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THE POWER OF PLACE

GEOGRAPHY, DESTINY, AND GLOBALIZATION'S ROUGH LANDSCAPE

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GLOBALS, LOCALS, AND MOBALS

Earth may be a planet of shrinking functional distances, but it remains a world of staggering situational differences. From the uneven distribution of natural resources to the unequal availability of opportunity, place remains a powerful arbitrator. Many hundreds of millions of farmers in river basins of Asia and Africa live their lives much as their distant ancestors did, still remote from the forces of globalization, children as well as adults still at high personal risk and great material disadvantage. Tens of millions of habitants of isolated mountain valleys from the Andes to the Balkans and from the Caucasus to Kashmir are as bound to their isolated abodes as their forebears were. Of the seven billion current passengers on Cruiseship Earth, the overwhelming majority (the myth of mass migration notwithstanding) will die very near the cabin in which they were born.

In their lifetimes, this vast majority will have worn the garb, spoken the language, professed the faith, shared the health conditions, absorbed the education, acquired the attitudes, and inherited the legacy that constitutes the power of place: the accumulated geography whose formative imprint still dominates the planet. The regional impress of poverty continues to trap countless millions who are and will be born into it and who, globalization notwithstanding, cannot escape it. The "wealth gap" between the fortunate and the less fortunate, still largely a matter of chance and destiny, evinces a widening range resulting from the perpetuation of privilege and power in the so-called global "core" and its international tentacles. Those disparities, represented at all levels of scale, will entail increasing risk in a world of rising anger and weapons of growing destructive efficiency.

At the same time, the notion that the world, if not "flat," is flattening under the impress of globalization is gaining traction. As noted in the preface, the idea that diversities of place continue to play a key role in shaping humanity's variegated mosaic tends to be dismissed

by globalizers who see an increasingly homogenized and borderless world. "Flatness" is becoming an assumption, not merely a prospect, as implied by the titles of numerous books and articles of recent vintage (Fung et al., 2008).

And indeed, certain global playing fields are leveling, but there is a danger in assuming that the benefits are within everyone's reach. All of us are blessed as well as burdened by the baggage of place—our place of birth, our mother tongue, of belief systems and conditions of health, of environmental norms and political circumstances. The same place presents different opportunities and challenges to males as compared to females. In our current rush to embrace the rewards of global "flattening," it is worth reminding ourselves that point of entry continues to matter when it comes to opportunities in reach.

This book, therefore, focuses on the rugged terrain of the world's environmental, cultural, social, economic, and political geographies. It proposes that the confines of place continue to impose severe limits on human thought and action, engendering (and, in some cases, still intensifying) inequalities affecting individuals and families at one end of a continuum that has communities and regions at its other end, disparities so evident that no flat-world or melting-pot postulations can wish them away. These differences reflect a still-pervasive power of place. They may be diminishing in some ways in certain areas, for example, in the nodes and channels of globalization that have cast a cloak of conformity over high-rise skylines, multilane highways, office "parks," and shopping malls from Minneapolis to Mumbai, but elsewhere such disparities persist and are even worsening. In China, the Pacific Rim triumph of free-market capitalism—of which Shanghai is a symbol—stands in sharp contrast to the tragedy of the rural interior, where poverty and entrapment condemn hundreds of millions to a penurious existence from which escape is not easy. In India, the much-publicized employment opportunities in the burgeoning high-tech industries of Bengaluru (Bangalore), Gurgaon (outside Delhi), and even Kolkata (Calcutta), may attract hundreds of thousands of qualified workers but remain essentially irrelevant to tens of millions of landless peasants in the remote reaches of the lower Ganges Basin. In Africa, thousands of desperate emigrants climb into unseaworthy boats every year, seeking to reach the European mainland; this has been going on for decades, with immeasurable cost in lives and misery. To these and countless others testing the obstacles, notions of a flat world remain essentially irrelevant. Yes, the world is flattening—for the fortunate minority in control of, in the path of, or with access to the mainstreams of modernization. But a minority it is, and population projections indicate that humanity's coming expansion, before stabilization sets in toward the end of the century, will magnify the numbers in the world's poorest regions. This means that *locals* (those who are poorest, least mobile, and most susceptible to the impress of place) will increasingly outnumber the fortunate *globals* to whom the world appears comparatively limitless.

If this argument seems to counter economic models projecting an ever richer China and India and a burgeoning of the middle class virtually everywhere, it is important to consider demographic projections as well. In our divided world, the populations of the rich countries are growing at a collective 0.25 percent annually, but poor countries at 1.46 percent (Cohen, 2003). It is a matter of common knowledge, and growing concern, that populations in the richest regions of the world, for example Japan and Germany, are declining. But the four dozen most poverty-stricken countries on the planet, representing some 700 million inhabitants, are growing at an explosive 2.4 percent. And *within* major nations whose overall statistics suggest a sustained decline of the rate of natural increase, certain areas—usually the poorer ones—continue to mushroom even as others, better off economically, are stabilizing. In India, for example, the 2001 census reported that the State of Uttar Pradesh, one of the country's poorest and most populous, was growing at the fulminant rate of 2.55 percent (Bihar and Jharkhand were growing faster still) even as the growth rate in Kerala and Tamil Nadu hovered around 1.0 percent. Projections suggesting that the Earth's human population will continue to grow at a declining rate of increase, to stabilize at around 10 billion by the end of this century, must be tempered by the prospect that the bulk of this growth will occur in countries and provinces that currently rank among the poorest of the poor. The overwhelming majority of the three billion people who will be joining Cruiseship Earth will embark as locals, and but a tiny minority as globals.

MOBALS AND MOTIVES

In the best-case scenario, a comparatively fast-growing number of these locals will be enabled to join the latticework of globalization, and

to do so by choice rather than out of desperation. The argument rages today whether textile-industry sweatshops in low-wage countries should be seen as providing women the opportunity to escape their stultifying social environs or as exploitive corporate monstrosities, but either way they constitute the corridor out of the inside cabin to the privileged view from the deck. These (and other) harsh employments engender social and fiscal mobilities that should ultimately enhance choice, but studies are showing that they also widen wealth gaps and expose employees to cultural dislocation. All the same, globalization and mobility are synonymous, and even the toughest assembly lines make *mobals* out of locals. The same hope that sends a Bangladeshi villager to a textile factory propels a Chinese farmer toward the Pacific Rim and a Brazilian peasant toward São Paulo.

Mobals are the risk-takers, migrants willing to leave the familiar, to take a chance on new and different surroundings, their actions ranging from legal migration to undocumented border crossing, their motivations from employment to asylum. They move as highly trained professionals and as unskilled workers, as doctors and domestic servants, as bankers and bricklayers. Mobals are transnational migrants; that is, they cross international borders—they are agents of change. Many millions of movers relocate within their homelands, never to leave their familiar domicile. Mobals take the greater chance, often tempting fate. Some pay with their lives.

The desperate migrants who leave their homes in time of war and cross international boundaries to seek refuge are not, by this definition, mobals. The overwhelming majority of the millions of Pushtuns who escaped war-torn Afghanistan during the Soviet intervention and subsequent Taliban regime found sanctuary in cross-border Pakistan and Iran, where they awaited the opportunity to return, an opportunity most took when the Taliban regime had been ousted. The two million Iraqi refugees who fled into neighboring Syria and Jordan during the chaos following the American-led military invasion hope to return home as well. Transnational refugees are driven out by conflict. Transnational mobals are drawn by perceptions of opportunity and realities of need.

The Earth is in a race against time. Mobals challenge the power of place, carrying with them the assets and liabilities of locality and competing in new and unfamiliar environs for livelihood and security. Their world is rapidly urbanizing; gone will be the days when

local meant rural and global meant urban. The great majority of the still-to-be-born will arrive in poor-country conurbations numbering 50 million or more, vast urban regions signaling a fundamental transformation of human society. They will be the migrants, the great internationalizers of the twenty-first century. A sufficient number of them must see their hopes translated into reality, their local values accommodated, their efforts rewarded, to yield individual commitment to the order and stability that are the aims of the globals who will continue to exercise control. In a world suffused with weapons of all kinds, there is no other option.

A NATION ASUNDER

The future of our planet, thus, will depend on the ways relationships between globals and locals evolve. Globals, whether in government, industry, business, or other decision-making capacities, flatten playing fields for each other as they traverse the world from Davos to Doha. Conferences like the G-8 legitimize or countenance actions that may be inimical to locals, whose voices are not sufficiently strong to be heard. It is the globals who build security and migration barriers, not the locals. It is the globals who mobilize armies to intervene in other states, not the locals. It is the globals who move factories from low-wage to even lower-wage environs, wreaking havoc among workers. It is the globals who control the fates of locals as well as mobals, often ruthlessly.

This, of course, is nothing new. What has changed is the scale. When states were less interconnected than they are today, and colonial powers as well as ruling minorities were able to act with far less international scrutiny, the global-mobal-local model could function with considerable autonomy. While living in South Africa during the 1950s, I witnessed the imposition of the system for which the country was to become infamous, *apartheid*, the formalization of a set of practices that had long prevailed in the country but had never been codified as national policy. When my family arrived there (from the recently liberated Netherlands) toward the end of 1948, it soon became clear to me that the de facto rules of racial segregation applied more stringently in certain parts of the country than in others. While there was discrimination everywhere, gray areas could be recognized

in what was then the Cape Province, notably in Cape Town, and also in Natal, especially in its major city, Durban. Although discriminatory rules prevailed as a matter of course, there was clearly a variable geography of racial segregation. Things were tougher in the landlocked provinces of the interior than they were in the cities on the coast. Rules were stricter in small rural towns than in larger urban areas, and more often broken in the latter (Nelson Mandela had a modest office in an otherwise all-white law firm in Johannesburg). In suburbs and towns where Afrikaners were in the majority, often marked by names signifying their cultural heritage, such as Krugersdorp and Louis Trichardt, apartheid was already in full force long before it became government policy. This geographic modulation, arising from a combination of factors, seemed to function as a safety valve in a slowly integrating society (Mandela, 1994).

In the still-colonial era of the 1940s, South Africa in some ways was a microcosm of the world. A white minority had established the political, economic, and social frameworks that constituted the state. Black workers toiled in gold and diamond mines, on farms, and on public projects; whites had appropriated the means of production as well as most of the good farmland. The architects of apartheid and their collaborators, who included not just Afrikaners but many English-speaking South Africans as well, were the country's globals, guiding the economy from paneled boardrooms, driving along good highways linking all-white city centers and upscale suburbs, and controlling internal African migration in accordance with labor requirements.

South Africa's locals were the African peoples who found themselves circumscribed by the political boundaries the Europeans laid out. Several of them were veritable nations more numerous than their white rulers: the Zulu of Natal, the Xhosa (Mandela's people) of the eastern Cape, the Sotho of the highlands, the Tswana of the interior. All of them had historic homelands; all had distinctive cultures and traditions. The mines and farms and cities had drawn hundreds of thousands from their ancestral homelands into the new economy, but the majority remained where they were born. These were the most local of locals, isolated in their rural abodes and remote from the modern South Africa being forged far over the horizon.

Soon after the Afrikaner-dominated government imposed its apartheid rules on South Africa, this indigenous cultural geography became the foundation for an extension of the system. Under

a grand design called *separate development,* the African homelands were cartographically defined and politically designated as national entities actually referred to as "republics." Also called *Bantustans,* they were given the trappings of statehood, complete with enhanced capitals, assembly buildings, schools, and local industries; but when all was said and done, they covered less than 15 percent of South Africa's territory. They were, in effect, domestic colonies, never capable of self-sufficiency. Of necessity, they would provide much of the labor South Africa could require. But here is how they facilitated the dominance by the globals over the locals: every black South African was forced to register as a "citizen" of his or her ancestral "republic." This meant that every African who happened to be living and working somewhere in the more than 80 percent of the country designated for whites was henceforth a foreigner in his own land, a temporary migrant worker destined sooner or later to have to "return"—even if born in, say, Johannesburg—to one of the remote "republics." By extension, no black African could expect to vote in "white" South Africa; a Zulu voter would register in the Zulu "republic," not anywhere else.

But all this was still in the future when, shortly after my arrival in Johannesburg, I had an opportunity to see the South Africa that was about to disappear. My father, a violinist, was scheduled to perform in a concert with the Durban Symphony Orchestra, and to travel from the rather barren plateau environs of mile-high Johannesburg to the palm-lined streets of this port city with its graceful waterfront esplanade was to trade one world for another. Multicultural Durban was roughly one-third Asian (mostly from India), one-third African (mostly Zulu), and one-third white. Among the whites, people with British ancestries far outnumbered Afrikaners. I stood in the back of the balcony of Durban City Hall waiting for an open seat when I noticed something I would not see again: several dozen Asian and African listeners sat in the back rows, some with tickets in hand, proving that the whites-only rule, clearly posted downstairs, was being violated by (white) box-office personnel, ushers, and others. In the days that followed, I noted that buses were not strictly segregated (as they were in Johannesburg) and that other trappings of "petty" apartheid were being routinely ignored.

In Cape Town, where my father's next appearance was scheduled, a friend of his took me to see the great university, further proof that apartheid had yet to reach its nadir. Cape Town, like Durban, was

a multicultural community, but here the significant sector of the population was referred to as "Coloured," meaning of mixed ancestry. In the absence of identity cards specifying race (that, too, was in the future), many citizens of Coloured ancestry moved freely in the city, making use of public amenities mostly without hindrance. At the University of Cape Town, I saw Coloured, some African, and a few Asian students in hallways and classes. When we visited the government buildings, I learned that Coloured citizens of the Cape even had special representation in the South African parliament.

In the government's offices, however, the machinery of apartheid was being assembled. For three hundred years, South Africa had been the scene of interracial and intercultural contact, conflict, and accommodation. Its natural riches had attracted a variegated mix of ancestries and traditions. Its economic growth had engendered a great internal migration of workers. Its diverse natural and social environments had produced different solutions to the inevitable problems of multiracial living. In the half century following the end of the Boer War, South Africa had been governed by a British-dominated political party whose administration was not noted for its efficiency or vision. When the Afrikaner "Nationalist" Party contested the 1948 (whites-only) election, its platform centered on the "threat" that South Africa was drifting toward irreversible integration. Even before their victory, the designers of apartheid were planning their strategy. No longer would existing rules of segregation be locally ignored. No longer would universities in designated white areas be permitted to register students other than those of "European" ancestry. No longer would a blind eye be cast over the long-evolving residential integration of inner cities. Apartheid operated at all levels of scale: micro (personal facilities such as toilets and park benches), meso (urban-residential), and macro (regional-territorial) (Domingo, 2004). The *separate development* scheme was the logical culmination of a plan to *re*segregate South Africa and then to carry the project to its ultimate geographic conclusion. South Africa would become a "nation of nations." In the process, definitions of "nation," "republic," "development," and "government" were subverted to ideology. The globals of South Africa, microcosm of the world, would prove that separation of races and cultures was the way toward postcolonial stability and sustained hegemony, a system that would keep locals in their place and mobals under strict control.

One key lesson from South Africa in the 1950s was (and remains) that some regimes, unconstrained by international scrutiny and undeterred by multilateral sanctions or other direct costs, are able to subjugate entire populations to serve their economic, cultural, and strategic purposes. In an era when colonial powers did little to oversee each other and European dictatorships ruled harshly over African dependencies, South Africa's white-nationalist regime could implement apartheid without risk to its membership in the United Nations. From international economic organizations to sporting events, South African delegations and teams traveled the world, South Africa's globals capitalizing on the tenor of the times. In the postcolonial era, when the evils of the system led to worldwide revulsion and global condemnation, many analysts asserted that only white-minority regimes could create such perfidy. But the imperatives that engendered apartheid were human, not racial. They can be seen today, albeit in different forms, from Myanmar to Sudan and from North Korea to Zimbabwe. Might they be discernible as well in the globalizing, flattening world at large?

Even in pre-apartheid but already segregated South Africa, some locals had managed to break through the prevailing social, educational, and economic barriers and had found precarious niches on the other side. What I saw that concert night in Durban City Hall was a glimpse of the South African Paradox, as I called it in my diary at the time. Why would people rebuffed at every turn want to dress in Western attire, hear the music of European composers, observe the rules of the global concert hall? Why would they want to attend Christian churches (Afrikaners often invoked biblical interpretations to justify apartheid)? Why would they want to study at universities that educated the very elites that oppressed them? Nevertheless, by the time the Afrikaner regime implemented apartheid as official policy, tens of thousands of Africans, Coloureds, and Asians had formed a growing middle class, mobals of remarkable tenacity whose commitment to the modern order was evinced by their lifestyles.

The planners of apartheid viewed this as a threat, not the cultural achievement it constituted. The systematic rejection by the Afrikaner administration of those who had succeeded in crossing the barriers of de facto racial segregation was a distressing episode, foreshadowing their reemergence in opposition movements that would eventually play a powerful role in ending the apartheid era. The long-imprisoned

Nelson Mandela was the key figure in South Africa's essentially peaceful transition to majority government, but others who might have been bent on revolutionary change and violent retribution were once again persuaded to commit themselves to sustaining a social order not of their making—and one that would bear the imprints of apartheid for decades to come. A new, multiracial cadre of globals has taken the reins in South Africa, but as in much of the rest of the world, the problems of old persist. South Africa's new challenge is the revolution of rising expectations, for jobs, land reform, housing, education. After decades of containment, an army of millions of mobals is transforming cities and towns, generating a huge informal economy that funnels far too few hopefuls into the formal one. South Africa still is a mirror to the world. It has not yet crossed the Rubicon.

A WORLD APART

Formal apartheid may no longer disfigure the South African state, but in the world at large the incentives that gave rise to the system increasingly mark the cultural landscape, from gated communities in affluent suburbs to fenced boundaries between rich and poor countries. In South Africa, wealth was concentrated in a necklace of cities that anchored the interior and dominated the coast; poverty prevailed in the horseshoe of "Bantustans" that encircled the urban core and provided raw materials and labor for the globally linked economy. In the world today, wealth is concentrated in a highly urbanized and strongly globalized region extending from Europe through North America to East Asia and Australia, a region often referred to by economic geographers as the *global core*. The worst global poverty persists in the periphery—in Africa and Asia (figure 1.1). As the map shows, virtually all the cities in the world with the highest quality-of-life indexes lie in this demographically slow-growing core, whereas the burgeoning, chaotic megacities lie in the faster-growing periphery. Certainly the world is "flattest" in the wealthy core, roughest in the periphery.

Figure 1.1 cannot tell the whole story, of course. The global periphery contains the world's poorest countries and societies, but it has its own geographic variations. As a geographic realm, South America is economically far ahead of Subsaharan Africa. In East Asia, national statistics for China do not reflect enormous contrasts between the rural interior, where conditions in certain areas are so bad that foreigners are not allowed to see them, and the coastal zone, where authoritarian rule coupled with market economics has created a "flattening" that is moving this area toward the conditions of the core, at least in material terms. Southeast Asia may not be part of the global core, but Singapore ranks as one of the world's most successful economies and has a very high quality-of-life index, an oft-cited symbol of globalization.

The map represents the outcome of millennia of postglacial environmental change, of centuries of colonialism and imperialism, of agricultural, industrial, technological, and political revolutions and their global dissemination, and of the enduring advantage of the head start in a globalizing world. There may have been a time when the sun never set on the British Empire, but Britain lost it all—and yet the United Kingdom still is a force in global affairs and London remains one of the world's financial capitals. The wealth and continuing influence of countries such as the Netherlands and France were assured when their empires extended from Middle America to Southeast Asia. The global core of which these countries are parts is also the region where indigenous populations were overwhelmed and very nearly extirpated by the European invasion.

Nothing underscores the contrast between core and periphery as powerfully as do demographic and economic data. As defined in figure 1.1, the global core contains approximately 15 percent of the global population but records nearly 75 percent of the world's annual income (in terms of gross national income, based on World Bank data). The periphery represents 85 percent of the planet's population, accruing just 25 percent of total income.

As such, the core attracts millions of mobals ranging from legal immigrants to asylum seekers and from illegal workers to revolutionaries. Not only are the states of the core the richest on the planet; their power also continues to permeate the countries of the periphery, spawning anger as well as hope. The great majority of migrants seeking to enter the core are drawn by the promise of work and wages, pull factors that can induce them to take terrible risks. The remittances sent home by just one successful mobal can sustain an entire extended family in Mexico, India, China, the Philippines, or a host of other countries. But a small minority have other objectives,

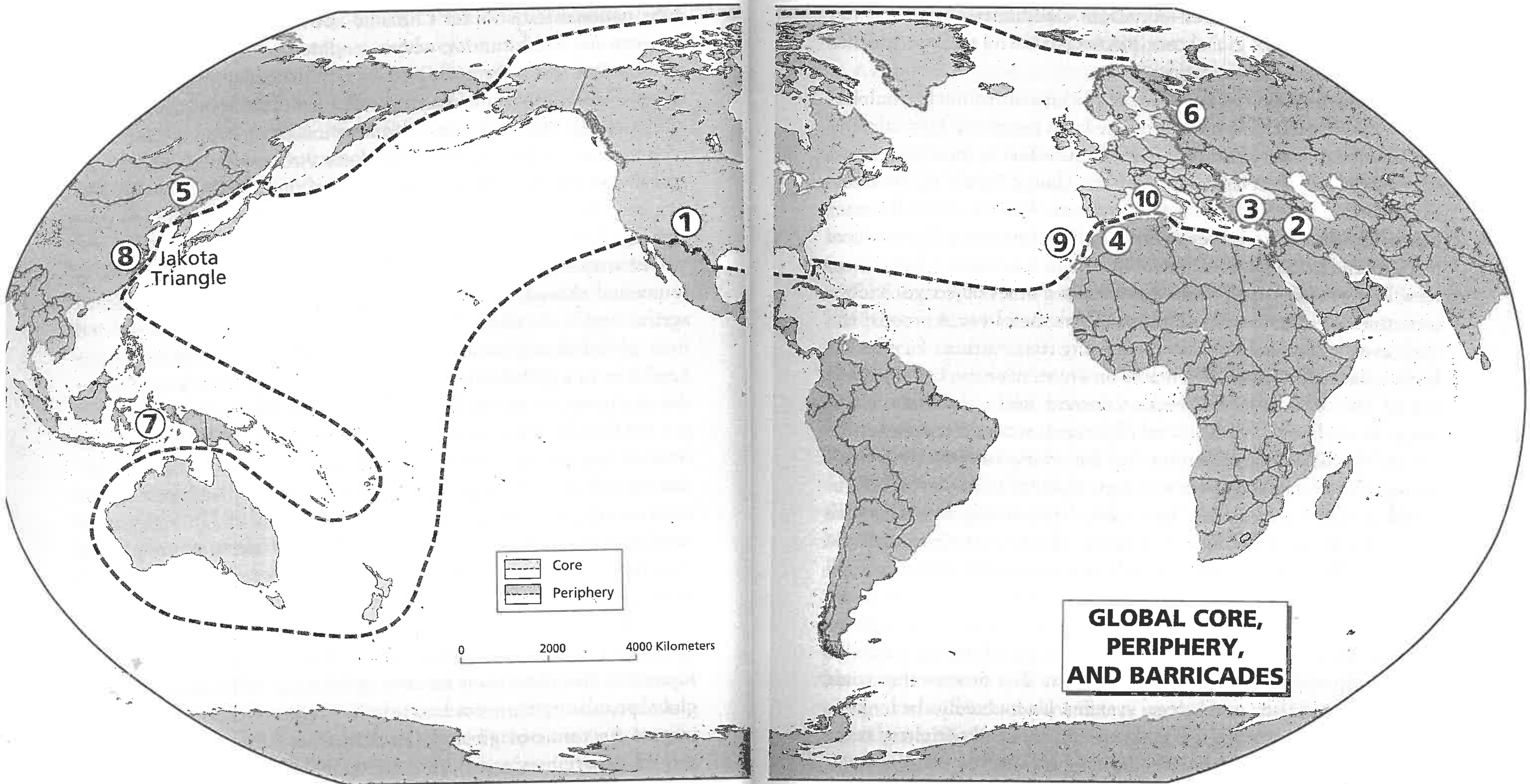

Figure 1.1. The world divided: core and periphery in the early twenty-first century. The numbers refer to places where governments try to stem the tide of undocumented migrants moving from periphery to core.

ranging from organized crime to terrorism. The control and regulation of immigration are therefore joint objectives of the states of the core.

To be sure, the management of migration should involve both source and destination—the countries of origin as well as the recipient states. But such coordination has proven difficult to achieve. When U.S. President George W. Bush took office in 2001, he proclaimed his intention to reach an agreement with then-President Vicente Fox of Mexico to coordinate and regulate cross-border migration and to find a joint solution to the problem of the millions of illegal Mexican migrants already in the United States. That initiative fell victim to 9/11 and its aftermath, and by the time it was revived, public opinion had hardened, public confidence in the U.S. president and his administration had weakened, and a comprehensive solution was beyond

reach. In truth, the Mexican–American case underscores what has been the norm: in the global core, piecemeal control takes precedence over comprehensive negotiation.

As the map shows, this control takes various forms, but in combination it has the effect of walling off core from periphery. Undoubtedly the most portentous manifestation of this effort is the demarcation of the border between Mexico and the United States (1) in accordance with the terms of the Secure Fence Act, an 1100-kilometer expansion and reinforcement of the barriers between joint members of NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Association that was to raise living standards in Mexico and, among other objectives, reduce incentives for cross-border migrants to risk their lives. A proportionately even larger project (2) is the ongoing construction of a physical barrier that will essentially enclose an entire country, Israel, within nearly 700 kilometers of fences, concrete walls, and intervening no-go zones. Here the proclaimed objective is security against terrorism rather than labor migration, but the project has been impugned as a revival of apartheid methodology (Carter, 2007). Another infamous barrier, the so-called Green Line, hermetically sealed Turkish northern Cyprus from the Greek south (3), and even Cyprus's 2004 accession to the European Union did not end its control function. Still another physical barricade marks the territorial limits of two small Spanish exclaves on the North African (Mediterranean) coast, Ceuta and Melilla (4), where barbed-wire fences ward off immigrants who, once on Spanish soil, would have rights to due process that could overwhelm Spanish and EU legal systems. Undoubtedly the longest-existing and best-known rampart between core and periphery is the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between South and North Korea (5) across their joint peninsula, a nearly 250-kilometer fenced fortification, four kilometers wide and so heavily guarded from both sides that virtually no transit occurs. Built in 1953 as a result of the armistice ending the Korean War, the DMZ came to symbolize the world's core–periphery partition only after South Korea's economic transformation and political democratization. The remaining land-based barrier, marking the eastern limit of the European Union (6), is not as effectively demarcated as the others for several reasons, including the continuing EU expansion, the transitional character of the EU–Russian frontier, and the still-ongoing ratification of the Schengen Accord, which will enhance coordination of European border,

security, and information systems and thus inhibit illegal cross-EU border migration from Finland to Greece.

As the map suggests, the alternate routes for would-be mobals seeking entry into the global core are via the sea. Australia (7) has no land neighbors, but it has long experience with illegal immigrants arriving across the waters separating the north from Indonesia and New Guinea. These immigrants do not originate exclusively, or even primarily, in Australia's maritime neighbors; they also come from as far away as Afghanistan and Iraq. In response, the Australian Defense Forces have mounted a continuous surveillance and interception operation along a 3,000-kilometer stretch of the Timor and Arafura Seas, involving marine patrols and air reconnaissance. Further, in response to problems arising in detention centers in Australia, the Australian government is considering legislation that will deport intercepted asylum-seekers to island-based holding facilities where the legitimacy of their claim to asylum will be adjudicated. A different situation marks the waters between Taiwan and China (8). Taiwan, along with South Korea and Japan, is part of the so-called Jakota Triangle, the western outpost of the global core. United States aircraft carriers have patrolled the Taiwan Strait during times of tension between Beijing and Taipei, but since the rise of China's Pacific Rim, the strait is no longer an avenue for migrants. Off West Africa, EU vessels patrol the waters between the mainland and the Canary Islands (9) to intercept and return African mobals risking their lives to reach Spanish territory. And in as well as above the Mediterranean Sea (10), Spanish, French, and Italian surveillance operates to limit illegal crossings from the North African coast, on the Cuba–Florida model (11).

Many millions of legal immigrants have entered the global core and continue to do so. Even as national economies in the global core are thriving, dwindling populations and changing labor needs will require immigration to offset demographic losses. The "Western Wall" around the global core reflects a regional desire to control the influx, though growing inequalities between core and periphery are likely to determine otherwise. But that is the future. At present, in the broadest sense, the economic, cultural, and political geographies of core and periphery evince contrasts that far outweigh similarities. On average, being born in the core confers certainties and opportunities unattainable in the periphery. The exceptions are too few; the disparities grow wider. Geography and destiny are tightly intertwined.

PLACE AND DESTINY

It is not difficult to discern similarities between the geography of apartheid South Africa and the fractured world displayed in figure 1.1. South Africa's physical and cultural geography presented opportunities for the ruling white minority to exploit: a combination of natural barriers and historic black homelands, discrete urban mixtures (Asian–British in Durban, Coloured–Afrikaner in Cape Town), and concentrated resources. After creating a thriving economy with some limited opportunities for mobal professionals, the segregationists shut the doors and erected the walls of apartheid.

There is, of course, nothing unique about Afrikaners seeking to protect their privileges and advantages, their way of life and culture. It has been done by majorities as well as minorities for millennia, from Han-ruled China to Sunni-dominated Iraq. What was unique was apartheid's grand design, its essentially geographic framework. An entire state with tens of millions of citizens was reconstituted in accordance with a rigid ideology based on race and space. Even Saddam Hussein had his Shi'ite (and Christian) acolytes and collaborators in pre-intervention Iraq. The Afrikaner regime included not a single African, Asian, or Coloured participant. Exclusion is a human trait that has marked the map for as long as communities have existed. Unchecked, it can create aberrations at any scale, even the national.

In this respect, the modern core–periphery map of the world is, to be sure, different. The core region shown in figure 1.1 already is multiracial beyond anything even pre-apartheid South Africa displayed. Australia is fast becoming a plural society (Japan as yet is not); America was one from its inception; and Europe is in a difficult process of ethnic and cultural transformation. But throughout the region, the crucial decisions, including the exclusionary ones reflected by the map, continue to be made by governments very much like those of two or three generations ago. When former U.S. President Jimmy Carter invoked the term apartheid in his critique of Israeli policies toward the Palestinians, he could have enlarged the scope of his analysis (Carter, 2007). There is more than a hint of apartheid in the regional geography of the world today. Keeping locals in their place and restricting mobals to the greatest degree possible perpetuate the global dichotomy represented by the map.

The implications are far-reaching. Place and identity are closely linked. Some scholars, most recently the philosopher Amartya Sen, argue that choice and reasoning can essentially negate the power of place, although "there can be little doubt that the community or culture to which a person belongs can have a major influence on the way he or she sees a situation or views a decision...in any explanatory exercise, note has to be taken of local knowledge, *regional norms*, and particular perceptions and values that are common in a specific community (Sen, 2006; emphasis added). While all concede that talent and education are indispensable in "choice and reasoning about identity," as Sen puts it, few acknowledge that such choice and reasoning are luxuries unattainable for many, even those with some formal education. Indeed, the power of place is such that choice and reasoning are more likely to flourish when "regional norms" are left behind.

Toward the end of the twentieth century, when the Soviet Union disintegrated and Yugoslavia collapsed, many observers foresaw the demise of the state as the key player in international affairs. Replacing it would be a continuum of entities ranging from supranational blocs such as the European Union at one end and subnational units such as Catalonia at the other. Little more than a decade later, the state remains the cornerstone of international structures and systems, projecting power, protecting culture, proscribing movement. In many ways, the state remains the most obvious manifestation of the power of place, the organization of society in the pursuit of "national" goals. Today the focus is on success and debacle. In his magisterial work *Collapse*, Jared Diamond marshals a wide range of such topics to analyze how, as his subtitle states, "societies choose to fail or succeed" (Diamond, 2005). The rise and fall of empires, states, and societies have been topics of study in geography, history, and other disciplines for centuries, and the causes continue to be debated. Obviously, the oft-sudden fall (as opposed to the longer-term rise) is of the most immediate concern: we are all worried about the decline of countries and societies that matter to us. In recent years, the notion of the "failed state" and the opportunities this presents to terrorist organizations has concentrated attention on countries from Afghanistan to Somalia in new ways. In *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom sees the disintegration of the fabric of American culture as key to the weakening of U.S. power and influence in the world (Bloom, 1987). But smaller, far less influential states have suffered breakdowns much more dramatic than

the perceived decline of America. The United States may be beyond the zenith of its global stature, but it remains the planet's sole superpower: it is not collapsing. Other countries and societies, however, have indeed imploded, some with remarkable, even frightening suddenness. Diamond cites five factors that, usually in some combination, contribute to such breakdowns: environmental damage done by the population, the natural forces of climate change, the behavior of hostile neighbors, the weakening of trading partners and allies near (in history) and far (more recently), and the varying responses of different societies to similar problems. All these are fundamentally geographic, and the last one is crucial, because these variations relate directly to the comprehensive environments, natural and social, that have operated on these societies for a very long time. Can such long-term circumstances produce a "culture of failure," as has been proposed by scholars from the Hoover Institution's Thomas Sowell (1994) to the Harvard historian David Landes (1998)? It is a proposition that has aroused much critical response, but it is clearly linked to the obstacles, physical and social, that still bar millions from the planet's mainstreams of advancement.

AN ENDURING HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

The emergence and diffusion of modern humanity is a drama whose scenes are still being reconstructed and whose backdrops are still being painted. That the ascent of modern humans in Africa occurred very recently is no longer in question; the routes of dispersal of our ancestors from Africa into Eurasia and beyond are fast becoming known. Modern humans challenged their predecessor Neanderthals in Europe about the same time they reached Australia, or perhaps slightly later, around 40,000 years ago. When plant and animal domestication began and fertile, watered river basins attracted growing numbers of people, a settlement pattern emerged, roughly 10,000 years ago, that is still visible on the map today. Thus, a map of world population (figure 1.2) represents a durable demographic layout, much of it forged early and then sustained by local expansion far more than by regional relocation. China had the world's largest population a thousand years ago; it still does today. The peoples living between the Himalayas and Sri Lanka and between the Indus and Brahmaputra Rivers constituted a quantitatively matching cluster of humanity even before British

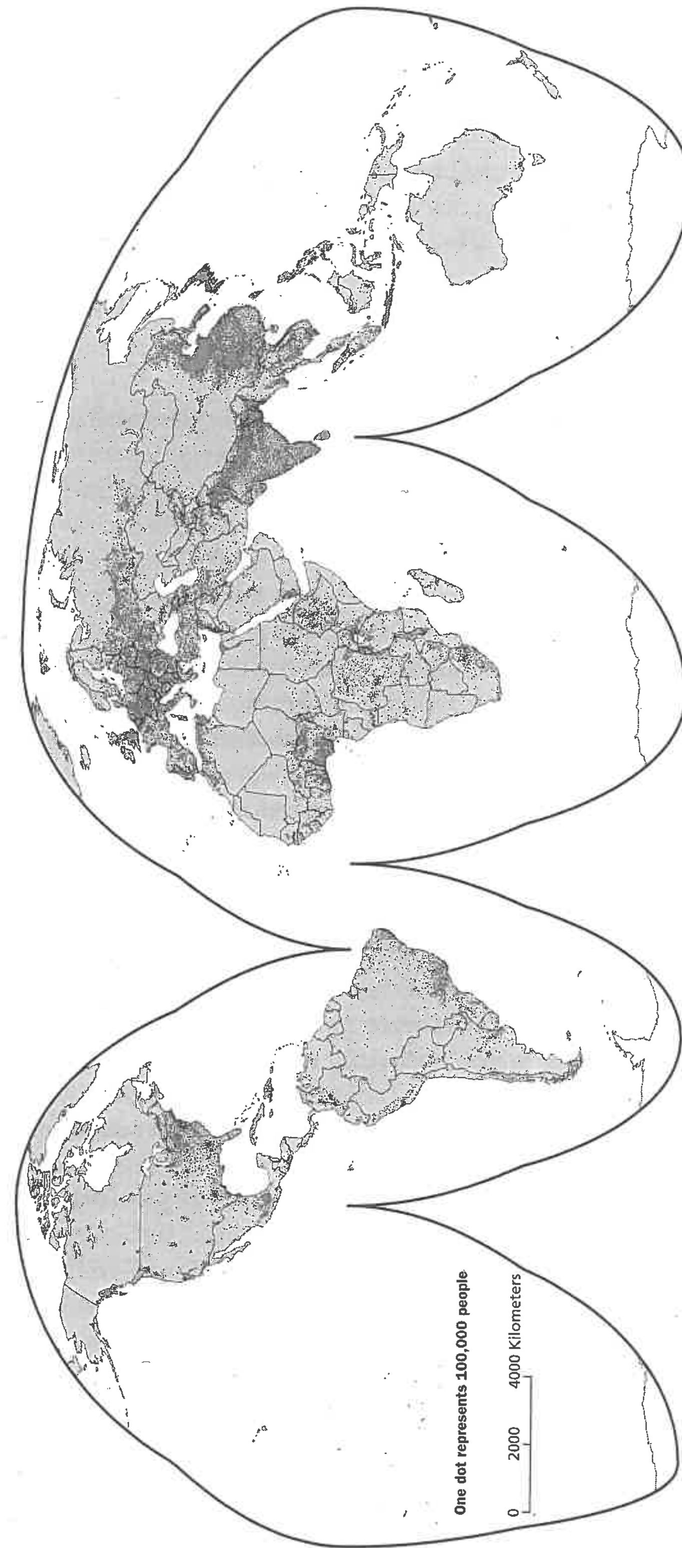

Figure 1.2. By this method of displaying the world's population distribution, one dot represents 100,000 people. The map emphasizes the persistence of ancient, agriculture-based patterns in the World Island (Eurasia and Africa); the two largest clusters of population lie in the global periphery.

colonialism girdled them with modern boundaries. The greatest distributional changes over the past millennium occurred *not* on what Halford Mackinder so aptly called the "World Island" consisting of Eurasia and Africa (Mackinder, 1904), but in the human outposts of the Americas and Australia, where Europeans overpowered and decimated earlier arrivals (even today, the World Island's human population exceeds the rest of the world by 5.4 to 1.3 billion). Peoples in Eurasia and Africa, as well as Amerindians and Aboriginal Australians, have lived under their current environmental circumstances—whether river basins or savannas, *altiplanos* or tropical deserts—for millennia. Except, of course, those who catastrophically damaged their natural environment or confronted significant climate change. Climate change, which we tend to view in global context, can have surprisingly local dimensions.

Aside from where ocean water already bounded living space, as in Japan, Iceland, New Zealand, and numerous Pacific islands, the irregular grid of "national" boundaries familiar to us today was superimposed on the inhabited world comparatively recently. In effect, it is the product of the last five centuries, although the notion of boundary making is much older than that. Roman and Chinese wall builders tried to demarcate and fortify imperial borders and limit human movements, but the world was not parceled out among competing powers until the colonial era. (Interestingly, among the many thousands of islands, including hundreds of large and consequential ones, fewer than a dozen were divided by "national" boundaries.) But when that boundary framework was installed, subject to modifications that are still going on, societies were compartmentalized and faced their environmental and economic challenges with new constraints. No longer could peoples who had severely damaged their natural environments move elsewhere and leave the consequences behind. No longer did open frontiers beckon those who chafed under the yoke of oppressors. Millions have perished at walls, fences, moats, and riverbanks in our newly compartmentalized world.

Figure 1.2, therefore, reflects three phases of modern humanity's geographic dispersal: first, the ancient emigration from Africa and occupation of productive Old-World environments, followed by later migrations into the Americas; second, the recent penetration of the New World by European emigrants whose technological superiority and deadly diseases decimated their predecessors, confined them to remote environs, and consigned them to isolation; and third, the

recent explosion of global population, which in little more than one century has taken human numbers from one to nearly seven billion. What the map does not show is of comparable consequence: the urbanization of more than half of this population, and the accelerating rate of this momentous process. It is a process that is changing the geography of Cruiseship Earth and the destiny of its passengers.

MODELS, MOBALS, AND MIGRATION

During my years in graduate school at Northwestern University and in my first appointment in the Geography Department at Michigan State University, I heard some of the world's leading scholars express their views on the future of the planet. The geologist Arthur Howland described continental drift as "mysticism" and predicted that notions of moving landmasses would fade before what he called the "visible evidence." The political scientist David Apter predicted a "breathtaking" future for Africa, with political liberties and economic opportunities that would give Europe a run for its money. The British scientist Nigel Calder forecast a fast-cooling planet on which peoples would be driven toward the tropics as higher latitudes were engulfed by snow and ice. The biologist Paul Ehrlich warned that the population explosion would create vast famines afflicting billions, causing global dislocation and disaster before the end of the twentieth century.

All this is to emphasize how hazardous even short-range predictions can be, but the virtue of such prognostications is that they tend to engender vigorous and often productive debate. An example is the transmogrification of the so-called demographic transition model over the past half century (figure 1.3). This model purports to reflect and predict the stages of natural growth through which national and regional populations have gone and will go. A half century ago, the cycle showed three stages and assumed that all populations would go through a high-growth period (the "population explosion") followed by a continuing, significant expansion. A couple of decades ago it became clear that certain populations (the most highly urbanized ones among them) were experiencing a low-growth fourth stage. Now it is evident that, for various reasons, a growing number of societies (that is, countries) are exhibiting a fifth stage of "negative growth," in demographic parlance, meaning that their populations are shrinking. In combination, these factors are

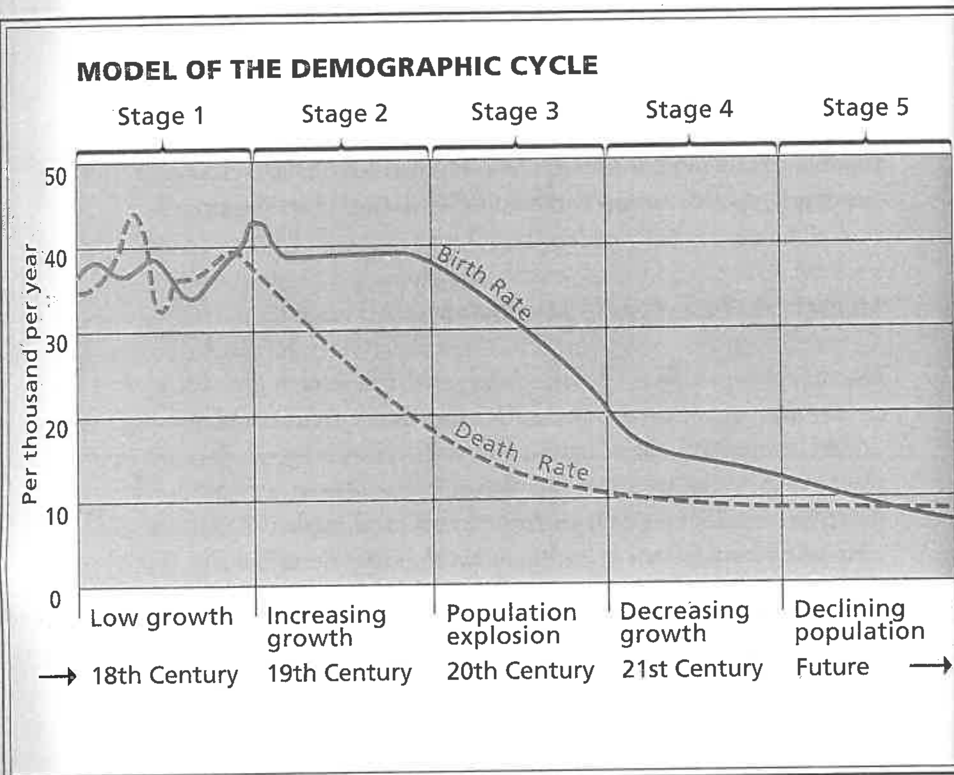

Figure 1.3. Fast-declining death rates and still-high birth rates created the population explosion of the twentieth century; some countries still are in the third stage of the cycle, but others are in stage five, their populations stable or declining. The global rate of natural increase today is in stage four.

leading to the conclusion that the global population, during the present century, will in fact cease growing altogether and may begin to decline. Predictions of the level at which this will take place tend to range from 9 to 10 billion, but we know how risky long-range prognostications are.

What is beyond doubt is that declining national populations need infusions of immigrants to compensate for the shrinkage. Policymakers in Japan, one of the states whose populations are in accelerating decline, seem to believe that the process can be managed without significant substitution, and Japan remains by far the most ethnically and culturally homogeneous among larger societies today. But immigration is transforming other countries and regions. For all its barriers against

asylum-seekers, Australia is becoming a multicultural society through legal immigration. Fifty years ago, when Australia had less than half the population it has today, 95 percent were of European ancestry and three-quarters came from the British Isles. Eugenic (race-specific) immigration policies kept things this way into the 1970s, when Australia celebrated its bicentennial. Then those policies changed, and the criteria for legal immigration shifted to money and skills rather than ancestry. By the early 1990s, Australia was admitting nearly 150,000 immigrants annually, mostly from Hong Kong, Vietnam, China, the Philippines, India, and Sri Lanka (a proportional number in the United States would be more than two million *per year*). The influx created social problems that required a reduction in legal immigration, but about 80,000 continue to arrive annually, some of them well-heeled globals but many others mobals in search of opportunities and better lives—and still others seeking asylum for legitimate reasons. Sydney, already home to nearly one-quarter of Australia's population, is the main recipient of the Asian influx and has become a mosaic of ethnic districts. With this have come increased crime, gang violence, drug use, disturbances, and other conditions not usually associated with life in the "lucky country." But for every incident of this kind, there are thousands of mobals who arrived in Australia with few resources, played by the rules, and thrived in this free, open, and acceptant society.

The migration issue ranks high among American and European concerns, and immigration has transformed North American and Western European societies in significant ways. In the United States, as noted above, the presence of an estimated 12 million illegal immigrants—the most mobile of mobals—became a political issue during the G. W. Bush administration, when proposals to confer some legitimacy on these mobals were combined with plans to reinforce the barriers to cross-border migration from Mexico. The United States, by far the largest affluent state in the world, adjoins a country that is representative of the periphery, and Mexico forms a conduit for mobals beyond its own borders in Central America. But the 2006 UN *Report on Migration* underscores how comparatively limited the global migration flow remains. From 1990 to 2005, the number of migrants in the world rose from 155 million to 191 million, well below 3 percent of the planet's population. Even where migration is facilitated rather than obstructed, notably within the expanding European Union, the percentage of workers crossing international borders remains remarkably low. Again, the

overwhelming majority of our planet's inhabitants still live out their lives within the countries and communities in which they were born. These locals far outnumber the mobals—even when the richer countries of the global core need the latter in growing numbers.

MIGRANTS AND MOTIVES

The United Nations and other agencies grapple with problems of definition when it comes to identifying migrants. The figures just cited relate to transnational (international) migrants, mobals who have crossed one or more international borders to reach their intended destination and who have lived outside their original homeland for one year or more. It is a reflection of the powerful constraints on long-distance migration that the number of these mobals is as small as it is, and the number of *intercultural* migrants is even smaller. Mexican immigrants to the United States are international as well as intercultural migrants, as are Indians and Pakistanis moving to Western Europe and Nigerians immigrating to the United Kingdom. But the millions of Pushtuns who moved from war-torn Afghanistan to Pakistan during the Soviet intervention and stayed there for years as the conflict raged were international, but not intercultural, migrants. Today the war in Iraq is generating a massive international emigration from Iraq to its immediate neighbors (Syria and Jordan), of which only a small fraction is becoming intercultural in the form of the small minority reaching Europe, America, or other parts of the non-Muslim world. The great majority of these refugees will probably return to Iraq.

International migration involves far smaller numbers, of course, than does internal migration. Many hundreds of millions of migrants are on the move without crossing international boundaries. One of the great migrations of the past generation continues within China, where the economic rise of the Pacific Rim draws millions of villagers from rural west to urbanizing east. Rural-to-urban migration is a global phenomenon involving far more internal than international migrants, and truly international cities (such as New York and London) are far outnumbered by burgeoning megacities growing mainly through domestic aggregation (Tokyo, São Paulo, Mexico City, Lagos).

While models of future migration flows predict that international migration will expand, all suggest that the rate of increase will not

match the needs of either destination or source. Looking at the process geographically, it is clear that the poorest of the poor countries of the world are contributing the smallest share of international migration. A veritable trafficking and smuggling industry has sprung up to exploit those hoping to reach the global core, and only a comparative few can raise enough money to take the risk. Another key indicator shows that when the standards of living of source and destination converge, the flow of migrants declines. This might appear to be a favorable development, and it is often cited as one objective in addressing the Mexican–American dilemma: raise living standards in Mexico, and cross-border migration will dwindle.

But the domestic population of the United States is not (yet) experiencing the rapid aging and shrinking that marks populations elsewhere in the global core, creating an additional dilemma for this country. In Mexico and elsewhere in Middle America, income and wealth disparities are great and abject poverty is still a massive problem, generating reservoirs of mobals seeking to cross the border. In the United States, income inequalities are growing, workers' wages are stagnant, and jobs are being lost. It is a recipe for trouble in an already-plural society that has taken in immigrants by the millions, and the illegal-immigration issue at times assumed an ugly tone during the 2007/08 election campaign following the defeat in Congress of President Bush's "amnesty" proposal.

Who benefits? While America's flexible labor markets can absorb many of the millions of workers crossing the border, Mexico and its citizens are the major beneficiaries of the process (Mexico annually receives from its mobals some $25 billion, accounting for 3.4 percent of the country's gross domestic product). In the European Union, things are different. One immediate consequence of the aging of populations affects the number of available young entrants into the labor force. In the global core, about 140 jobseekers still are available per 100 workers retiring annually, but toward 2020, the ratio will be below 90. Thus the need for immigrants will grow exponentially, despite negative perceptions of migrants at their destinations. For example, although it is often argued that migrants reduce the wages of low-skilled workers, studies show that, over time, low-paid migrants cause locals to seek and secure higher-paying employment. And what about the situation at the source? In the poorer world, the UN report states, there are more than 340 candidates for every 100 jobs that become available

annually. Joblessness and poverty create markets for political, religious, and other forms of extremism. Internationally coördinated migration could be the planet's safety valve, but its conduit remains mostly blocked. Meanwhile, intercultural conflict between mobals and locals, occasionally punctuated by acts of terrorism, strengthens the determination of those seeking to limit the flow even further.

A BARRICADED WORLD

With a population approaching seven billion and international migrant numbers hovering (in 2008) around 200 million, our planet thus is not as amenable to movement as its purported flatness implies. While major historic migrations involving tens of millions of migrants altered the distribution produced by prehistoric human dispersal, outlines of the latter still remain imprinted on the modern map. As populations grew numerically, societies variegated vertically, and cultures diversified ideologically, political power made its appearance on the ground in the form of walls, fences, fortified riverbanks, and buttressed mountain ridges. European imperialism completed a process begun during the earliest phase of state formation by superimposing on the world a boundary framework that, from Serbia to Somalia, is still evolving. That boundary framework, drawn in ignorance of much of the world's natural-resource base and with often deliberate disregard for cultural geographies, encumbered the world and its modern states with inequalities and obstacles unforeseen by its designers. A good atlas map—or better yet, a globe—reveals some of these disparities, ranging from sheer size and relative location (more than 10 percent of the world's countries are landlocked) to distance from, or proximity to, the mainstreams of international interaction. More specialized maps indicate how the roulette of partition favored some states and disadvantaged others in terms of raw materials, natural environments, and opportunities.

Today's world is not just boundary-barricaded but also regionally fractured. The core–periphery dichotomy described above is just one manifestation of this; Samuel Huntington described another in his "Clash of Civilizations" (Huntington, 1996). A more geographic framework, based less on power and conflict than on the spatial realities of culture and ethnicity, assembles the world's approximately 200 countries into a dozen "realms" (figure 1.4). But no matter how you

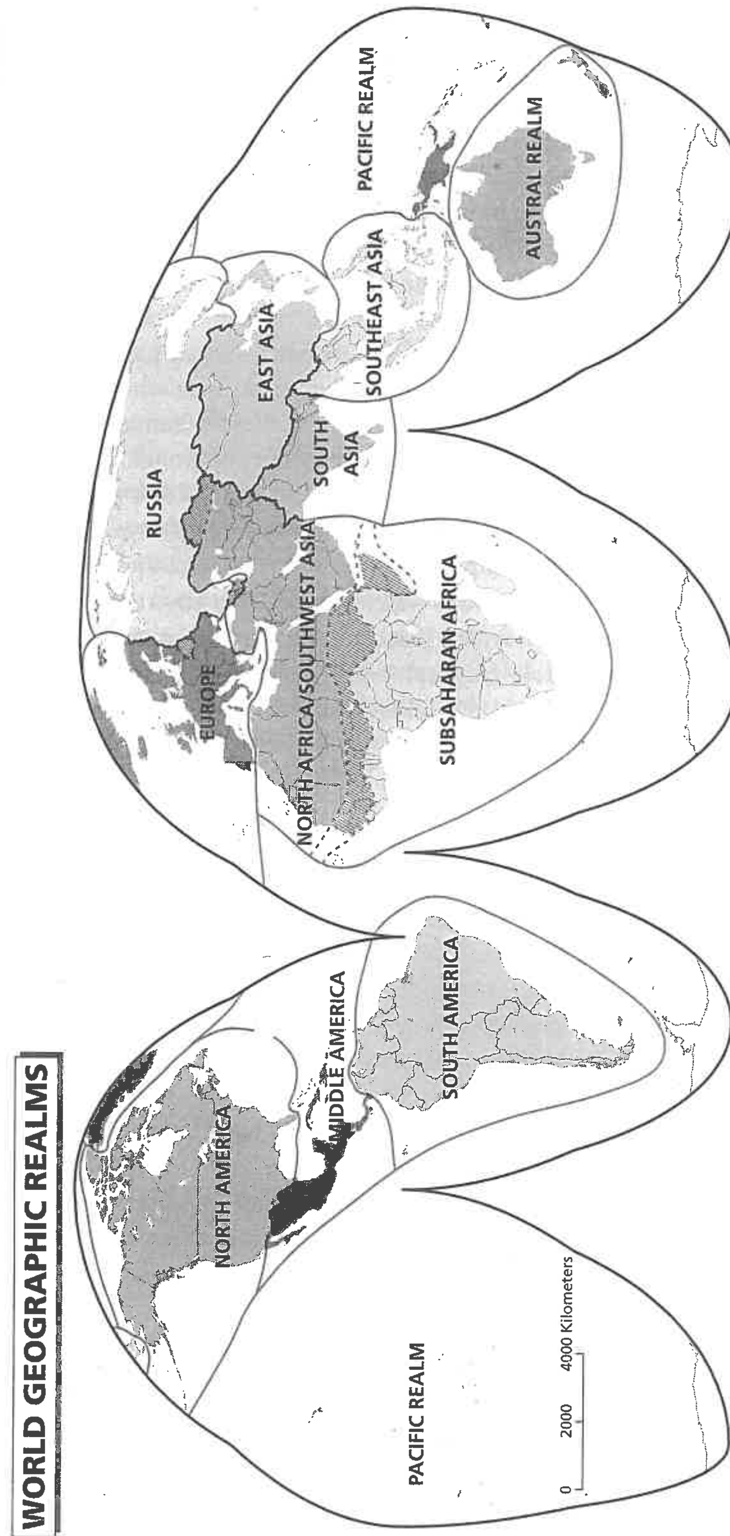

Figure 1.4. One way to view the world's geography, based on a combination of physical, cultural, political, and economic factors. Not many regional borders are sharply defined, but at this scale only a few major transition zones can be shown, as in Africa, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe.

look at it, ours remains a divided world whose obstacles and barriers constrain countless would-be mobals who, as poverty-stricken and powerless locals, have no chance of escape and who cannot influence those who determine their fate. Others, seemingly less constrained, better educated, and more capable, find contentment in containment, or perhaps resignation, weighing the risks and uncertainties of relocation against the certitudes of tradition and custom. Whatever the circumstances, the great majority of our planet's human passengers live their lives in the natural and cultural environs into which they were born, many eager but unable to join the modest stream of intercultural mobals and still remote from the corridors of globalization.

This partitioning—global, regional, national, local—slows the leveling of the social platform of the planet, the "flattening" implied by globalization. From mother tongue to medical access, from pervasive religion to political ideology, from endemic conflict to environmental peril, from lifeways to lifestyles, place and destiny are inextricably linked. Such is this variable geography of opportunity and constraint that globe-trotting globals and localized locals live in very different and very unequal worlds.

2

THE IMPERIAL LEGACY OF LANGUAGE

Language is the essence of culture, and culture is the epoxy of society. Individually and collectively, people tend to feel passionately about their mother tongue, especially when they have reason to believe that it is threatened in some way. Ever since the use of language evolved in early human communities, some confined in isolated abodes and others on the march into Eurasia, Australia, and the Americas, languages have arisen, flourished, and failed with the fortunes of their speakers. Linguists estimate that tens of thousands of such languages may have been born and lost, leaving no trace. Some major ones, including Sumerian and Etruscan, survive fragmentarily in their written record. A few, such as Sanskrit and Latin, live on in their modern successors. But the historical geography of language is the story of a loss of linguistic diversity that continues unabated. At present, about 7,000 languages remain, half of them classified by linguists as endangered. In the year from the day you read this, about 25 more languages will go extinct. By the end of this century, the Earth may be left with just a few hundred languages, so billions of its inhabitants will no longer be speaking their ancestral mother tongues (Diamond, 2001).

If this projection turns out to be accurate, the language loss will not be confined to those spoken by comparatively few people in remote locales. One dimension of the "flattening" of the world in the age of globalization is the cultural convergence of which linguistic homogenization is a key component. Some of my colleagues view this as an inevitable and not altogether undesirable process of integration, but if I may be candid, most of those colleagues speak one language only: English. Having spoken six languages during my lifetime (I can still manage in four), I tend to share the linguists' concern over the trend. English has the great merit of comparative simplicity and adaptable modernity, but as it reflects historic natural and social environments it is sparse indeed and no match for the riches of French or even