LSE IDEAS public lecture

Each Age Gets the Great Powers It Needs: 20,000 years of international relations

Professor Ian Morris

Philippe Roman Chair in History and International Affairs for 2015-16, LSE IDEAS

Professor Michael Cox

Chair, LSE

Suggested hashtag for Twitter users: **#LSEMorris**

Each Age Gets the Great Powers it Needs:

Twenty Thousand Years of International Relations

Ian Morris

2015/16 Roman Lectures, London School of Economics

December 8, 2015

Two Questions:

1. Can we identify really long-term patterns in the system of great powers?

2. If so, can we (a) identify the forces underlying these patterns, (b) explain them, and (c) forecast where the trends will take us next?

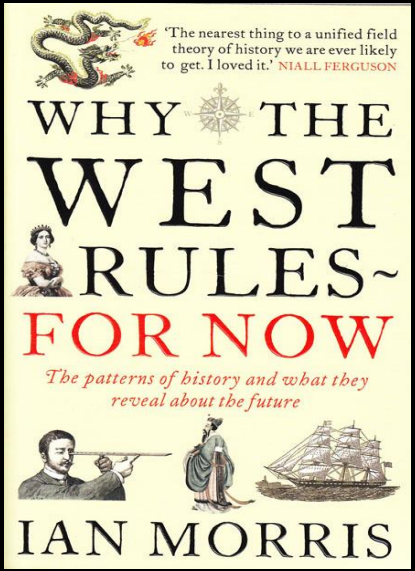
Two Questions:

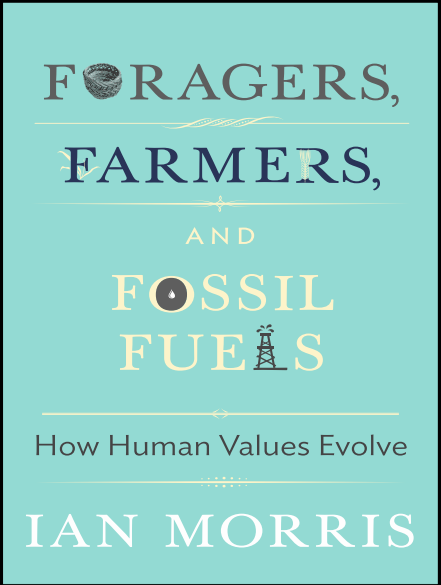
1. Can we identify really long-term patterns in the system of great powers?

   Yes

2. If so, can we (a) identify the forces underlying these patterns, (b) explain them, and (c) forecast where the trends will take us next?

   Yes


'The nearest thing to a unified field theory of history we are ever likely to get. I loved it.' NIALL FERGUSON
WHY THE WEST RULES~ FOR NOW
The patterns of history and what they reveal about the future
IAN MORRIS


FORAGERS, FARMERS, AND FOSSIL FUELS
How Human Values Evolve
IAN MORRIS

Four phases:

1. The world of foragers (tiny)
2. The age of agriculture (small)
3. Inner rim and heartland (big)
4. Inner rim and outer rim (huge)

The Plan:

1. Talk about each phase
2. Draw some conclusions

Four phases:

1. The world of foragers (tiny)
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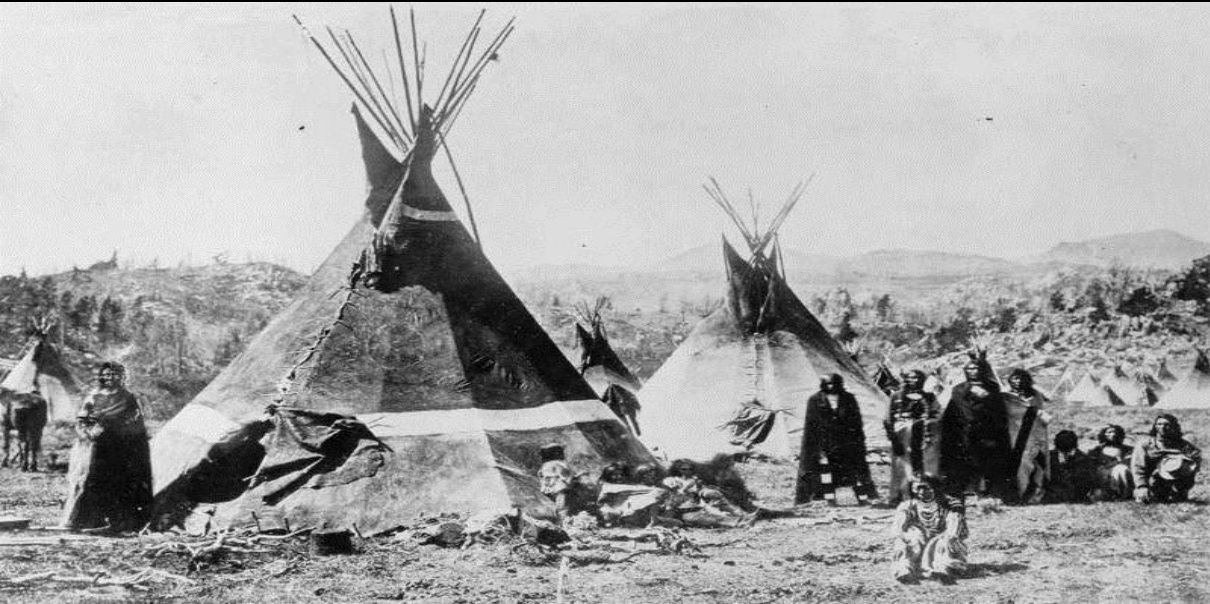
4. Inner rim and outer rim (huge)

Small-scale, highly mobile societies

Shoshone camp, 1930s (US Southwest)



Feasting, Amazon basin, 1970s

Kwakiutl village, British Columbia, 1890s

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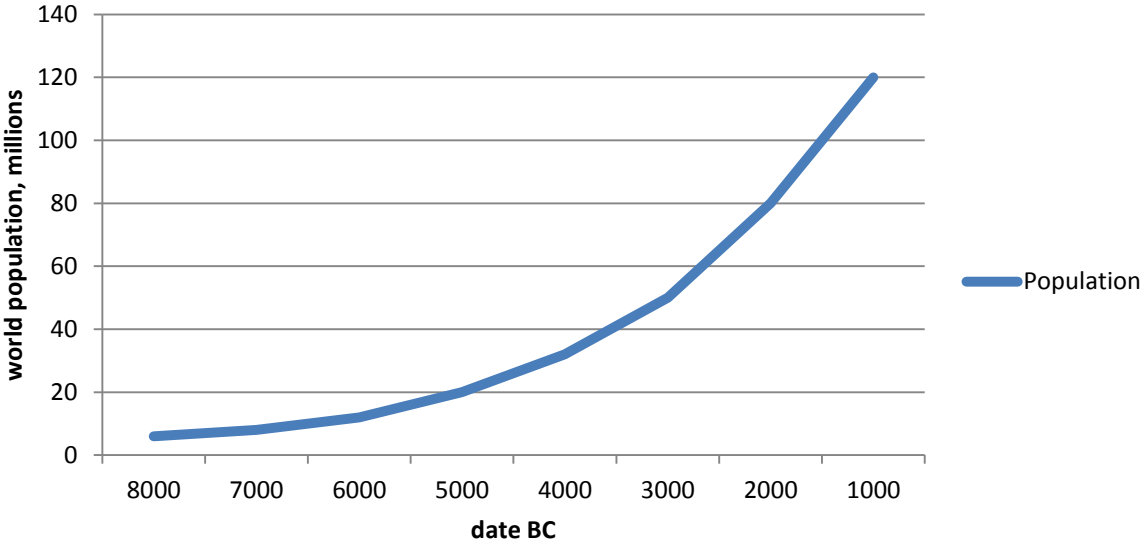
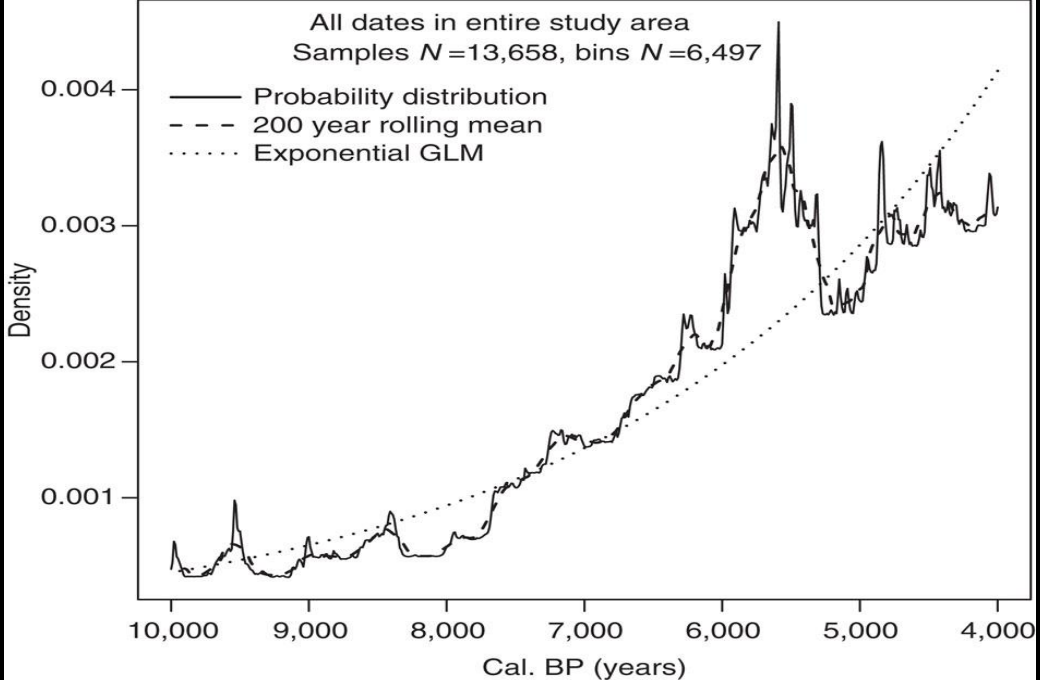
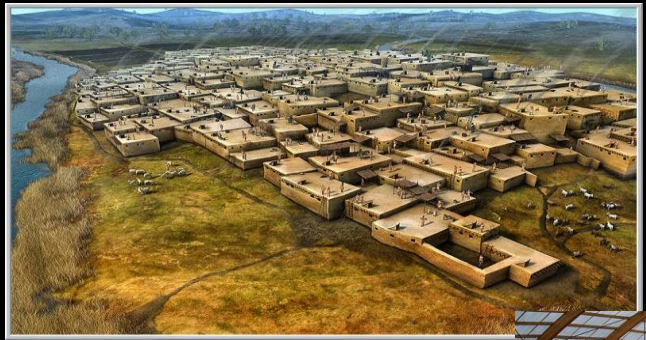
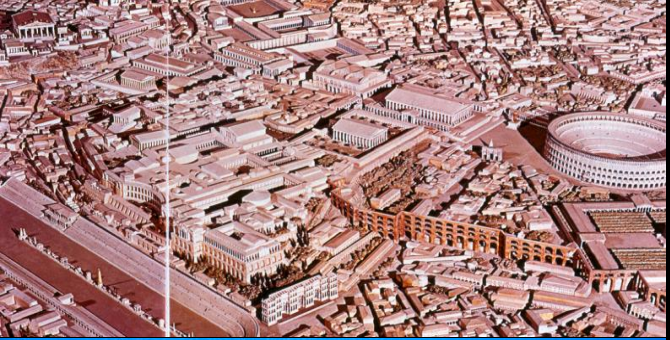

140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
world population, millions
8000
7000
6000
5000
4000
3000
2000
1000
date BC
Population


All dates in entire study area
Samples N =13,658, bins N =6,497
Probability distribution
200 year rolling mean
Exponential GLM
Density
0.004
0.003
0.002
0.001
10,000
9,000
8,000
7,000
6,000
5,000
4,000
Cal. BP (years)

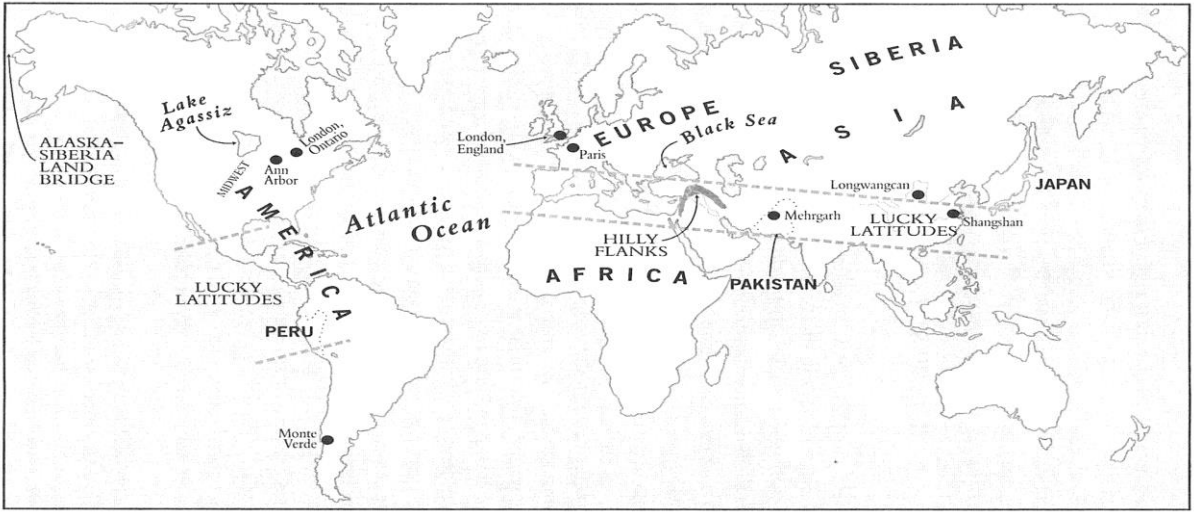


Çatalhöyük,
Turkey,
c. 6500 BC

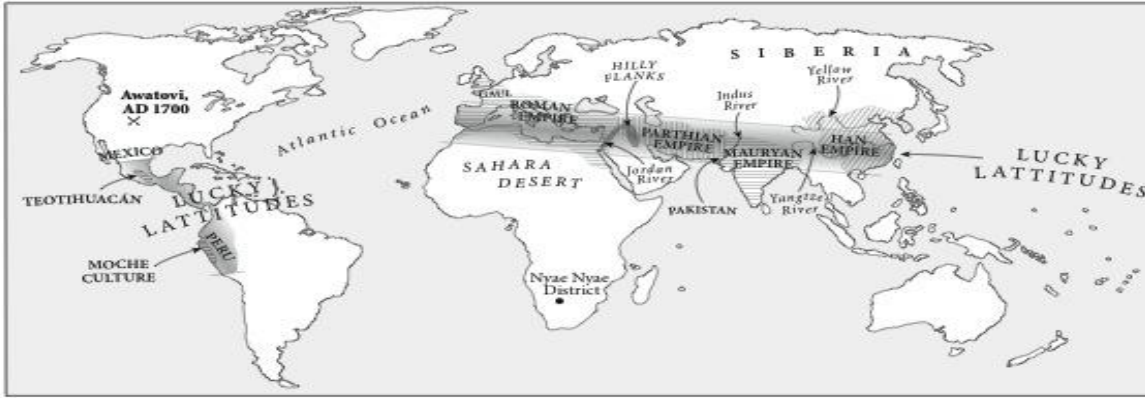


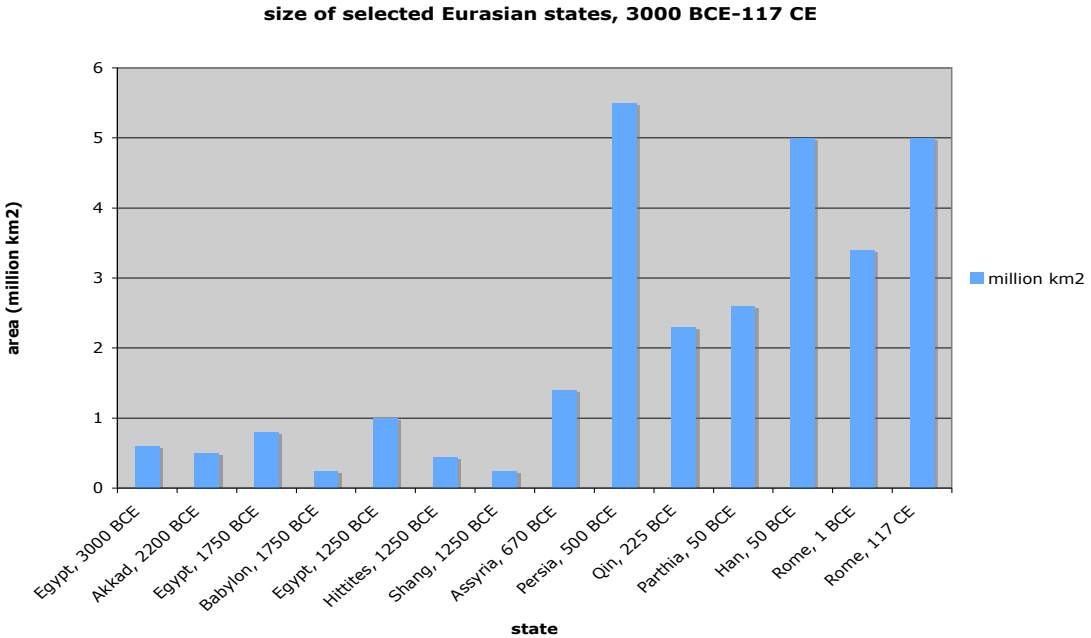
Hierarchy: Tutankhamun of Egypt (1341-1324 BC)

The lucky latitudes



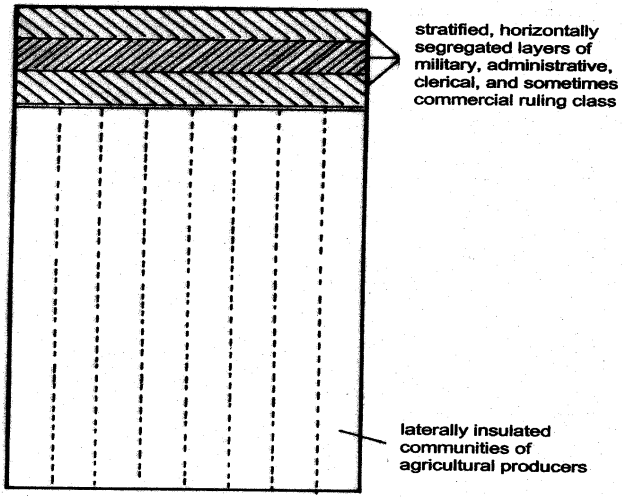
Morris War Fig. 02-03 Full turnpage (REV 1)



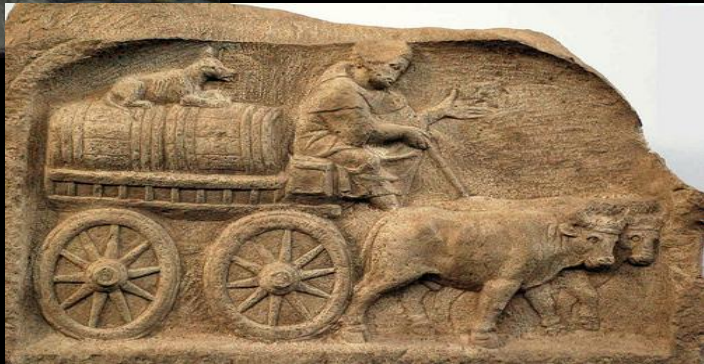

size of selected Eurasian states, 3000 BCE-117 CE
area (million km2)
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
Egypt, 3000 BCE
Akkad, 2200 BCE
Egypt, 1750 BCE
Babylon, 1750 BCE
Egypt, 1250 BCE
Hittites, 1250 BCE
Shang, 1250 BCE
Assyria, 670 BCE
Persia, 500 BCE
Qin, 225 BCE
Parthia, 50 BCE
Han, 50 BCE
Rome, 1 BCE
Rome, 117 CE
state
million km2

Ernest Gellner (1925-95)

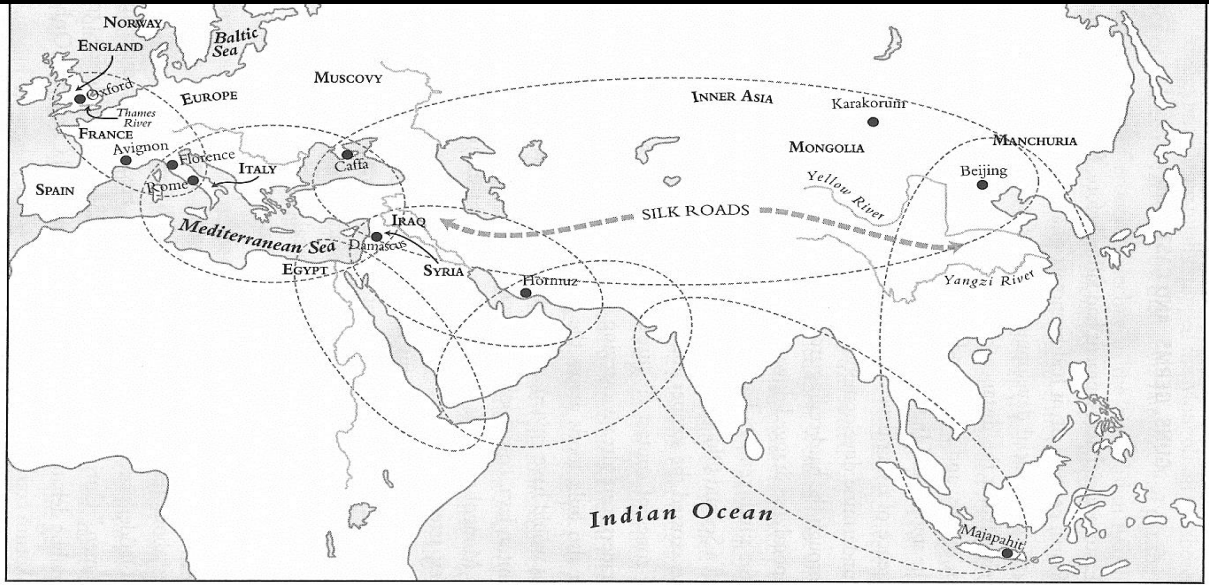
The structure of agrarian society (after Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 1983)

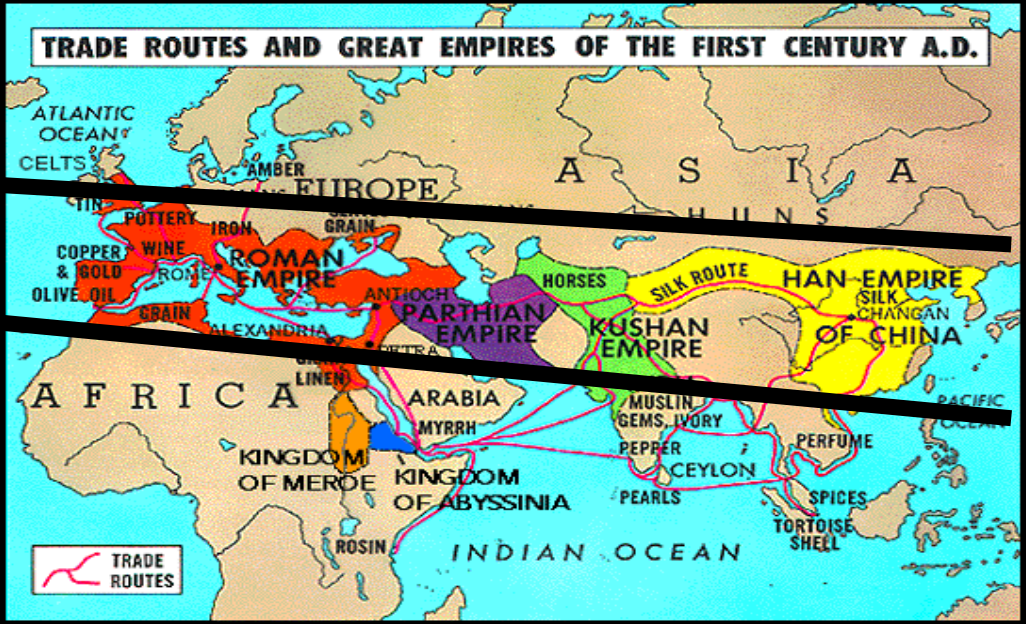


The conquest of distance



Eurasia reconnected, 13th-14th centuries AD



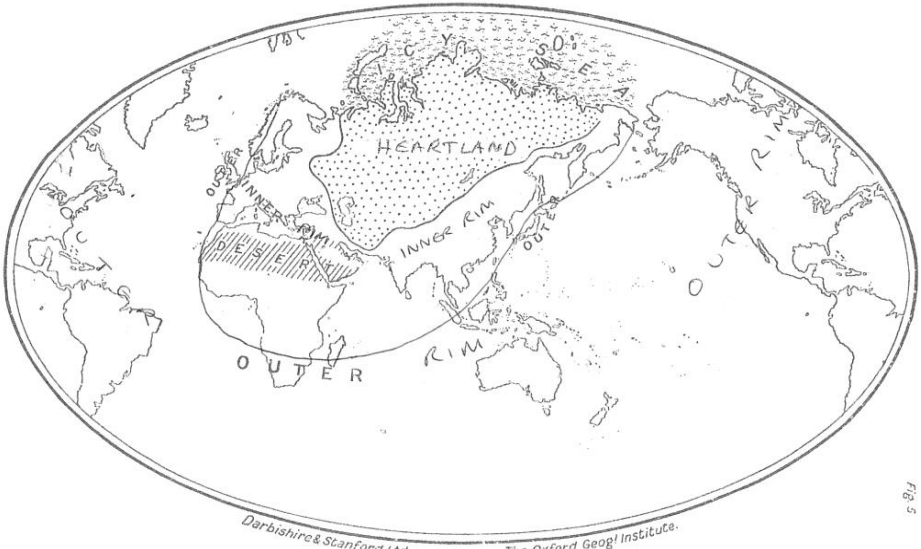

TRADE ROUTES AND GREAT EMPIRES OF THE FIRST CENTURY A.D.
ATLANTIC OCEAN
CELTS
AMBER
EUROPE
A S I A
HUNS
TIN
POTTERY
IRON
GRAIN
COPPER & GOLD
WINE
ROME
ROMAN EMPIRE
OLIVE OIL
GRAIN
ANTIOCH
PARTHIAN EMPIRE
HORSES
SILK ROUTE
HAN EMPIRE OF CHINA
SILK
CHANGAN
KUSHAN EMPIRE
ALEXANDRIA
PETRA
LINEN
A F R I C A
ARABIA
MYRRH
MUSLIN
GEMS, IVORY
PEPPER
CEYLON
PERFUME
PACIFIC OCEAN
KINGDOM OF MEROE
KINGDOM OF ABYSSINIA
PEARLS
SPICES
TORTOISE SHELL
ROSIN
INDIAN OCEAN
TRADE ROUTES

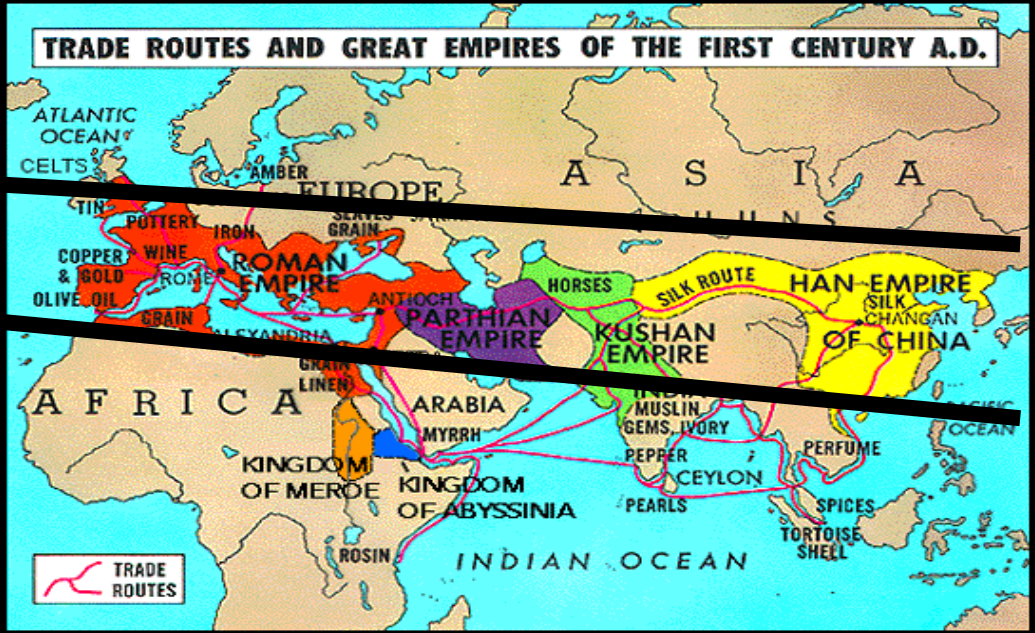
Four phases:

1. The world of foragers (tiny)
2. The age of agriculture (small)
3. Inner rim and heartland (big)
4. Inner rim and outer rim (huge)

Halford Mackinder,
1861-1947

Mackinder's map (1904)




TRADE ROUTES AND GREAT EMPIRES OF THE FIRST CENTURY A.D.
ATLANTIC OCEAN
CELTS
AMBER
EUROPE
A S I A
TIN
POTTERY
IRON
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A F R I C A
ARABIA
MYRRH
MUSLIN
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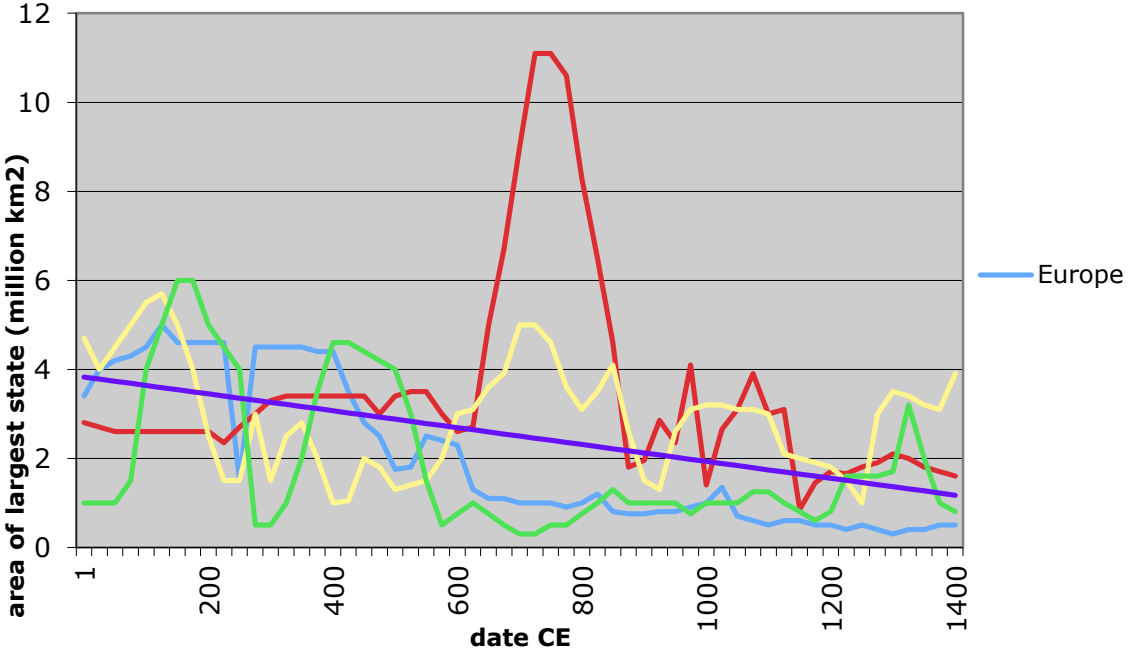
PEPPER
CEYLON
PERFUME
PEARLS
SPICES
TORTOISE SHELL
PACIFIC OCEAN
KINGDOM OF MEROE
KINGDOM OF ABYSSINIA
ROSIN
INDIAN OCEAN
TRADE ROUTES

The steppes

0 1000 mi
0 1500 km
40°
60°
80°
100°
120°
140°
Yenisey
Lena
SIBERIA
Vilyuy
Ob
Irtysh
Angara
Aldan
Lake Baikal
Amur
Sea of Okhotsk
SWEDEN
Baltic Sea
Moscow
Volga
Dnepr
URAL MOUNTAINS
Western Steppe
ALTAI MOUNTAINS
Eastern Steppe
GREATER KHINGAN RANGE
CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS
HUNGARY
UKRAINE
KAZAKSTAN
Ural
Aral Sea
Balkhash
Lake
Dzungarian Gate
Karakorum
MANCHURIA
ROMANIA
Danube
Black Sea
CAUCASUS
Caspian Sea
Ili
KYZYLKUM
TIEN SHAN
MONGOLIA
GOBI
Malazgirt
Amu Darya
Syrdarya
SINKIANG
TARIM BASIN
Huang Ho
Peking
Yellow Sea
JAPAN
TURKEY
Mediterranean Sea
SYRIA
IRAN
Tigris
KARA-KUM
HINDU KUSH
AFGHANISTAN
TAKLA MAKAN
CHINA
East China Sea
Euphrates
TIBET
HIMALAYAS
Indus
Ganges
Yangtze
YUNNAN
ARABIA
BURMA
20°
Nile
Red Sea
AFRICA
Arabian Sea
INDIA
Bay of Bengal
VIETNAM
South China Sea
Steppes
©1998 Encyclopaedia Britannica

Genghis Khan and Mongol cavalry, thirteenth century


12
10
8
6
4
2
0
area of largest state (million km2)
1
200
400
600
800
1000
1200
1400
date CE
Europe

Catching up: top, Great Zimbabwe; bottom, Saksaywaman (Cusco)

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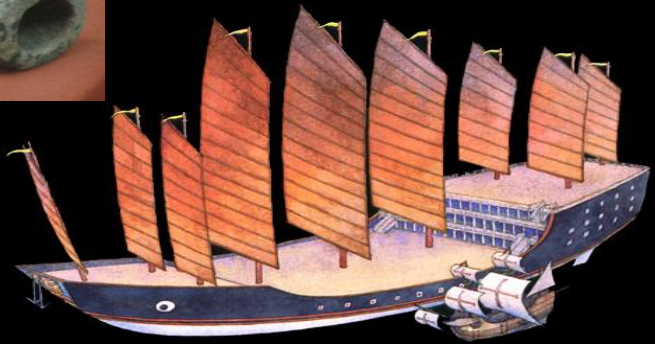
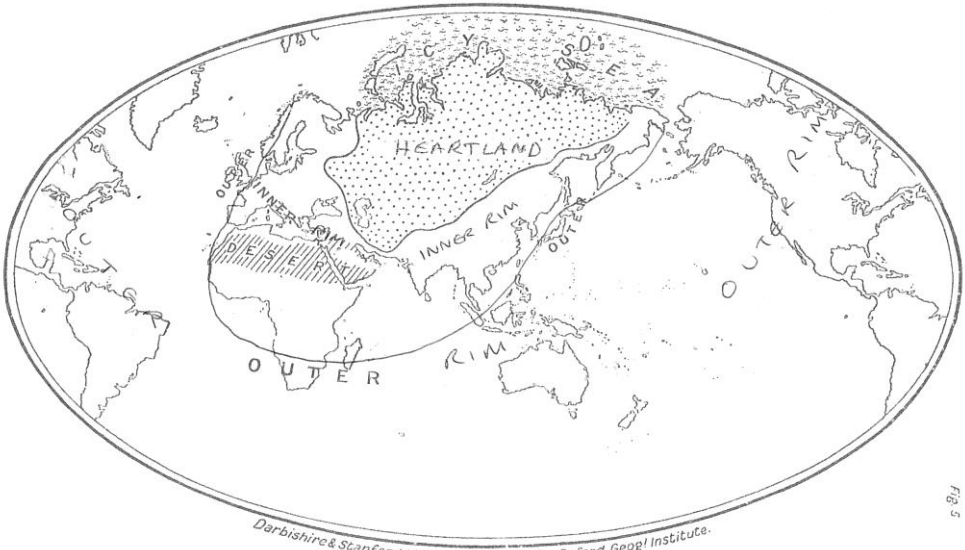
Guns and ships: left, the oldest known true gun (probably 1288, from Manchuria); right, the flagships of Zheng He (1405) and Vasco da Gama (1497)



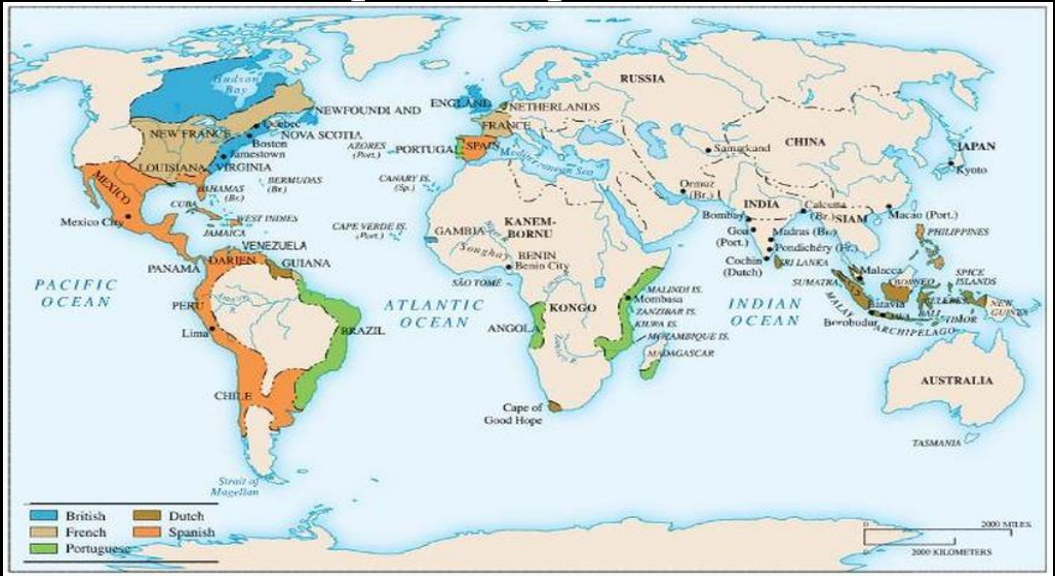
A MING TREASURE SHIP
Perhaps 400 ft (122 m) long,
170 ft (52 m) wide

VASCO DA GAMA'S
SÃO GABRIEL
About 74 ft (23 m) long,
18 ft (5 m) wide

Mackinder's map (1904)

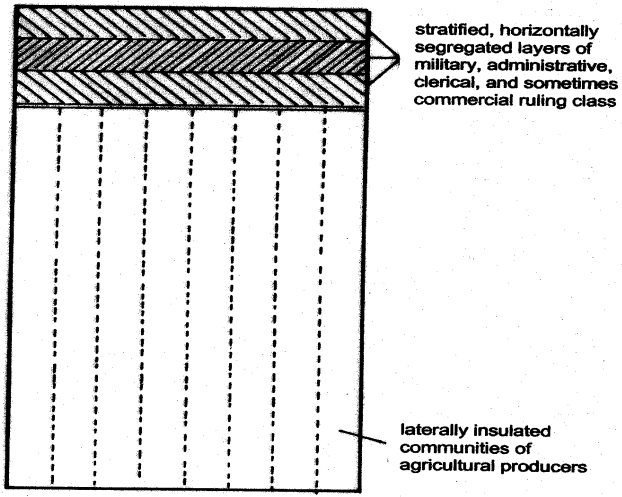


European empires in 1750

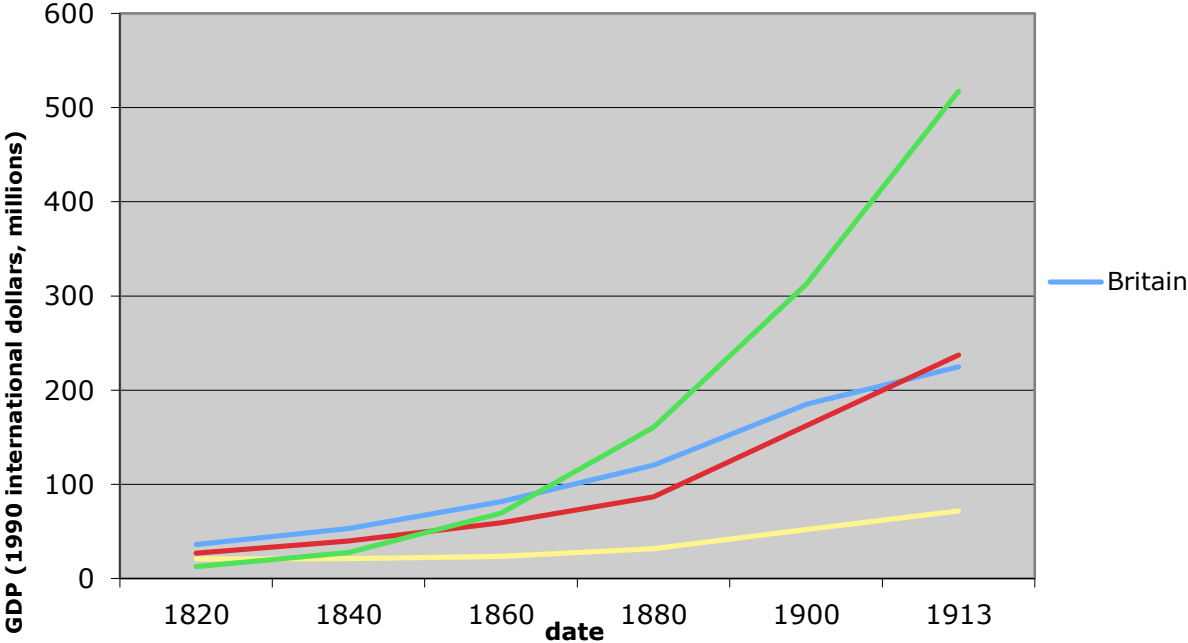


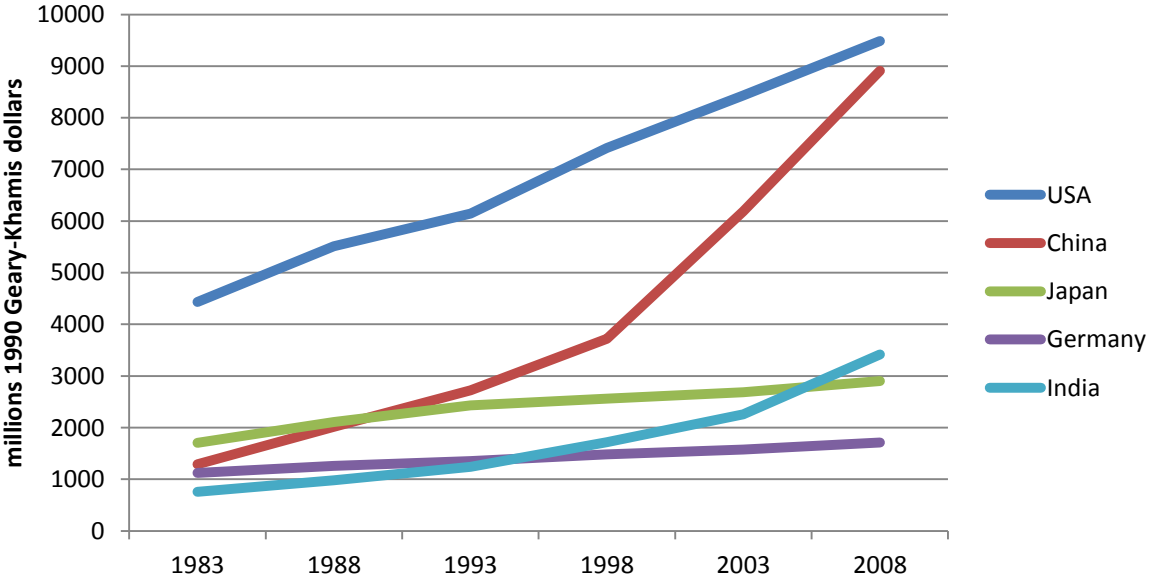
Sikhs from the British army in Tibet, 1904

The structure of agrarian society (after Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 1983)

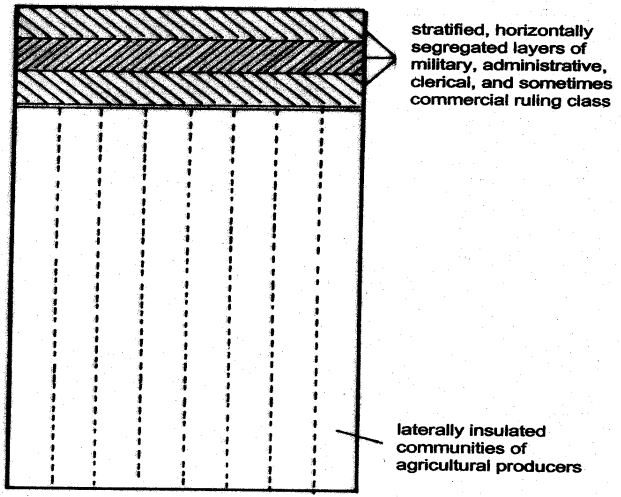


Arctic Ocean
Canada (Dominion)
North America
Newfoundland
UK
Europe
Asia
Pacific Ocean
Pacific Ocean
Weihaiwei
Bermuda
Bahamas
Atlantic Ocean
Gibraltar
Malta
Cyprus
Kuwait
Bahrein
Br. Honduras
Br. West Indies
Hong Kong
Gambia
Sierra Leone
Aden
Somaliland
Tokelau Is.
Br. Guiana
Gold Coast
Africa
Maldives
Ceylon
Brunei
Br. N. Borneo
Sarawak
Malaya
Singapore
Gilbert & Ellice Is.
Oceania
Seychelles
Oceania
South America
Zanzibar
Chagos Arch.
Nyasaland
Fiji
Solomon Is.
Cook Is.
Tonga
Pitcairn
St. Helena
Rhodesia
Bechuanaland
Mauritius
Fiji Is.
Swaziland
Basutoland
Indian Ocean
Cape Colony
Falkland Is.
New Zealand
Antarctica
British Empire in 1898
British Territory

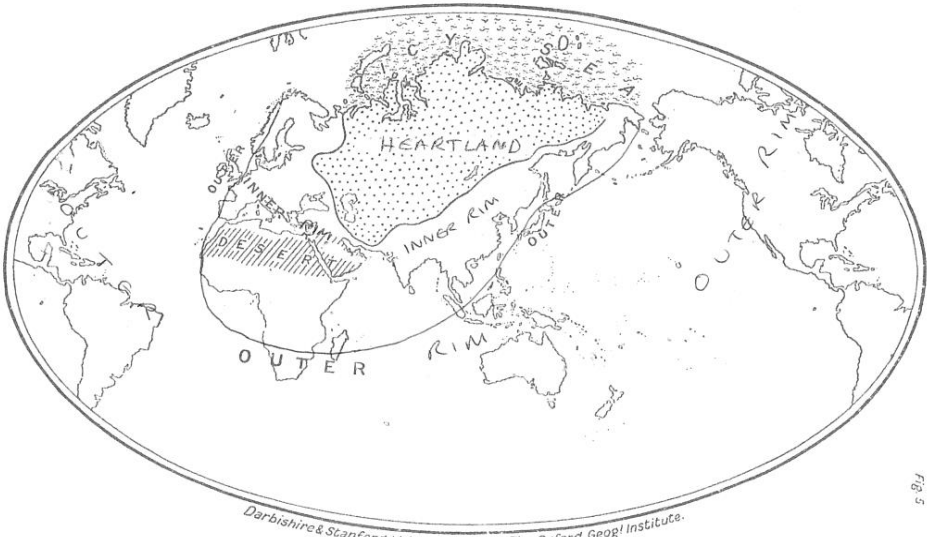

600
500
400
300
200
100
0
GDP (1990 international dollars, millions)
1820
1840
1860
1880
1900
1913
date
Britain


millions 1990 Geary-Khamis dollars
10000
9000
8000
7000
6000
5000
4000
3000
2000
1000
0
1983
1988
1993
1998
2003
2008
USA
China
Japan
Germany
India

The structure of agrarian society (after Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 1983)



Mackinder's map (1904)



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   Yes

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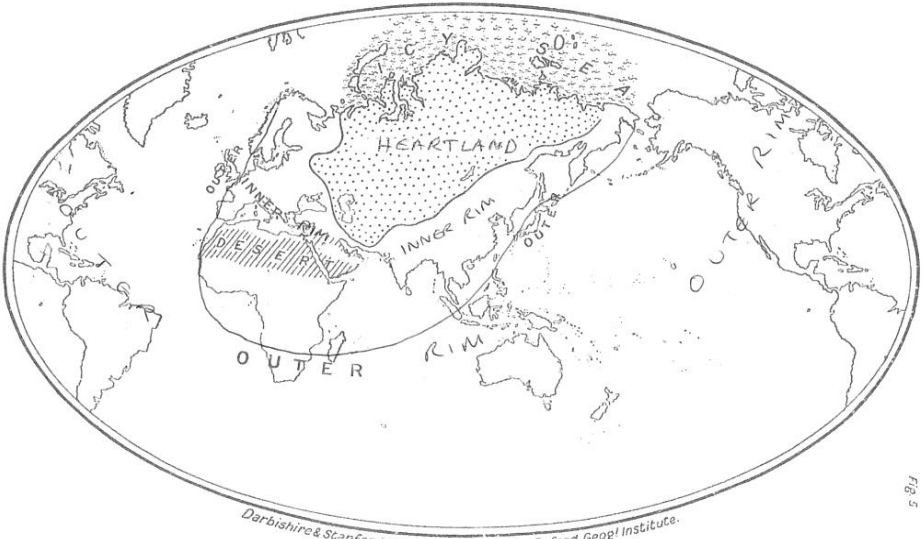

LSE IDEAS public lecture

Each Age Gets the Great Powers It Needs: 20,000 years of international relations

Professor Ian Morris

Philippe Roman Chair in History and International Affairs for 2015-16, LSE IDEAS

Professor Michael Cox

Chair, LSE

Suggested hashtag for Twitter users: **#LSEMorris**