Migration

Field Note   Risking Lives for Remittances

A decade ago, I was on my way to Rosenstiel Marine Center on Virginia Key, off the coast of Miami, Florida. I noticed an overcrowded boat, with about 70 people on board. The Haitians were fleeing the most impoverished country in the Western Hemisphere. Most of the would-be illegal immigrants were men, and there were perhaps half a dozen women and as many children. They jumped overboard prematurely when the Coast Guard approached, and some undoubtedly lost their lives; others made it to the beach and ran for the road.

The Haitians the Coast Guard caught were sent home to Haiti with other illegal Haitian immigrants. The chance of getting caught is high, the travel is treacherous, and hundreds die off the coast of Florida each year. The hope of a job in the United States and the lack of hope in their lives and homes in Haiti compel them to try. The immigrants know that if they make it to shore and can find their way to the homes of friends and family, they can find employment and will live under the radar of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (Fig. 3.1).

Figure 3.1

Miami, Florida. A sailboat carrying more than 100 Haitians waits for the United States Coast Guard to pick them up after fleeing Haiti in June 1994. © AP/Wide World Photos.

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Across the world, hundreds of thousands of migrants have fled their home-lands by boat, train, car, or foot for opportunities—in North America, Australia, China, and Europe. These immigrants are sometimes welcomed and sometimes turned away. In the United States in the 1970s, the government of the United States welcomed Haitian immigrants because of the growing repressiveness of the government in Haiti at the time and also because most of the Haitian migrants in the 1970s were educated and able to afford travel to the United States. As the political and economic situations in Haiti worsened in the 1980s, the United States changed its policy to one that mandates the automatic deportation of all Haitians the U.S. government catches arriving illegally—by boat or any other method.

Governments greatly impact migration flows by opening and closing doors to migrants. In some cases, the policy is not as simple as the door being open or shut. Since the Clinton administration, the U.S. government has had a "wet foot, dry foot" policy toward Cuban immigrants. If Cuban immigrants are intercepted at sea, they are deported, but if Cuban immigrants make it to land, they have the right to stay.

Why are immigrants willing to risk their lives on overcrowded boats or by crossing treacherous deserts across parts of the United States—Mexico border? Economics provides part of the answer, but it does not explain the whole story. The Pew Hispanic Center found in a 2005 survey that the vast majority of undoc-umented (illegal) migrants from Mexico "were gainfully employed" in Mexico before they left for the United States. Perception is an overwhelming factor in migration—as long as migrants perceive a better life abroad, they will continue to migrate.

Migration flows vary by region, hometown (rural versus urban), gender, socio-economic class, age, race, and ethnicity. Geographers who study gender and migra-tion realize that the dynamics of individual households in the sending countries determine who migrates, when they migrate, and where they go.

Today, an estimated 11.3 million illegal immigrants live in the United States, many of whom work in order to send money home to family. Monies migrants send home to family are called **remittances**. Haitians living in the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean sent home over $1 billion in remittances in 2007, a fig-ure equivalent to 30 percent of Haiti's gross domestic product and far outpacing the value of Haitian exports. The 2001 census in Haiti estimates that one in five households in Haiti receives remittances from abroad.

The economies of many poorer countries in the Caribbean, Africa, Central and South America, and Eurasia depend in part on remittances sent to their citi-zens. In 2007, Mexican immigrants sent $23.98 billion in remittances home, up from $23.05 billion the year before.

Not all immigrants are illegal. Of the estimated 37.9 million immigrants in the United States today, 26.6 million are legal immigrants (Fig. 3.2). Countries recognize the need for immigrant labor, and many have policies allowing—indeed encouraging—legal immigrants to work under temporary visas to fill a need. Thousands of people who work in the United States and Canada are there on temporary visas to fill seasonal jobs in agriculture and forestry. In the United States, over 45,000 agricultural laborers legally enter the country each year under a program that allows unskilled laborers into the country, as long as no Americans want the jobs. Canada began to allow agricultural laborers into the country in 1966. In both Canada and the United States, the vast majority of legal agricultural
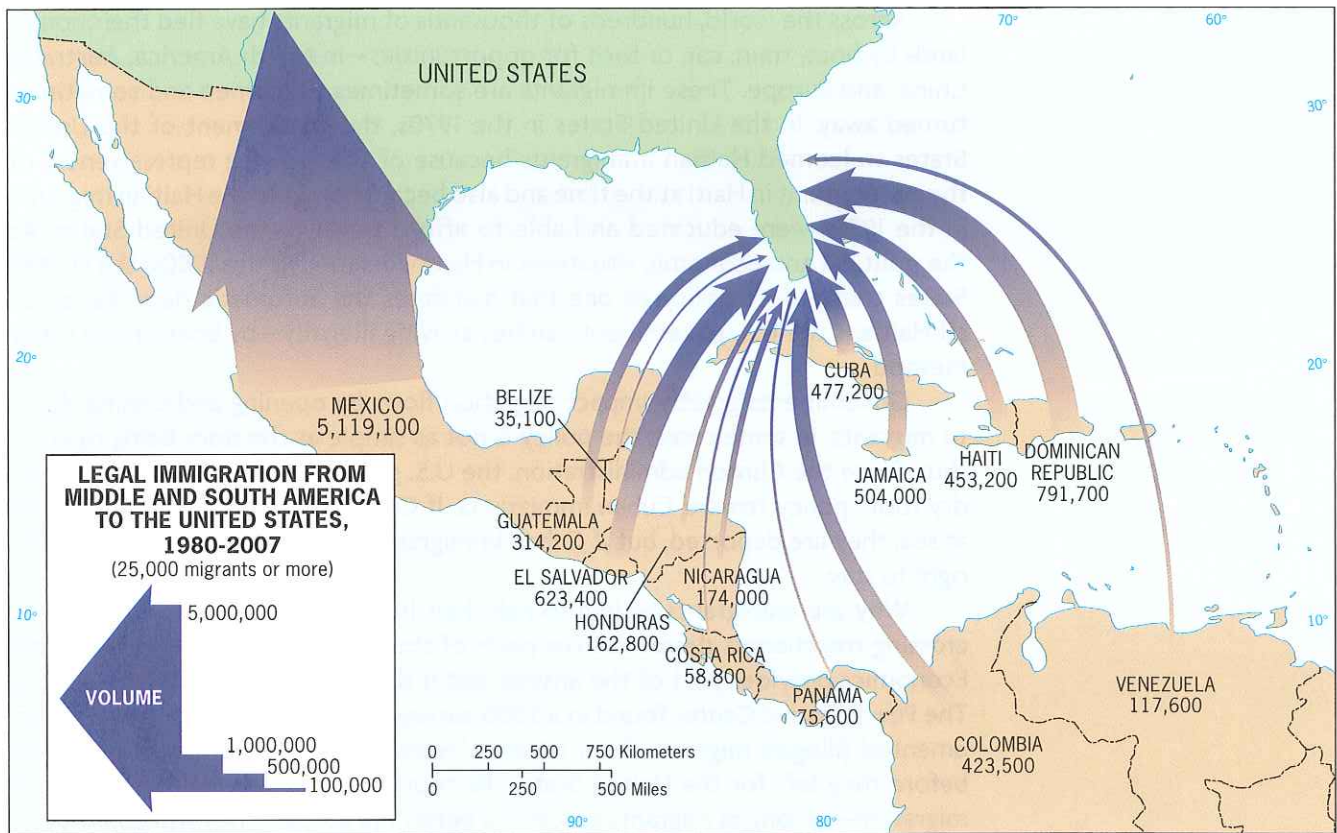
Figure 3.2

Legal Immigration from Middle and South America to the United States, 1980–2007. *Data from:* United States Department of Homeland Security, Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2007.

laborers come from Mexico. Canadian companies travel to Mexico to recruit agricultural laborers from rural Mexico and laborers for the hotel industry from urban areas of Mexico.

Since September 11, 2001, many countries have cracked down on immigration, making legal and illegal immigration more difficult. The United States has earmarked more money for building fences along its border with Mexico, hiring additional border patrols, and installing new technology to intercept would-be terrorists. The cultural landscape of the border region is changing. The government is erecting specially designed fences that are difficult to climb, while at the same time ensuring the fences have spaces where people across the border can speak with each other. The new fences and security south of San Diego, California, are pushing illegal immigration farther east into the desert. The fences in the desert are marked by empty water bottles and memorials to Mexicans who have died trying to cross the border (Fig. 3.3).

Eventhough globalization has promoted a freer flow of goods across the world, and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has established freer trade among Mexico, the United States, and Canada, the free flow of people is far from realized. Less than a decade ago, the U.S. government commissioned a barrier dividing Nogales, Arizona, from Nogales, Mexico. The *New York Times* reported that the architecture firm that designed the wall followed government requirements that it be aesthetically pleasing to "evoke the friendship" between the two countries while also making it "resistant to physical assault by means such

Figure 3.3

Tijuana, Mexico. Tijuana and San Diego, California are separated by a highly guarded border infrastructure that in this section includes two walls to discourage illegal crossing. Human rights activists placed crosses on the wall to memorialize people who died while attempting to cross into the United States. © AP/Wide World Photos.

as welding torches, chisels, hammers, firearms, climbing over or penetration with vehicles." Illegal immigrants go to great lengths to find their way into the United States; and similarly, the U.S. government goes to great lengths to deter illegal immigration.

In this chapter, we examine various types of migration and question why migrants choose to leave a particular place and why they go to a particular place. We also examine the barriers governments erect to slow human migration, questioning why government policies shift and how policies affect migration flows. By employing geographic concepts such as scale in our analysis of human migration, we seek to shed light on the nature and meaning of migration flows and to gain an appreciation for why people migrate, where they migrate, and how people, places, and landscapes change as a result.

Key Questions For Chapter 3

1. What is migration?
2. Why do people migrate?
3. Where do people migrate?
4. How do governments affect migration?

WHAT IS MIGRATION?

Movement is inherently geographical. Movement changes people, as well as the way they see themselves in the world. Movement changes places—both the places the people left and the places where they go. Human movement speeds the diffusion of ideas and innovations; it intensifies spatial interaction and transforms regions; and it is often closely linked to environmental conditions.

The movement of humans takes several forms. Mobility ranges from local to global—from the daily to once in a lifetime. Mobility has increased markedly over the past decades. With greater mobility, people broaden their perspectives and widen the horizons of others, thus encouraging further mobility. All movement involves leaving home. The three types of movement we discuss in this section vary based on time away from home. **Cyclic movement** involves shorter periods away from home; **periodic movement** involves longer periods away from home; and **migration** involves a degree of permanence the other two do not: with migration, the mover may never return "home."

Cyclic Movement

Cyclic movement involves journeys that begin at our home base and *bring us back to it*. The great majority of people have a daily routine that takes them through a regular sequence of short moves within a local area. These moves create what geographers call **activity spaces**. The scale of activity space varies across societies. You may go to classes every weekday and perhaps to a job as well, creating a relatively confined and stable activity space, diversified by shopping trips and social activities. The average activity space of a North American covers a greater amount of territory than that of an average African or Southwest Asian.

Commuting is also a cyclic movement. Commuting—the journey from home to work and home again—takes from minutes to hours and can involve several modes of transportation. The average North American commuter travels a greater distance each day than the average Chinese villager does in a year. Advances in transportation technology have expanded daily activity spaces. Cars and vast infrastructure enable people to commute over long distances. In Washington, D.C., commuters combine use of their cars, commuter trains, and the metro to travel upwards of 100 miles each way, each day, commuting not only from the surrounding suburbs, but also from Delaware, West Virginia, and central Virginia. By airplane, commuters arrive at work in Washington, D.C., from New York City. Others, such as members of Congress, commute from their home state, keeping houses there and apartments in the Washington, D.C. area.

Another form of cyclic movement is seasonal movement. Every autumn, hundreds of thousands of travelers leave their homes in Canada and the northern parts of the United States and seek the winter sun in Florida and other "Sunbelt" States, returning in the spring. This seasonal transfer has huge economic consequences (and electoral significance) in depopulated northern towns and burgeoning tourist centers in the South.

This kind of seasonal movement is a luxury. Another type of cyclic movement, **nomadism**, is a matter of survival, culture, and tradition. Nomadism is dwindling across the world, but it can still be found in parts of Asia and Africa. Westerners often envision nomadism as an aimless wandering across steppe and desert by small groups of rootless roamers—people who claim no territory and do not behave territorially. In reality, nomads need to know their territory well in order to find water, food, and shelter in their cyclic movements. Nomadic movement takes place along long-familiar routes repeated time and again. The nomads and their animals visit water sources and pastures that have served their ancestors for centuries. Weather conditions may affect the timing of their route, but barring obstacles such as fenced international borders or the privatization of long-used open country, nomads engage in cyclic movement.

Periodic Movement

Periodic movement, like cyclic movement, involves returning home. Periodic movement involves *a longer period of time* away from the home base than cyclic movement. One common type of periodic movement is **migrant labor**, which involves millions of workers in the United States and tens of millions worldwide. The need for migrant labor in the farm fields of California, Florida, and other parts of the United States creates a large flow of cross-border movers, many of whom eventually become immigrants.

A specialized form of periodic movement is **transhumance**—a system of pastoral farming in which ranchers move livestock according to the seasonal availability of pastures. This is a periodic form of movement because it involves a long period of residential relocation (unlike classic nomadism). In Switzerland, for example, cattle are driven up the mountain slopes to high, fresh pastures during the summer; farm families follow the herds, taking up residence in cottages that are abandoned during the cold winter. In the "Horn" of Northeast Africa, hundreds of thousands of people follow their livestock from highland to lowland and back in search of pastures renewed by seasonal rainfall.

Periodic movement takes on other forms as well. If you leave home to attend a college far away, you are living away from home for four (or more) years. Although you may retain a home address in your place of origin, you now spend the great majority of your time in your new

abode (traveling home only for breaks), and your mobility cannot be categorized as cyclic.

Military service is another form of periodic movement. In a given year, as many as 10 million U.S. citizens, including military personnel and their families, are moved to new locations where they will spend tours of duty that can last several years.

Migration

When movement results in permanent relocation across significant distances, it is classified as *migration*. The process of migration involves the long-term relocation of an individual, household, or larger group to a new locale outside the community of origin.

International migration, movement across country borders, is also called transnational migration. When a migrant leaves the home country, he or she is classified as an emigrant (one who migrates out) of the home country. When the same migrant enters a new country, he or she is classified as an immigrant (one who migrates in) of the new country. Emigration subtracts from the total popula-

tion of a country, and **immigration** adds to the total population of a country.

Countries also experience **internal migration**—migration that occurs within a single country's borders. Mapping internal migration routes reveals patterns of well-defined streams of migrants that change over time. Early in the twentieth century, a major migration stream took tens of thousands of African American families from the South of the United States to the industrializing cities of the Northeast and Midwest. Today, major internal migration movements in the United States are carrying migrants to the Sunbelt and the Far West (Fig. 3.4).

Internal migration varies according to the mobility of the population. In mobile societies, internal migration over long distances is common. In the United States, the flow of internal migration is not as simple as rural to urban. Rather, in the past few decades, internal migrants have flocked to the economically dynamic regions of the Sunbelt and Far West. Internal migrants have escaped from large cities and rural areas to move to medium-sized cities for retirement or family-friendly lifestyles; and wealthy individuals who seek solace and space have moved into environmentally attractive rural areas, trying to keep

Figure 3.4

Recent Internal Migration in the United States. *Courtesy of*: United States Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program, 2004.

the area "rural," while pushing out farmers. The U.S. population is the most mobile in the world. More than 5 million people move from one State to another every year, and nearly seven times as many—an average of 35 million—move within their State, county, or community. On average, an American citizen moves once about every six years.

Relatively new migrants also migrate internally within their new home country. Since the 1940s, the American Southwest and Florida have attracted millions of migrants from Latin America to the United States. Most migrants stayed in these same basic regions, perhaps migrating part of the year to work in agricultural fields. In 1986, the US government passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), legislation that gave amnesty and permanent residence to 2.6 million migrants who had been living in the United States for a long period of time. The newly legal migrants under IRCA could move anywhere, and during the 1990s, many moved to the Great Plains and Midwest and also to the South (Fig. 3.5). Migrants found the South attractive for the same reasons other Americans were—the growth of the Sunbelt economy in the 1990s brought numerous job opportunities, and the warm climate year round was also attractive.

In Peru, which is a less mobile society than the U.S. society, the pattern of internal migration is generally from rural to urban. Migrants have left rural areas and moved to Lima, the capital. Global and national investment capital is concentrated in Lima. The capital represents the major focus of economic opportunity for the rural population. Lima receives the vast majority of Peru's migrants, regardless of age, gender, or marital status.

thinking geographically

Choose one type of cyclic or periodic movement and then think of a specific example of the kind of movement you chose. Now, determine how this movement changes both the home and the destination. How do these places change as a result of this cyclic or period movement?
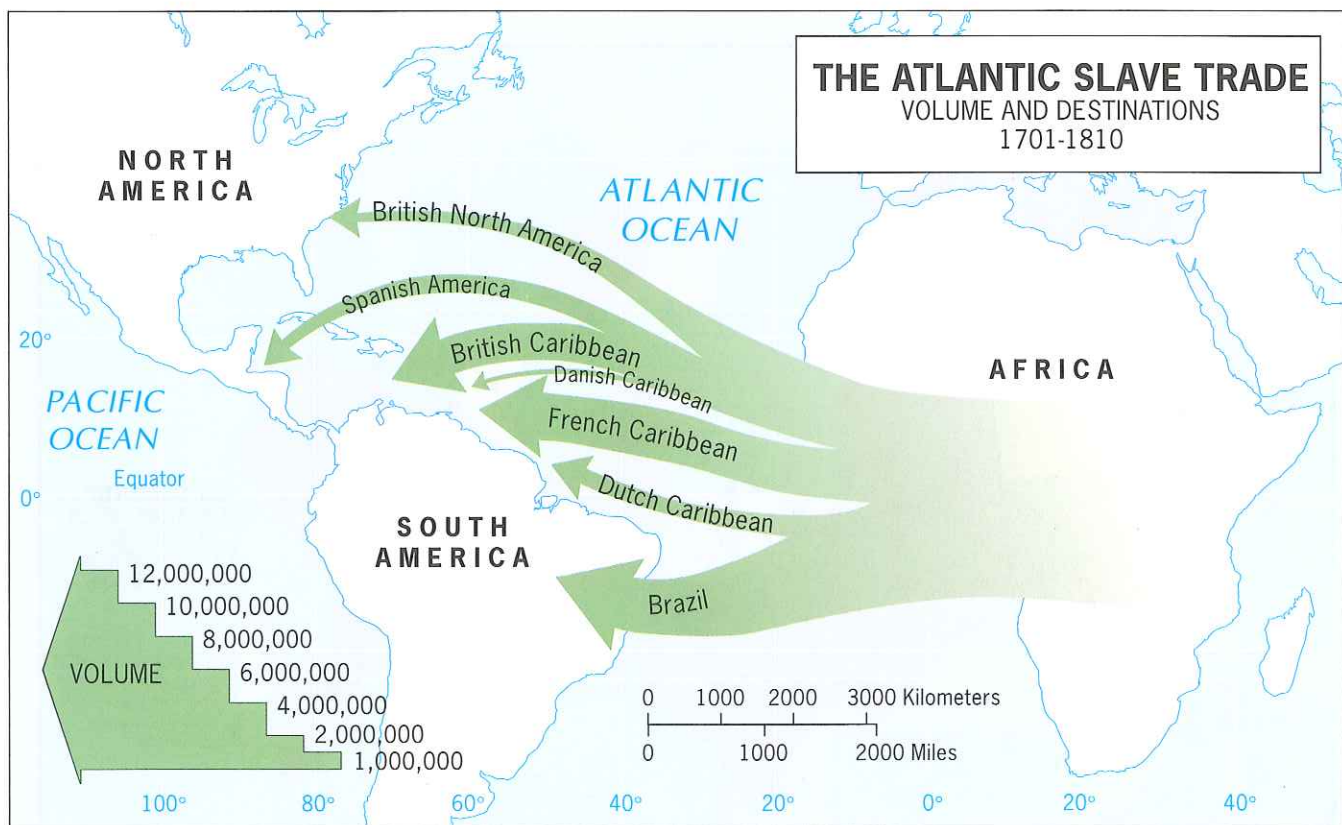
(after P. D. Curtin)

Figure 3.5

The Atlantic Slave Trade. *Adapted with permission from:* Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade.* University of Wisconsin Press, 1969, p. 57 and Donald K. Fellows, *Geography.* John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1967, p. 121.

WHY DO PEOPLE MIGRATE?

Migration can be the result of a voluntary action, a conscious decision to move from one place to the next. It can also be the result of involuntary action, a forced movement chosen by one group of people for another group of people. **Forced migration** involves the imposition of authority or power, producing involuntary migration movements that cannot be understood based on theories of choice. **Voluntary migration** occurs after a migrant weighs options and choices (even if desperately or not so rationally), and can be analyzed and understood as a series of options or choices that result in movement.

The distinction between forced and voluntary migration is not always clear-cut. The enormous European migration to the United States during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is often cited as a prime example of voluntary migration. However, some European migration can be construed as forced. The British treatment of the Irish during their colonial rule over Ireland can be seen as political persecution—a cause for forced migration. During British colonialism in Ireland, the British took control of nearly all of the Irish Catholic lands and discouraged the operation of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Until 1829, the British enforced penal laws preventing Irish Catholics from buying land, voting, or carrying weapons. The mass exodus of migrants from Ireland to North America in the mid-1800s can be seen as forced, both because of the British treatment of the Irish and because of the potato famine, but it can also be seen as voluntary in that the Irish chose to go to North America.

At the scale of an individual region or country, we can question whether a decision to migrate is forced or voluntary. At the scale of the household, the decision to migrate is all the more complex. For certain members of a migrating household, the move may be under duress, and for others, the move may be a preferred choice. The neutral title "migrant" veils the complexities of decision making at the household scale. Geographic studies of gender in migration reveal the complexities of migration at the household scale. At the household scale, geographers consider power relationships, divisions of labor, and gender identities in understanding migration flows. Here, decisions are made, in geographer Victoria Lawson's terms, in a "cooperative conflict bargaining process." Who has a say in this process and how much of a say each individual has depend on gendered power relationships and responsibilities in the household.

Studies of gender and migration find that, in many regions, men are more mobile than women and men migrate farther than women. Generally, men have more choices of employment than women, and women earn less than men in the jobs they find at the destination. One study of migration in Mexican households found that strongly patriarchal households shield young women from migration, sending young men out to work. Mexican households without a strong patriarchy send young, unmarried women to the city or another country to gain employment.

Thus, geographers cannot easily describe migration flows in terms of men and women or forced and voluntary. Ultimately, the decision or directive to migrate happens to an individual migrant within a household, place, country, region, and world, each of which has its own dynamics. The key difference between voluntary and forced migration, however, is that voluntary migrants have an option (at the very least—where to go or what to do once there); forced migrants do not.

Forced Migration

The largest and most devastating forced migration in the history of humanity was the Atlantic slave trade, which carried tens of millions of Africans from their homes to South America, the Caribbean, and North America, with huge loss of life. The number of Africans sold into slavery will never be known (estimates range from 12 million to 30 million). Figure 3.5 shows an approximation of the numbers involved, as well as the destinations of the trans-Atlantic African deportees.

Because slavery plays a major role in U.S. history, many students in the United States assume the vast majority of African slaves were forced across the Atlantic and into the southeastern United States. However, as the map shows, a considerable majority of Africans were forced across the Atlantic to the Caribbean region, to coastal Middle America, and to Brazil.

The Atlantic slave trade began during the sixteenth century, when Africans were first brought to the Caribbean. In the early decades of the seventeenth century, they arrived in small numbers on plantations that were developing in coastal eastern North America. Plantation economies from the southeastern United States to Brazil helped drive the slave trade. The wealth promised through plantation agriculture created a demand for slaves by plantation owners, who paid European shippers for slaves, who in turn paid African raiders for slaves. Of all crops produced on plantations in the Americas and Caribbean during the 1700s, sugar was the most important economically. Figure 3.5 reflects the scramble for sugar islands in the Caribbean, as the map names Spanish, British, Danish, French, and Dutch colonies in the Caribbean as destinations for slaves. Add the coffee, fruit, and sugar plantations in Brazil and the cotton plantations of the southeastern United States, and the destinations on the map make sense.

The terror and destruction of slave raiding afflicted large areas of Africa. Much of West Africa was exploited,

from Liberia to Nigeria and inland to the margins of the Sahara. So many Africans were taken from the area that is now Benin to Bahia in Brazil that significant elements of the local culture remained intact in the transition. Today there are strong ties between Bahia and Benin, and cultural exchanges are growing stronger. The entire Equatorial African coastal region was victimized as well, and Portuguese slave traders raided freely in the Portuguese domains of Angola and Mozambique. Arab slave raiders were active in East Africa and the Horn, penetrating Equatorial Africa and often cooperating with the Europeans. Zanzibar, off the coast of mainland Tanzania, long was a major slave market.

We know proportionately where slaves ended up, but we can never gauge the full impact of this horrific period. In *A Colonizer's Model of the World*, geographer James Blaut discussed the sheer loss to African civilizations that occurred when significant populations were enslaved. The Atlantic slave trade also changed the Caribbean, where on many islands the vast majority of people are of African-Caribbean descent, and few, if any, indigenous peoples remain. In combination, the slave trade inflicted incalculable damage on African societies and communities, and changed the cultural and ethnic geography of Brazil, Middle America, and the United States.

Although no forced migration in human history compares in magnitude to the Atlantic slave trade, there have been other forced migrations that have changed the world's demographic map. For 50 years beginning in 1788, tens of thousands of convicts were shipped from Britain to Australia, where they had a lasting impact on the continent's population geography. In the 1800s, the U.S. government took lands from thousands of Native Americans and forcibly moved them to other areas of the country—some far from their traditional homelands. In the Soviet Union during Stalin's ruthless rule between the late 1920s and 1953, the government forcibly moved millions of non-Russians from their homes to remote parts of Central Asia and Siberia for political reasons. During the 1930s in Germany, the Nazis were responsible for a significant forced migration of Jews from portions of Western Europe that fell under their control.

Forced migration still happens today. It continues to occur, for example, in the form of countermigration, in which governments send back migrants caught entering their countries illegally. In the 1990s, the United States repatriated Haitian arrivals from Florida. For 30 years, people from Afghanistan have left the country in search of safety from civil war, the Taliban, and the current instability of the Afghan War. Approximately 10 million Afghans have been refugees since 1979, fleeing mainly to Pakistan and Iran. Policies toward these refugees have shifted over time. During the 1980s and the early 1990s, the international community sent substantial aid to Pakistan to help them serve the refugee population.

After the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in 1994, support for Pakistan waned and the Pakistan government forced the repatriation of thousands of Afghans. Since September 11, 2001, the international community, led by the UNHCR has helped Pakistan and Iran repatriate nearly 5 million refugees to Afghanistan. Currently, 3 million Afghans are registered refugees in Iran and Pakistan, and approximately 1 million more Afghans in Pakistan are not registered as refugees. The repatriation of Afghans continues and is complicated by the current war and the fact that over half the Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran were born there...not in Afghanistan.

Push and Pull Factors in Voluntary Migration

Why do people choose to migrate? Researchers have been intrigued by this question for more than a century. Studies of voluntary migration flows indicate that the intensity of a migration flow varies with such factors as similarities between the source and the destination, the effectiveness of the flow of information from the destination back to the source, and the physical distance between the source and the destination.

Over a century ago, British demographer Ernst Ravenstein sought an answer to the question of why people voluntarily migrate. He studied internal migration in England, and on the basis of his data he proposed several **laws of migration**, many of which are still relevant today including:

1. Every migration flow generates a return or countermigration.

2. The majority of migrants move a short distance.

3. Migrants who move longer distances tend to choose big-city destinations.

4. Urban residents are less migratory than inhabitants of rural areas.

5. Families are less likely to make international moves than young adults.

Ravenstein also posited an inverse relationship between the volume of migration and the distance between source and destination; that is, the number of migrants to a destination declines as the distance they must travel increases. Ravenstein's idea is an early observation of the **gravity model**, which predicts interaction between places on the basis of their population size and distance between them. The gravity model assumes spatial interaction (such as migration) is directly related to the populations and inversely related to the *distance* between them—an assumption that had more meaning in an age before airplane travel and the Internet. In mathematical terms, the equation for the gravity model is the multiplication of the two populations divided by the distance between them.

Although the gravity model gives us a guide to expected migration, migration is not as simple as a mathematical equation. When a person, family, or group of people makes a voluntary decision to migrate, push and pull factors come into play. **Push factors** are the conditions and perceptions that help the migrant decide to leave a place. **Pull factors** are the circumstances that effectively attract the migrant to certain locales from other places—the decision of where to go. A migrant's decision to emigrate from the home country and migrate to a new country results from a combination of push and pull factors—and these factors play out differently depending on the circumstance and scale of the migration. Because a migrant is likely to be more familiar with his or her place of residence (source) than with the locale to which he or she is moving (destination), a migrant will likely perceive push factors more accurately than pull factors. Push factors include individual considerations such as work or retirement conditions, cost of living, personal safety and security, and, for many, environmental catastrophes or even issues like weather and climate. Pull factors tend to be vaguer and may depend solely on perceptions construed from things heard and read rather than on experiences in the destination place. Often, migrants move on the basis of excessively positive images and expectations regarding their destinations.

When considering pull factors, the principle of **distance decay** comes into play (Fig. 3.6). Prospective migrants are likely to have more complete perceptions of nearer places than of farther ones, which confirms the notion that th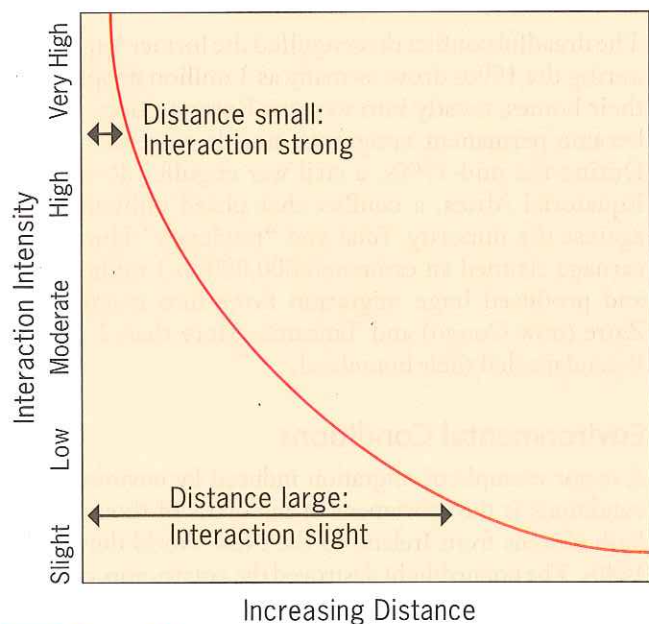e intensity of human activity, process, or function declines as distance from its source increases. Since interaction with faraway places generally decreases as distance increases, prospective migrants are likely to feel much less certain about distant destinations than about nearer ones. This leads many migrants to move less far than they originally contemplated.

Many migration streams that appear on maps as long, unbroken routes in fact consist of a series of stages, a phenomenon known as **step migration**. A peasant family in rural Brazil, for example, is likely to move first to a village, then to a nearby town, later to a city, and finally to a metropolis such as São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro. At each stage a new set of pull factors comes into play.

Not all migrants from one place follow the same steps. When 1000 people leave a village and migrate to a town in a given year, most, if not all, of them may dream of making it to—and in—the "big city." But only about 500 may actually move from town to city, and of these, only 200 eventually reach the metropolis that impelled them to move in the first place. Along the way the majority are captured by **intervening opportunity**. This happened when African Americans by the tens of thousands migrated northward after World War I to seek work in growing cities like Chicago and Cleveland. Many found employment in St. Louis and Cincinnati; that is, they encountered intervening opportunities along their northbound routes.

Along any route of migration, whether direct, in steps, or interrupted by intervening opportunity, a voluntary migrant weighs push and pull factors.

Types of Push and Pull Factors

What specific factors impel people to pull up stakes and leave the familiar for the uncertain? What specific factors help migrants choose a destination? Research has shown that typically a combination of factors, not just one, leads to deciding it is time to move and deciding where to go. Any single factor can be either a push for the migrant to leave the home country or a pull to the new country, and which factor matters most depends on the migrant and the circumstances surrounding the decision to migrate.

Legal Status

Migrants can arrive in a country with (legally) or without (illegally) the consent of the host country. Each country around the world gets to determine who is allowed to migrate to their country and under what circumstances. If you apply for and receive a work visa from another country, you are legally allowed to live in the country and work there for the time allotted on the visa (usually a period of months or years). Having a visa makes you a legal migrant because you have your documents, your visa, to show your legal right to be in the place. If you do not have a visa, you are an illegal, or undocumented, migrant in the country.

Figure 3.6

Distance Decay.   © E.H. Fouberg, A.B. Murphy, H. J. de Blij, and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Undocumented or illegal migrants choose quite different options for finding their way into the country than legal migrants do, simply because they do not want to be caught for fear of **deportation** (being sent back home).

Economic Conditions

Poverty has driven countless millions from their homelands and continues to do so. Perceived opportunities in destinations such as Western Europe and North America impel numerous migrants, both legal and illegal, to cross the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, and the Rio Grande in search of a better life. The lower economic position of migrants in their host countries can lead to exploitation by employers and others. The United Nations convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families recognizes the precarious position of migrant workers—their need for work and their desire to not be deported. The convention establishes standards of treatment for migrant workers. Although only 22 states have signed onto the convention, its statements on human trafficking and the right of migrant workers to equal wages are influencing states' migration policies.

Power Relationships

Gender, ethnicity, race, and money are all factors in the decision to migrate. The power relationships already embedded in society enable the flow of migrants around the world. Employers who hire migrant workers often have perceptions of what kinds of migrants would best work for them.

Women in the Middle East hire Southeast Asian women to work as domestic servants, housekeepers, and nannies. Geographer Paul Boyle points out that by hiring women from abroad, the female head of household establishes a relationship in which the employee's "ethnicity and citizenship status differentiates them from their female employer and this influences the power relationships that underpin the working arrangements." In their study of placement agencies that help people hire domestic workers, Stiell and England found that certain ethnicities were portrayed according to a scripted stereotype. For instance, workers from the Caribbean went from being portrayed as "docile, jolly and good with children" to being depicted as "difficult, aggressive and selfish," and women from the Philippines are in demand now as they are being portrayed as "'naturally' docile, subservient, hard-working, good natured, domesticated, and willing to endure long hours of housework and child-care with little complaint."

Race is also a factor in the hiring of migrant workers. For example, carpet companies in Dalton, Georgia (the carpet capital of the world) began hiring Mexican workers after the 1986 passage of IRCA because they saw them as hard workers who were loyal to one company. In the same time frame, North and South Carolina have also experienced surges in the Mexican migrant population. Geographer

Jamie Winders cites the work of several researchers in the South whose research "raises the issue of displacement of black workers by Mexican migration—a topic hinted at by many studies but addressed by few." Issues of race and migrant status in hiring can spill over into neighborhoods as they have recently in Raleigh, North Carolina, where in the last 10 years conflicts over affordable housing between the African Americans who lived in the neighborhoods and Mexican migrants who moved into the neighborhoods for the same affordable housing have arisen.

Geographer Paul Boyle also cites the power relationships based on money in the growing migration industry, whereby migration flows are contractually arranged in order to fill labor needs for particular economic sectors throughout the world. Contractors give migrants advances on their income, help them migrate to the new country or region within a country, and then take wages in order to pay for advances and other needs the contractor supplies to the migrants.

Political Circumstances

Throughout history oppressive regimes have engendered migration streams. Desperate migrants fled Vietnam by the hundreds of thousands after the communists took control of the country in 1975. In 1972 Uganda's dictator, Idi Amin, expelled 50,000 Asians and Ugandans of Asian descent from his country. The Cuban communist dictatorship expelled more than 125,000 Cubans in 1980 in the "Mariel Boatlift." Politically driven migration flows are marked by both escape and expulsion.

Armed Conflict and Civil War

The dreadful conflict that engulfed the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s drove as many as 3 million people from their homes, mostly into western Europe. Many people became permanent emigrants, unable to return home. During the mid-1990s, a civil war engulfed Rwanda in Equatorial Africa, a conflict that pitted militant Hutu against the minority Tutsi and "moderate" Hutu. The carnage claimed an estimated 800,000 to 1 million lives and produced huge migration flows into neighboring Zaïre (now Congo) and Tanzania. More than 2 million Rwandans fled their homeland.

Environmental Conditions

A major example of migration induced by environmental conditions is the movement of hundreds of thousands of Irish citizens from Ireland to the New World during the 1840s. The potato blight destroyed the potato crop, creating famine. The famine was exacerbated by a set of political conditions for which the British government has recently apologized—a reminder that environmental conditions rarely operate in a social vacuum. But this migration with an

This photo shows the damage caused by the 1995 eruption of the Sourfriere Hills volcano on the Caribbean Island of Montserrat. In the foreground you can see the grey volcanic ash clogging the roadbed, and in the background the abandoned capital city of Plymouth. Many buildings cannot even be entered because the ash has buried their first floors or caved in their ceilings. This scene illustrated for me the complexities of migration in the face of natural disasters. Many Montserrations fled to the United States when Plymouth was destroyed, and were given "temporary protected" immigration status. The U.S. government told Montserratian refugees to leave in 2005—not because the volcanic crisis was over or because the housing crisis caused by the volcano was solved. Rather, the U.S. government expected the volcanic crisis to last at least 10 more years; so, the Monsterratians no longer qualified as "temporary" refugees.

Credit: Jason Dittmer, University College London

Figure 3.7

environmental component permanently altered the demographics of both Ireland (the source) and the northeastern region of the United States (the chief destination).

Environmental crises such as earthquakes, hurricanes, and volcanic eruptions also stimulate migrations. For example, a surge of migration follows every major earthquake in California and flooding as from Hurricane Katrina or the 2008 floods in the midwestern United States. Because many migrants return, the net outflow generated by such momentary crises is usually small, but not always. New Orleans is estimated to have lost close to 40% of its population as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

Some environmental crises, such as volcanic eruptions, bring long-term environmental changes to the landscape, making return migration difficult, if not impossible. For example, the Caribbean island of Montserrat had a small population of about 10,000 prior to a volcanic eruption that began in 1995. The volcano has been active since then, prompting a migration flow. Geographer Jason Dittmer studied how drastically the physical and cultural landscapes of Montserrat have changed since the onset of volcanic activity. Dittmer explains that roughly half the island has been proclaimed an Exclusion Zone, a region that includes the capital city of Plymouth (Fig. 3.7).

People are not allowed in this zone of active volcanic activity. The people who remained must now live in the northern part of the island where the soils are thin, the land is rocky, and making a living is difficult. Over 7000 people migrated off the island, and the remaining 3000 migrated to the northern coast of the island, where the effects of the volcano are less felt.

Culture and Traditions

People who fear that their culture and traditions will not survive a major political transition, and who are able to migrate to places they perceive as safer, will often do so. When British India was partitioned into a mainly Hindu India and an almost exclusively Muslim Pakistan, millions of Muslim residents of India migrated across the border to the new Islamic state. Similarly, in the 1990s after decades of Soviet obstruction, more than 2 million Jews left the former Soviet Union for Israel and other destinations. And turbulent political conditions in South Africa during the mid-1990s impelled many whites to emigrate to Australia, Europe, and North America.

Technological Advances

For some migrants, emigration is no longer the difficult and hazardous journey it used to be. Although most migrants still move by simple and even difficult means, some use modern forms of transportation and communication, the availability of which can itself encourage migration.

Gone is the time when would-be emigrants waited months, even years, for information about distant places. News today travels faster than ever, including news of job opportunities and ways to reach desired destinations. Television, radio, and telephone stimulate millions of people to migrate by relaying information about relatives, opportunities, and already established communities in destination lands. Advances in communication technology strengthen the role of **kinship links** as push or pull factors. When deciding where to go, a migrant is often pulled to places where family and friends have already found success. Thus, Turks quickly heard about Germany's need for immigrant labor. Algerians knew where the most favorable destinations were in France. Haitians knew that a "Little Haiti" had sprung up in the Miami area.

When migrants move along and through kinship links, they create what geographers call chain migration. **Chain migration** occurs when the migrant chooses a destination and writes, calls, or communicates through others to tell family and friends at home about the new place. The migrant may help create a positive perception of the destination for his family and friends, and may promise help with migration, by providing housing and assistance obtaining a job. Reassuring family and friends that a new community has been formed, a place where they can feel home, encourages further migration along the same chain. Chains of migration built upon each other create **immigration waves**—swells in migration from one origin to the same destination.

thinking geographically

Think about a migration flow within your family, whether internal, international, voluntary, or forced. The flow can be one you experienced or one you only heard about through family. List the push and pull factors. Then, write a letter in the first person (if you were not involved, pretend you were your grandmother or whomever) to another family member at "home" describing how you came to migrate to the destination.

WHERE DO PEOPLE MIGRATE?

It is tempting to reduce the flow of migration to simple economics—a chance for a job in another place trumps the lack of a job at home. However, migration is much more complicated. Migration depends on various push and pull factors, ranging from persecution in civil war to environmental disaster, from disempowerment in the home to discrimination in the country, and each migration flow is helped or hampered by existing networks and governmental actions.

In this section of the chapter, we examine where people migrate, that is, what destinations they choose. At the global, regional, and national scales, we can see several major migration flows over the past 500 years, flows where hundreds of thousands of people migrated along the same general path. We focus on where—on the destinations in these major migration flows. A large movement of migrants changes places—both the place the migrants left and the destination. As we discuss migration flows at the global, regional, and national scales in this chapter, remember that these flows give only an overview of migration. At the local and household scales, each individual or family migration

required life-altering decisions, and those decisions fostered global change.

Global Migration Flows

Before 1500, long-distance, **global-scale migration** occurred haphazardly, typically in pursuit of spices, fame, or exploration. To put exploration in perspective, we need to remember that a complete map of the world's continents did not exist until the early 1800s. European **explorers**, who included surveyors and cartographers, played a major role in finally mapping the world. On the heels of exploration came European **colonization**—a physical process whereby the colonizer takes over another place, putting its own government in charge and either moving its own people into the place or bringing in indentured outsiders to gain control of the people and the land. First, Europeans colonized the Americas and the coasts of Africa and parts of Asia from the 1500s to the 1800s. Then, Europeans colonized interior Africa and Asia starting in the late 1800s and into the 1900s.

The past five centuries have witnessed human migration on an unprecedented scale, much of it generated by European colonization. The major flows of global migration from 1500 on are shown in Figure 3.8. The migration flows include movements from Europe to North America (1); from Southern Europe to South and Middle America (2); from Britain and Ireland to Africa and Australia (3); from Africa to the Americas during the period of slavery (4); and from India to eastern Africa, Southeast Asia, and Caribbean America (5).

Among the greatest human migrations in recent centuries was the flow from Europe to the Americas. Emigration from Europe (1 and 2 in Fig. 3.8) began slowly. Before the 1830s, perhaps 2.75 million Europeans left to settle overseas. The British went to North America, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa (3). From Spain and Portugal, many hundreds of thousands of Europeans emigrated to Middle and South America. Early European colonial settlements grew, even in coastal areas of present-day Angola, Kenya, and Indonesia. The rate of European emigration increased sharply between 1835 and 1935, with perhaps as many as 75 million departing for colonies in Africa and Asia, and for economic opportunities in the Americas. Although millions of Europeans eventually returned to their homelands, the net outflow from Europe was enormous, as evidenced by the sheer number of Canadians and Americans who identify themselves as being of European ancestry.

As already discussed, the Americas were the destination of another mass of immigrants: African slaves. African slaves were among the very first non-American Indian settlers in this country (4). Although this migration is mapped as just one of the eight major migrations, its immense and lasting impact on both sides of the Atlantic sets it apart from all the others.

Even as the Atlantic slave trade was in progress, the European impact was generating other major migrations as well. The British, who took control over South Asia, transported tens of thousands of "indentured" workers from present-day India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka to East and South Africa (see symbol (5) on Fig. 3.8). Today, people of Indian ancestry form substantial minorities in South Africa, Kenya, and Tanzania and, until their forced migration from Uganda, in that country as well. Their disproportionate share of commerce and wealth is now a major source of ethnic friction.

Long before the British arrived in India, Hindu influences radiated into Southeast Asia, reaching the Indonesian islands of Java and Bali. Later, the British renewed the Indian migration stream, bringing South Asians to the Malay Peninsula (including Singapore) and to their Pacific holdings including Fiji (Fig. 3.8).

The British were also instrumental in relocating Asians, mainly from India, to such Caribbean countries as Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana (the trans-Pacific stream marked 5 in Fig. 3.8). The Dutch brought many Javanese from what is today Indonesia to their former dependency of Suriname along the same route.

Regional Migration Flows

The stories of huge flows of migrants mapped in Figure 3.8 were unprecedented and meet few rivals in terms of sheer number today. Although some global migration flows already discussed were forced and some were voluntary, each occurred across an ocean. Migration also occurs at a **regional scale**, with migrants going to a neighboring country to take advantage of short-term economic opportunities, to reconnect with their cultural group across borders, or to flee political conflict or war.

Economic Opportunities

European colonialism helped establish **islands of development** throughout the world. Islands of development are often coastal cities because their establishment was based on access to trade (Fig. 3.9). Islands of development are places within a region or country where most foreign investment goes, where the vast majority of paying jobs are located, and where infrastructure is concentrated.
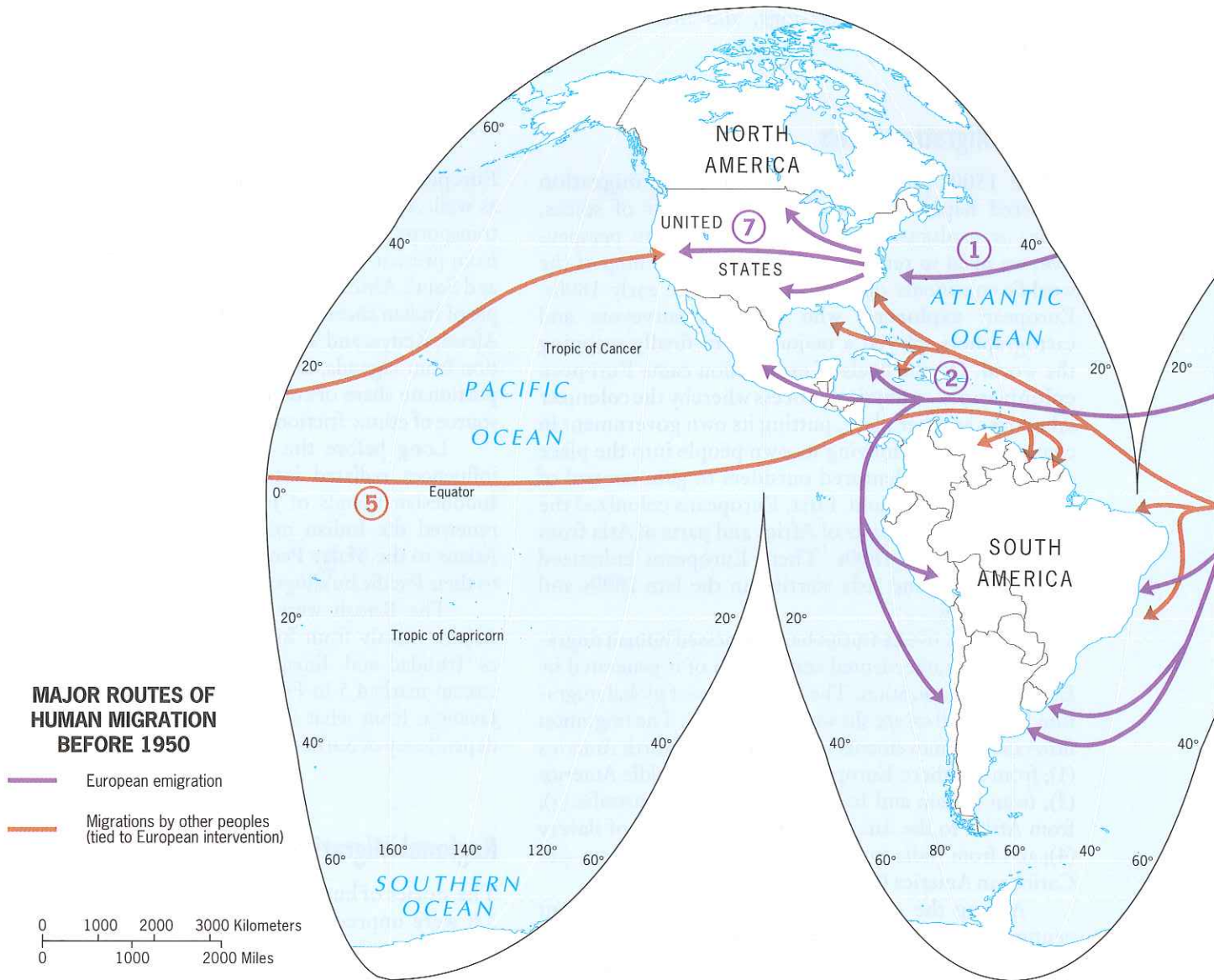
**MAJOR ROUTES OF
HUMAN MIGRATION
BEFORE 1950**

— European emigration

— Migrations by other peoples
(tied to European intervention)

0   1000   2000   3000 Kilometers
0   1000   2000 Miles

Figure 3.8
Major Routes of Human Migration before 1950. © H. J. de Blij, P. O. Muller,
and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

To understand migration flows from one poor country to another, it is not sufficient to analyze the flow at the global scale. We need to understand where the region fits into the global interaction picture, and to see how different locations within the region fit into

interaction patterns at both the global and regional scales. For example, within the region of West Africa, the oil-producing areas of Nigeria are islands of development. In the mid-1970s, poor people in Togo, Benin, Ghana, and the northern regions of Nigeria, perceiving
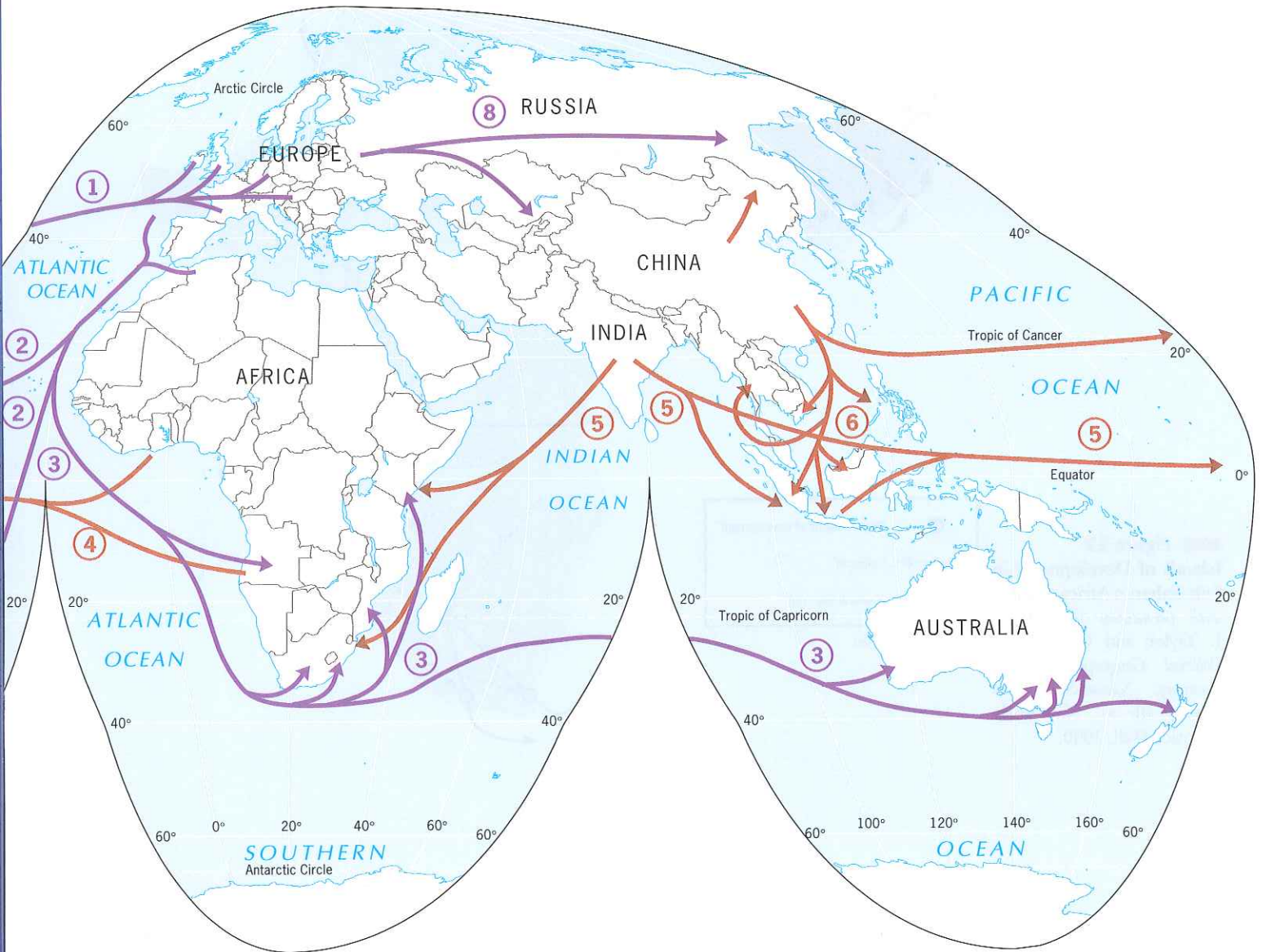
that economic life was better in coastal Nigeria, were lured to the coast for short-term jobs while the oil economy was good. The migrants, usually young men, worked as much as they could and sent almost all of the money they earned home as remittances to support their families. They worked until the oil economy took a fall in the early 1980s, and at that point, the Nigerian government decided the foreign workers were no longer needed. The Nigerian government forcibly pushed out 2 million foreign workers.
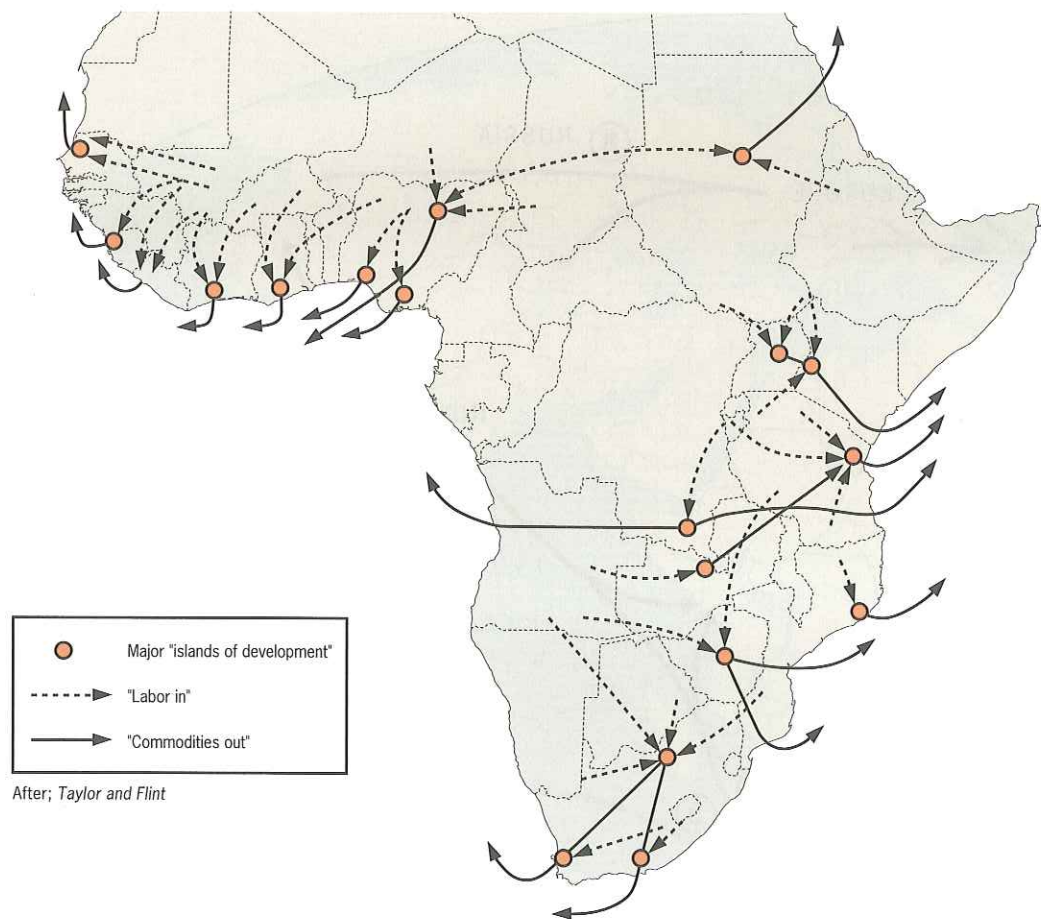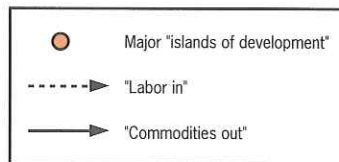
Islands of Development in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Adapted with permission from:* Peter J. Taylor and Colin Flint, *Political Geography: World-Economy, Nation-State and Locality,* 4th ed., New York: Prentice Hall, 2000.

After; Taylor and Flint

Legend:
- ● Major "islands of development"
- - - - ► "Labor in"
- ——► "Commodities out"

Global economic processes and the lasting effects of European colonialism certainly played a role in this West African migration flow. If we study such a flow only at the global scale, we see migrants moving from one poor country to another poor country. But if we use both the global and regional scales to study this flow, we understand regional economic influences and the pull of islands of development in Nigeria.

European colonialism also had an impact on regional migration flows in Southeast Asia. Europe's colonial occupation of Southeast Asia presented economic opportunities for the Chinese. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, many Chinese immigrated to cities in the region to work in trade, commerce, and finance (Fig. 3.10). Many remained, and today Chinese minorities in Southeast Asian countries account for substantial portions of national populations: 14 percent in Thailand, 32 percent in Malaysia, and 76 percent in Singapore. The Chinese minority in Indonesia accounts for only about 3 percent of the total population, but Indonesia has more than 200 million people, so its Chinese minority is one of Southeast Asia's largest clusters.

Reconnection of Cultural Groups

Regional migration flows also center on reconnecting cultural groups across borders. A migration stream with enormous consequences is the flow of Jewish immigrants to Israel. At the turn of the twentieth century, fewer than 50,000 Jewish residents lived in what was then Palestine. From 1919 to 1948, Great Britain held control over Palestine, and Britain encouraged Jews (whose ancestors had fled more than a thousand years earlier from the Middle East to Europe) to return to the region. By 1948, as many as 750,000 Jews resided in Palestine, when the United Nations intervened to partition the