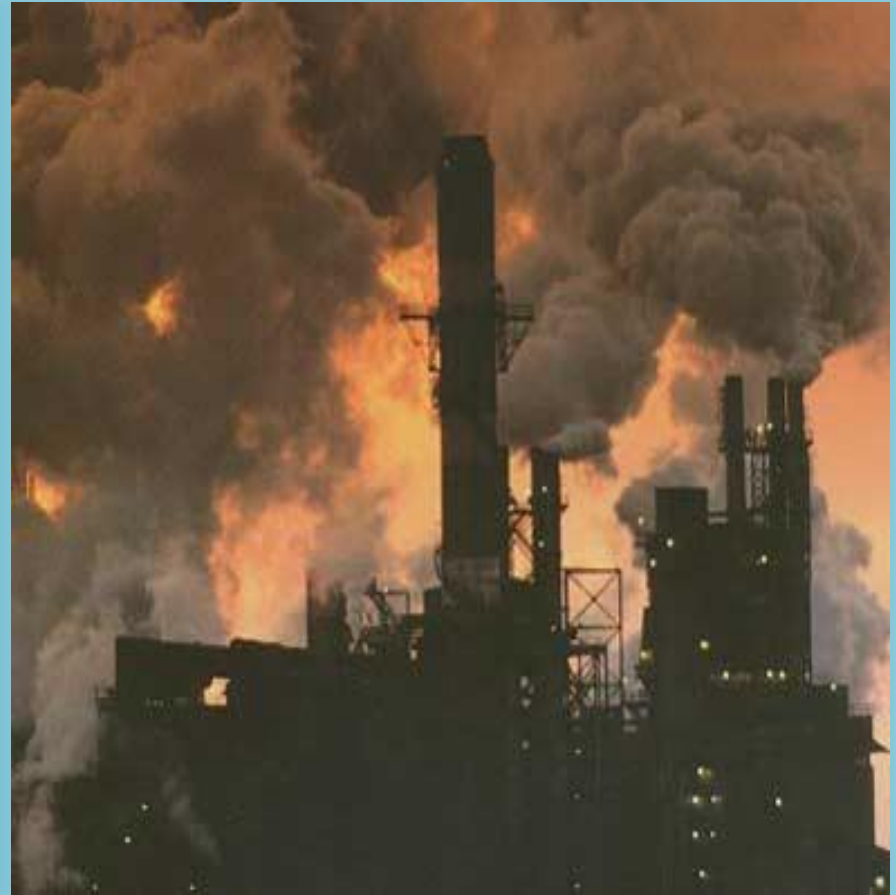
“Safe” Concentration Targets: 350? 450? 550?

350 is the most important number on the planet.

This number is the safe line for our global climate and a start line for a global movement.

Join 350.org to take action in your community, engage our world leaders, and build an international movement to solve the climate crisis.

Climate Change is a Collective Action Problem (Tragedy of the Commons)



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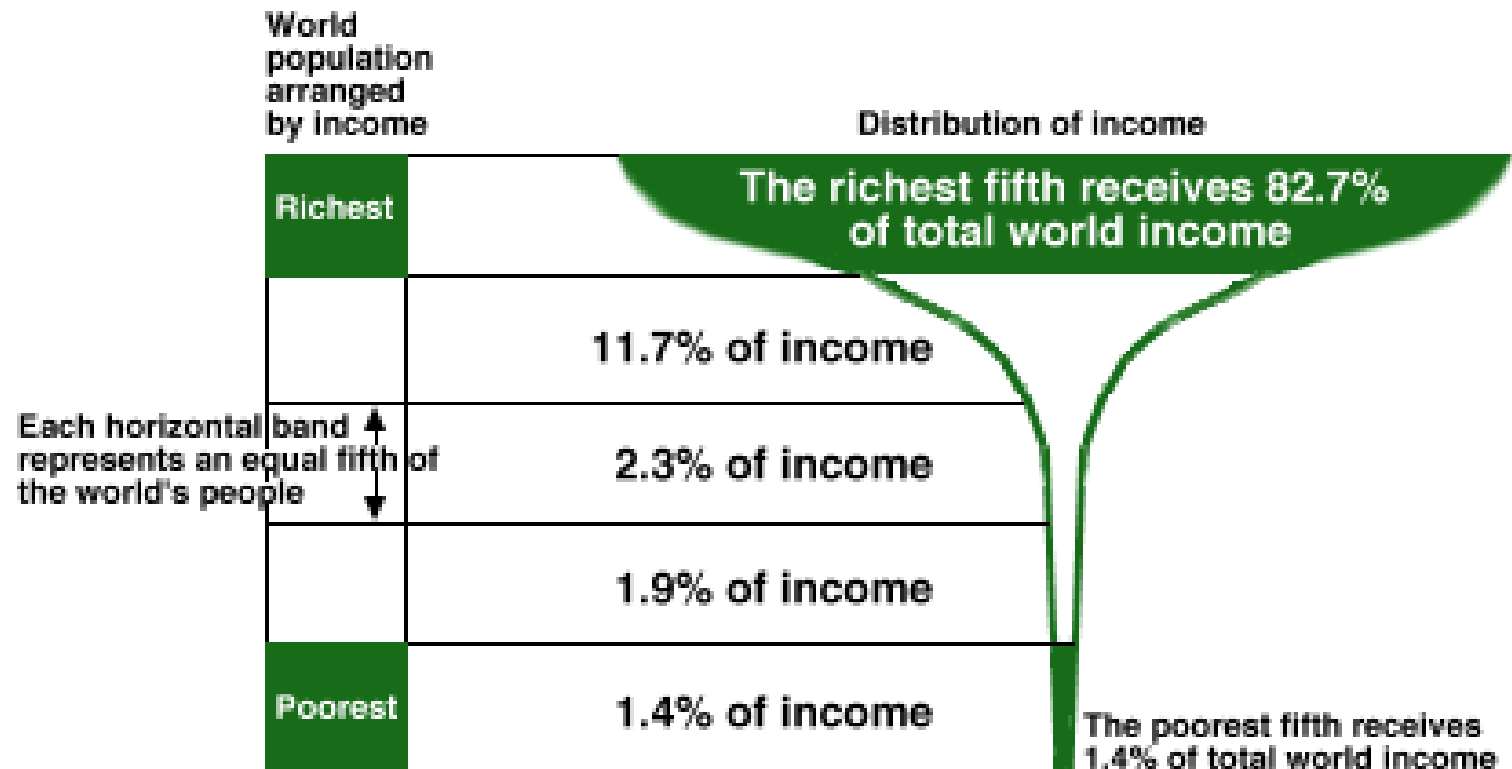
Monkey Cooperation and Fairness



- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aAFQ5kUHPkY>

Global Income Inequalities

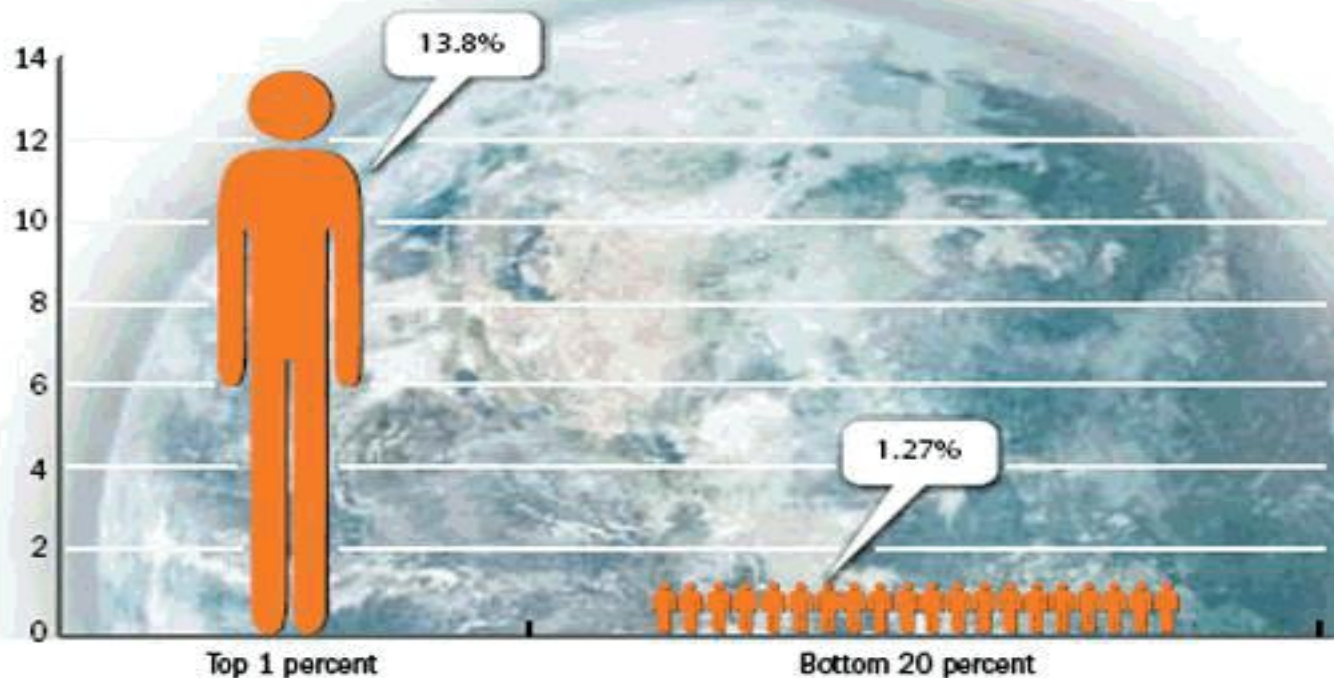
Figure 3: Global Income Distribution



Source: UNDP, *Human Development Report 1992* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

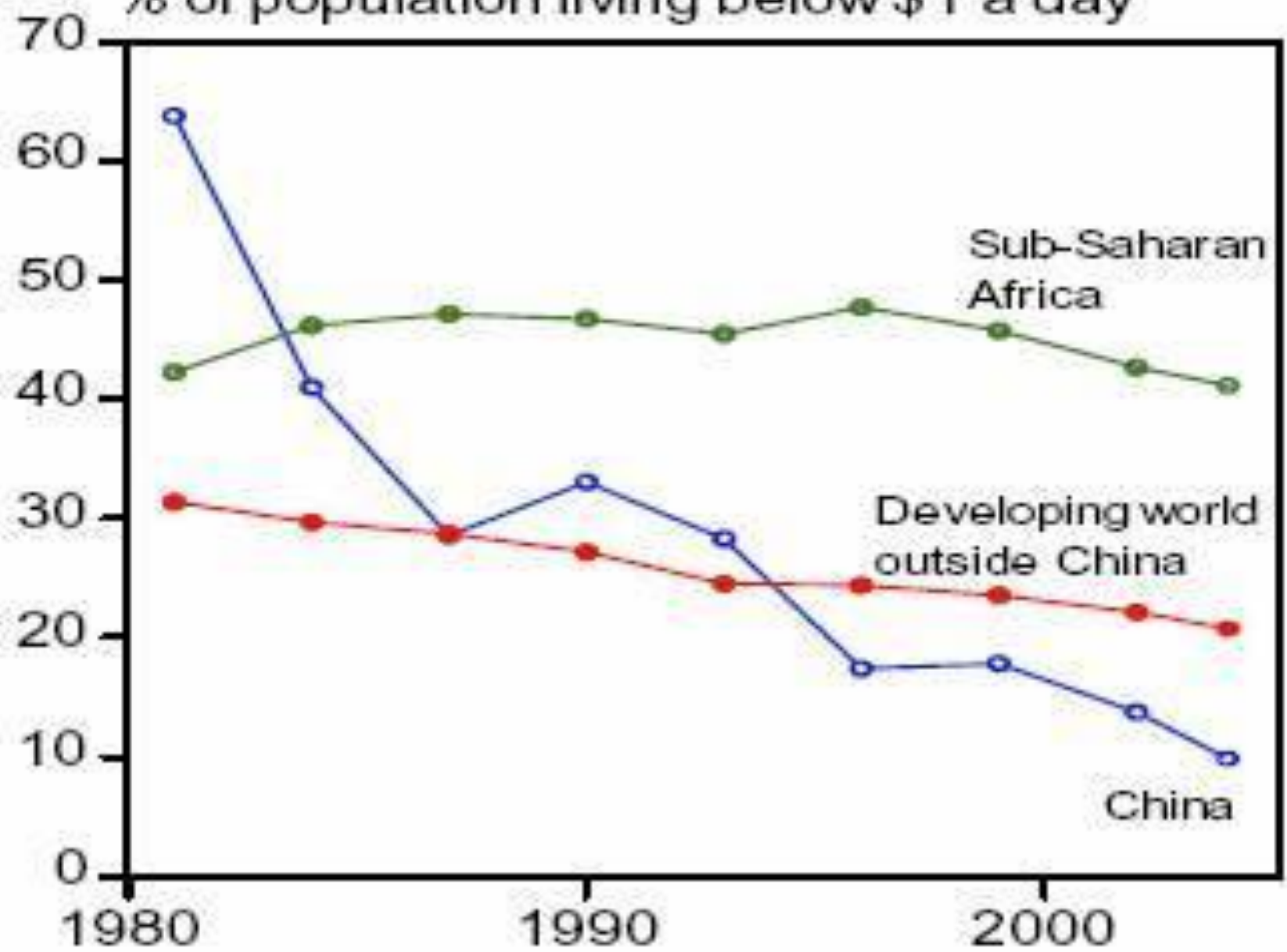
What a difference!

The richest 1 percent of people in the world receive nearly 14 percent of global income while the poorest 20 percent receive just over 1 percent.
(percent of global income)

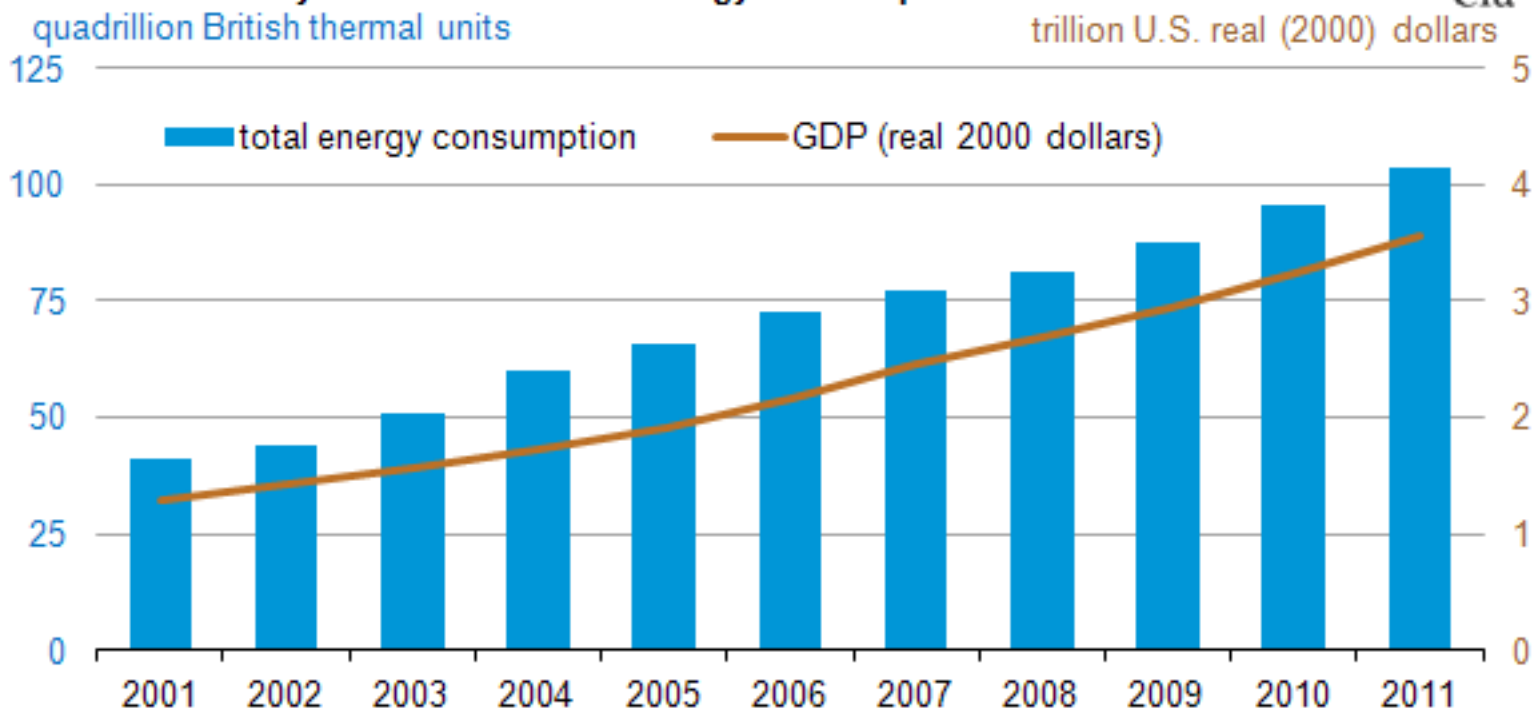


Sources: World Income Distribution database; and author's calculations.
Note: Data are for 2005.

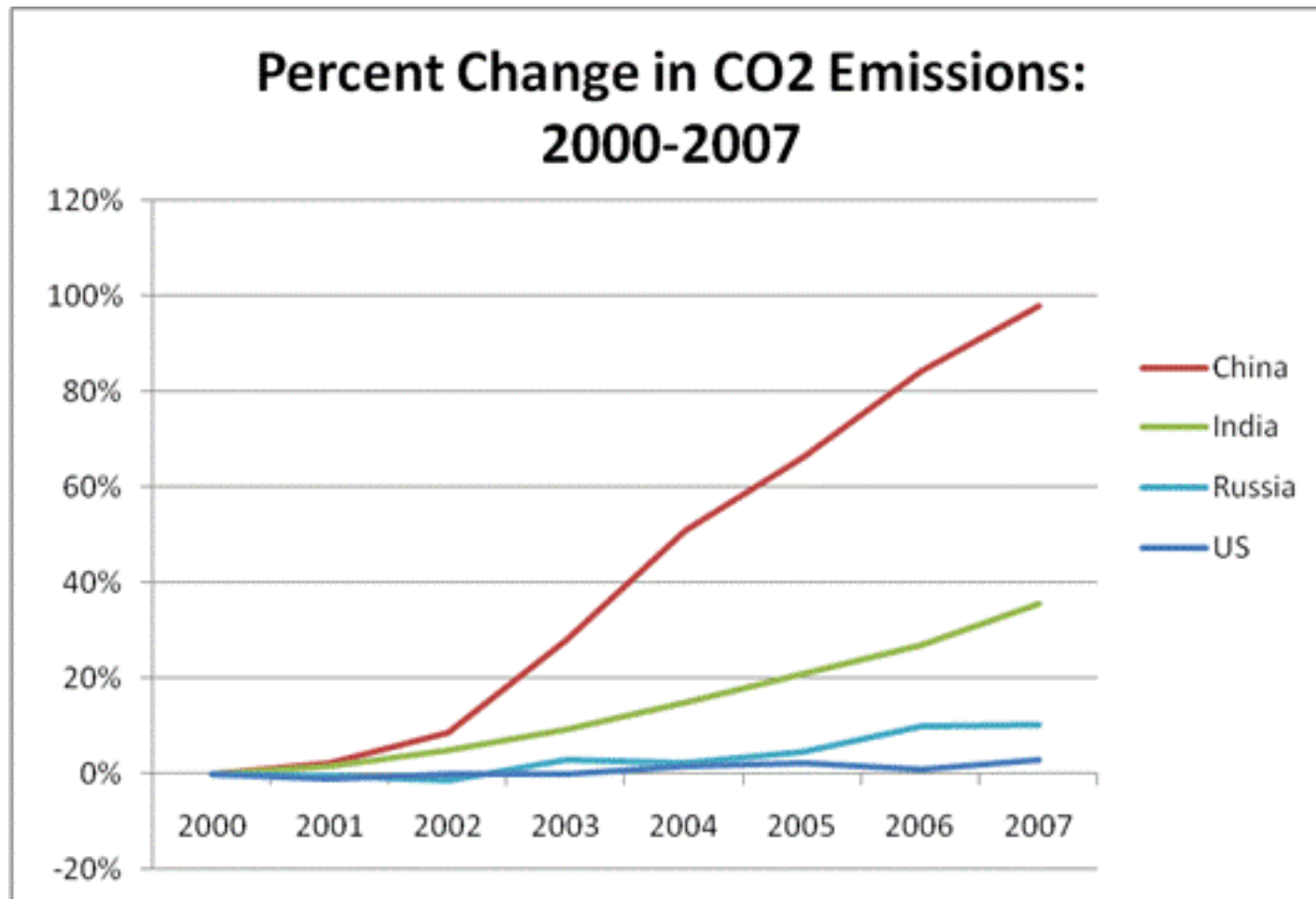
% of population living below \$1 a day



China's economy drives increase in energy consumption

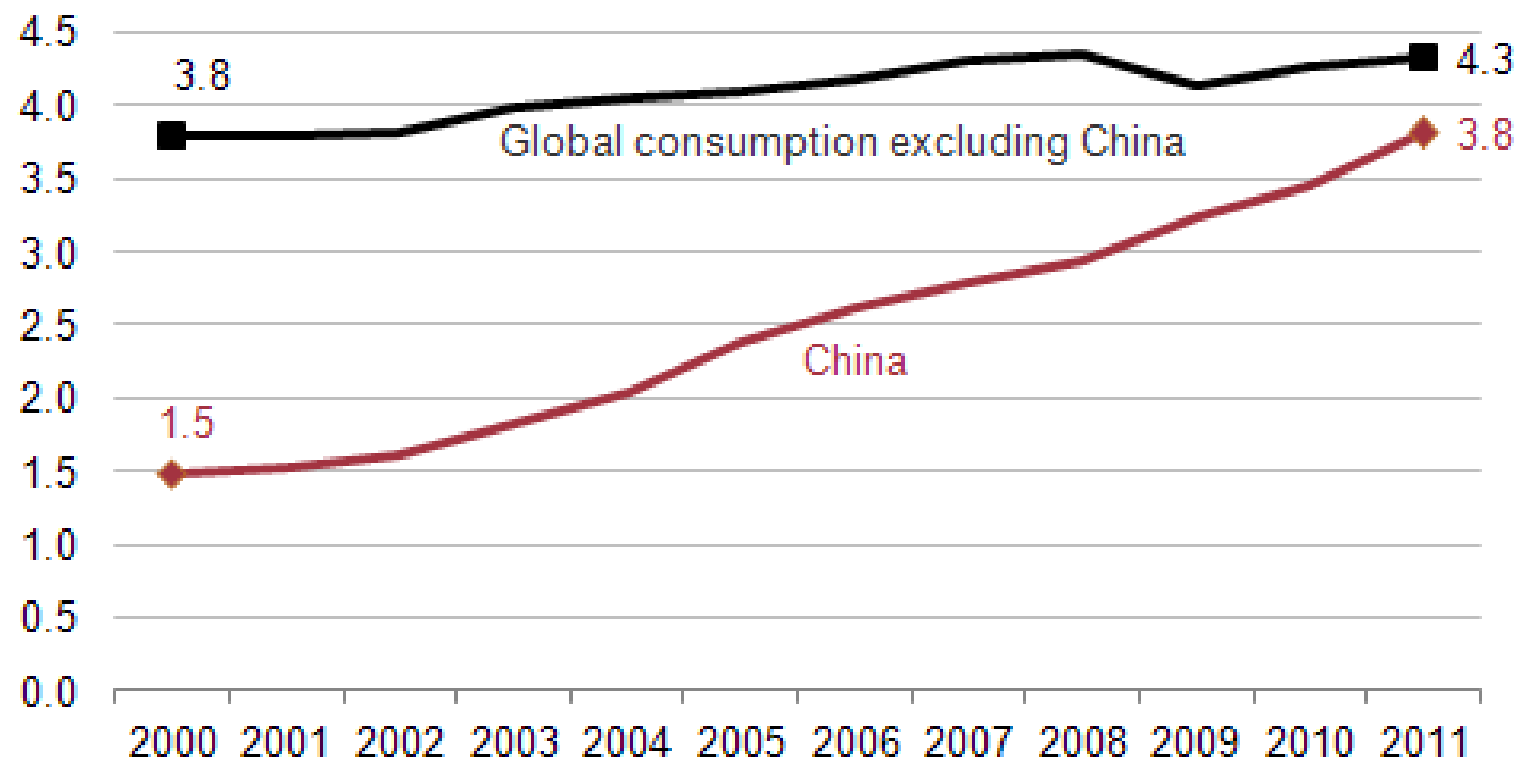


Economic Growth Carbon Emissions



Coal consumption: China rivals the world

billion tons

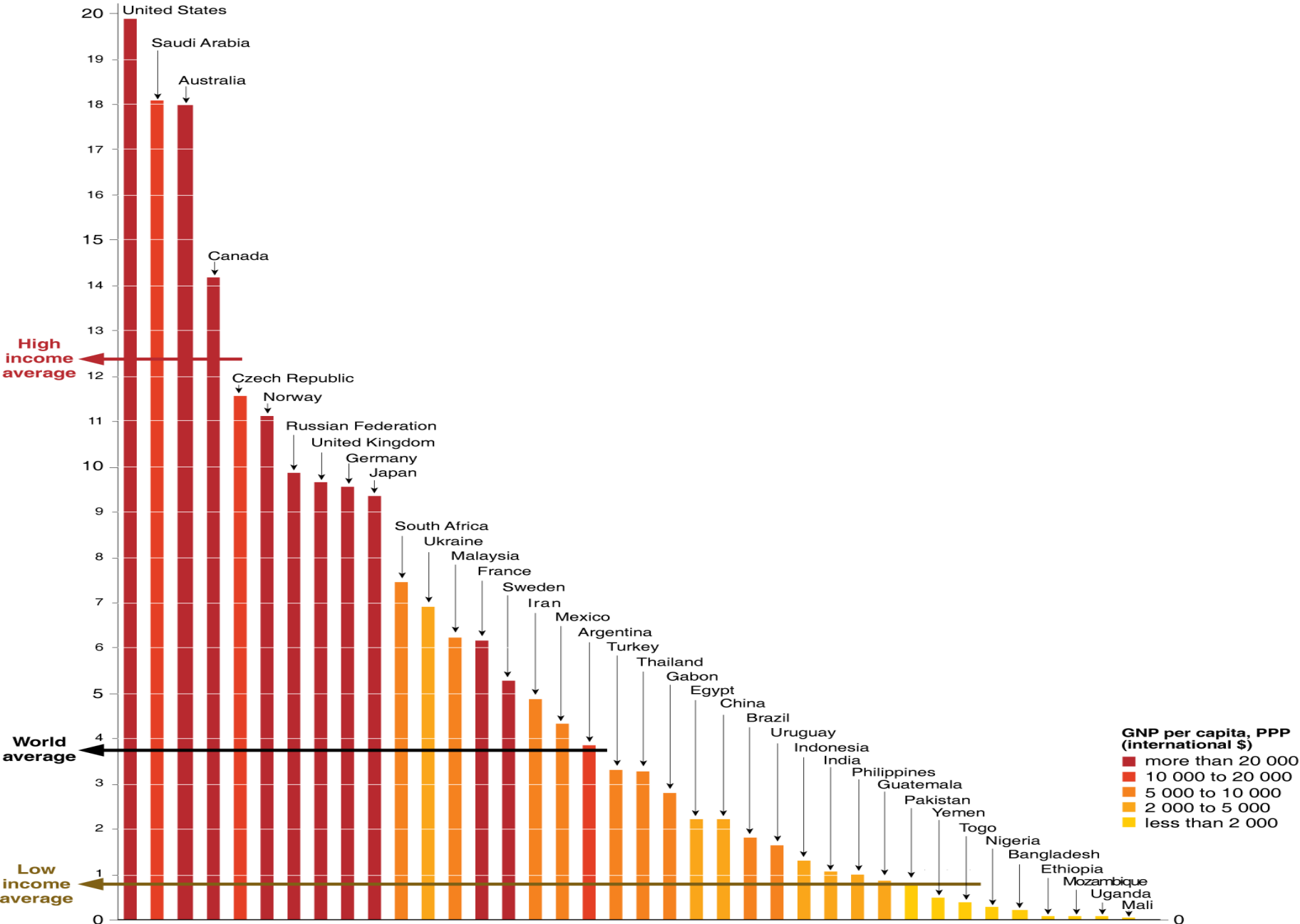


Capitalist Led Growth



CO₂ Emissions in 2002

Tonnes per capita



Source : World Bank, online database, 2004.

Differential Responsibilities

- Common but differentiated responsibilities
 - Ought implies can
- Annex I versus Annex II countries

