

Order & Violence



Lecture 6: What's a strong state and where does it come from?

Chris Blattman

Where we were, where we are headed

Last class

- Defined a strong state as something broader than a monopoly of violence, as an organization with the capability to shape society
- Early or “weak” states share a number of common characteristics, including personalized (relation-based) rule, elite coalitions, “corrupt” patrimonial systems, weak projection of power, and coercive tendencies
- Modern states have more depersonalized rule, more tax capacity, professionalized bureaucracies, and an ability to shape society
- Spreading and checking state power can reduce conflict between states

Today

- Early states tended to emerge in the places that favored to population growth and economic specialization and trade
 - Began with navigable waterways and trade
- Other initial conditions that favored early state development were animal/vegetable endowments and the disease environment
- The places that fostered many dense hierarchical states (and state *systems*) also fostered competition that selected stronger over weaker states

III. A current-day state, Afghanistan



To what extent is this an accurate description (or not)?

- They are highly personalized systems
 - (i) Ruled by elite coalitions with privileged access
 - (ii) Held together with patrimonial ties
 - (iii) Results in a highly personalized system
- They struggle to shape society
 - (iv) Struggle to project state power over periphery and people
 - (v) Weak fiscal capacity
 - (vi) Coercive

Mukhopadhyay: A weak central state maintains order via a fragile and personalized coalition of local power brokers, or warlords

“ *The political center in Kabul was not (and has never been) a collection of formal, bureaucratic institutions working in concert to penetrate the unwieldy periphery of wayward warlords, defiant mullahs, and rebellious tribal chieftains.*

It was, instead, a political center operating largely in the neopatrimonial image, and, much like many of its predecessors, forging links to the countryside through partnerships with power holders who could sometimes expand the scope of the state by engaging it.



Jamaluddin Badar, Nuristan governor (prosecuted for corruption)

Lutfullah Mashal, Langham governor (writer & poet)

Gul Agha Sherzai, Nangarhar governor (major anti-Taliban warlord and US ally, suspected of opium trafficking)

De jure vs. de facto rule

On the surface, Afghanistan is an sovereign nation state with a formal bureaucracy and democratic system. But how is power actually wielded?

“ *...the mere articulation of a democratic, centralized state would prove inadequate to shift the center of gravity in this state formation project from the provinces to Kabul.*

— Mukhopadhyay (2014), *Warlords, Strongman Governors and State Building in Afghanistan*



Hamid Karzai, President of Afghanistan 2001—14

Arguably we see several of the characteristics of weak states here

- i. Stability is rooted in elite coalitions that serve their private interests
- ii. Power is personalized and patrimonial
 - Society is organized in hierarchies that distribute patrimonial benefits
 - Many people identify more as a member of a group (a people) than a territorial state
- iii. “Corrupt” capture of rents is the current glue holding the state back from violence
 - Capture of the state, aid, spoils, drug production, ...
 - You could see this as the implicit aim of US policy, if not the explicit one
- iv. The Afghan state does not fully control its periphery, or have a monopoly on legitimate use of violence, and its bureaucracy does not penetrate society
- v. Tax collection is limited, and the state is reliant on outside aid
- vi. What control it has often coercive
 - Actively fighting an insurgency that is resistant to state rule

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Where it fits in

- 2 ½ classes: **States**
 - What is a strong state?
 - Historically, how did they arise?
- Next 2 ½ classes: **Institutions**
 - Historically, why are some states and rulers more constrained than others?
 - Bound by rules and institutions, accountable to elites
 - What are the implications of “institutions” for economic development?
- 2 ½ classes after that: **Society**
 - Why have some states become accountable to wider and wider groups of citizens (democracy)?
 - Why do strong states and societies often go hand in hand?

Next week's essay question

This past week we have been reading and discussing the historical origins of strong and weak states. Some theories emphasize initial conditions and endowments, others emphasize external political competition (such as war making), others emphasize internal political competition and decisions, and others emphasize the role of imperialism and other outside interventions.

Do you think any of these historical processes give insight into future state building?

For example, suppose the new President of the World Bank asked you to write a short briefing memo on what lessons we can draw from this literature for weak states over the next fifty years, and what the World Bank should do. Use the readings and discussion to address both themes: (i) whether and how today's weaker or more fragile states will get stronger, and (ii) the implications for international development institutions.

If you prefer, you can write the memo to the new President of a weak or fragile state of your choice, and what that administration could learn and do based on our class readings and discussion. (That is, you can address what a domestic actor can do rather than international development institutions).

Writing tips

- Your reader is always wondering “Why are they telling me this? How does it fit in? Why should I care?” Do not leave your reader mystified.
- You can answer this by being structured and clear
 - Introductory paragraph(s) that briefly summarize the argument and preview the structure
 - Logical, clear organization of material
 - “I’m going to divide the question into parts and address each part...”
 - “People have view X. I have three main criticisms of this view...”
 - Frequent use of headings and subheadings
 - Each paragraph is a distinct and coherent idea/point/argument. The first sentence of the paragraph makes the most important or higher-level point or claim, and the remaining sentences support this claim or relate to it coherently.
- Use clear, simple, direct language

IV. When, where, and why do states first emerge?

A simplified way to think we will talk about the spectrum of state development

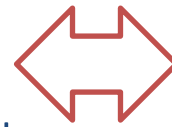
“Stateless”

Informal systems of rule (chiefdoms, bands, and other small political units), typically linked by personal and kinship ties, with limited ability to shape society



“Weak states”

Larger, more hierarchical, coercive, personalized political authority that provides some order and loosely controls society



“Strong states”

More stable, centralized, rule-governed, bureaucratic, depersonalized political organizations with sovereign territorial control, a monopoly on legitimate force, and able to shape society

Where some of our authors and theories will fit

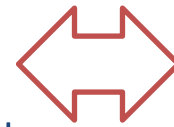
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Olson
Herbst
Mukhopadhyay

Tilly
Weber
Fukuyama

Let's focus on the first transition

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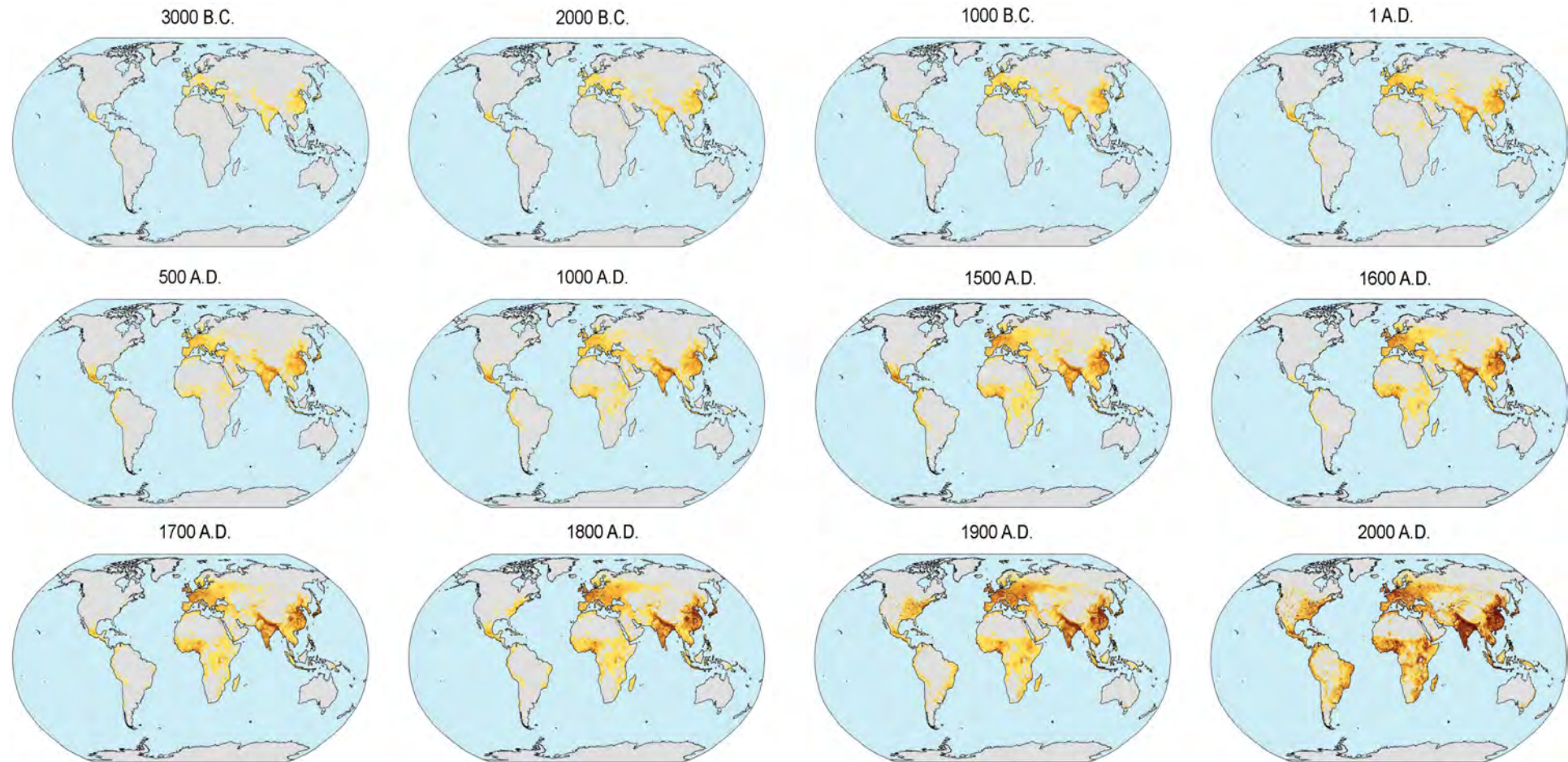


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Population density is a good guide to early state formation because states are (almost by definition) dense, settled, hierarchical societies

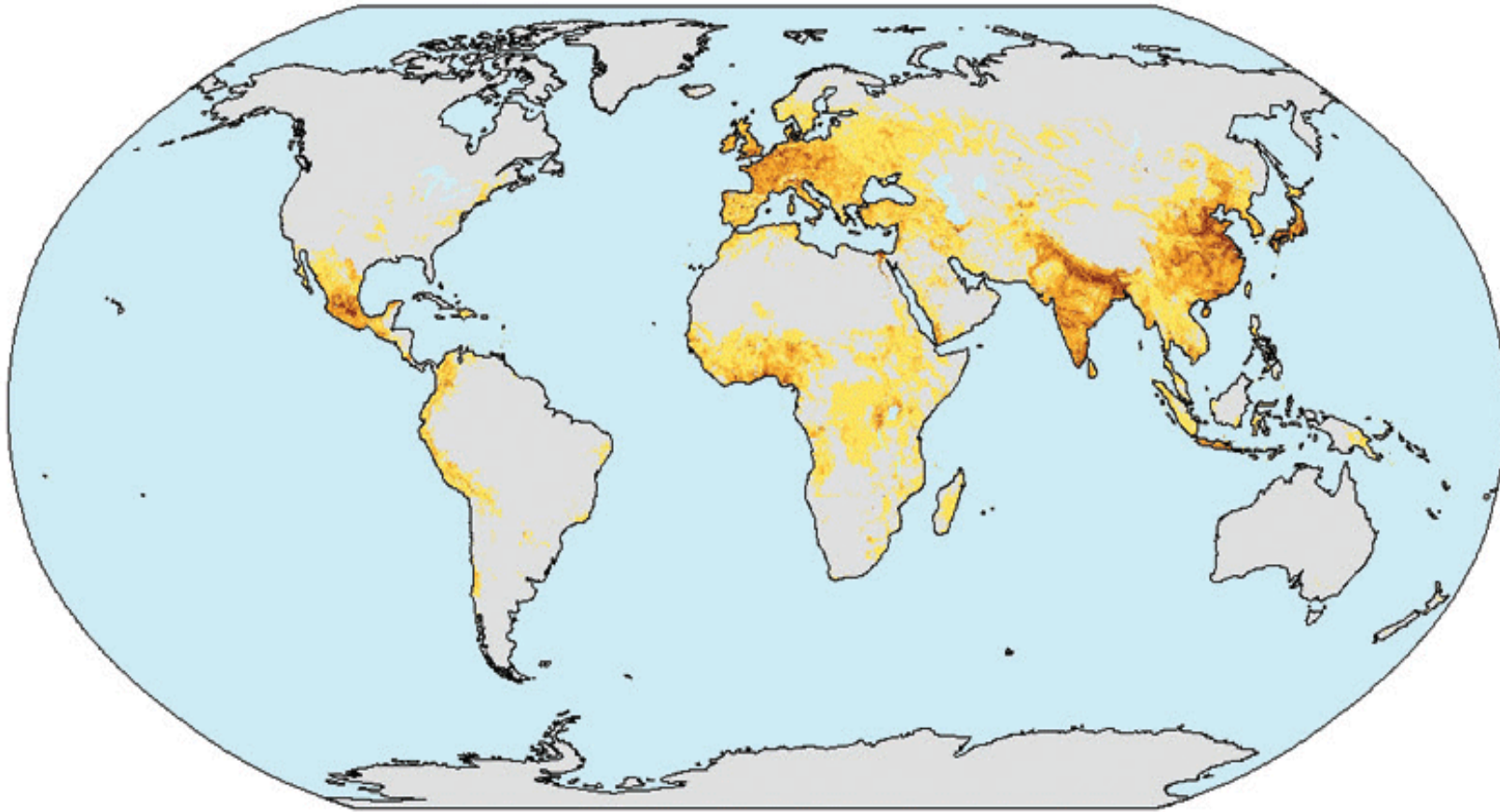
People are the basis for extraction



Source: Kees Klein Goldewijk, Arthur Beusen and Peter Janssen (2010) – *Long-term dynamic modeling of global population and built-up area in a spatially explicit way: HYDE 3.1*. The Holocene June 2010 vol. 20 no. 4 565-573.

1500 is a common “pre-modern” benchmark

1500 A.D.



Over the next 2-3 weeks we will look at four major kinds of explanations for state and institutional development

A. Initial conditions

- a) Trade
- b) Species
- c) Disease

B. Competition between states

- Especially (but not only) war

C. Competition within states

- a) Between elite groups
- b) Between elites and broader “society”

D. Choices and events at critical junctures

To understand variation in state capabilities by 1500, you can get pretty far with explanations that focus on natural endowments

A. Initial conditions

- a) Trade
- b) Species
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D. Choices and events at critical junctures

A. Initial conditions

Geographic factors that foster population growth and opportunities for economic exchange

What gives rise to population density, economic specialization, and early state development?

- a) Natural trade advantages
 - e.g. Navigable rivers, coastal access, near potential trading partners, smooth terrain
- b) Access to domesticable animal and plant species
 - Combined with suitability of climate to agriculture, plus continental axes and the ease of species diffusion
- c) The disease environment
 - Mortality risk for humans and livestock
 - Also disease as a societal “weapon”

(a) Natural trade advantages

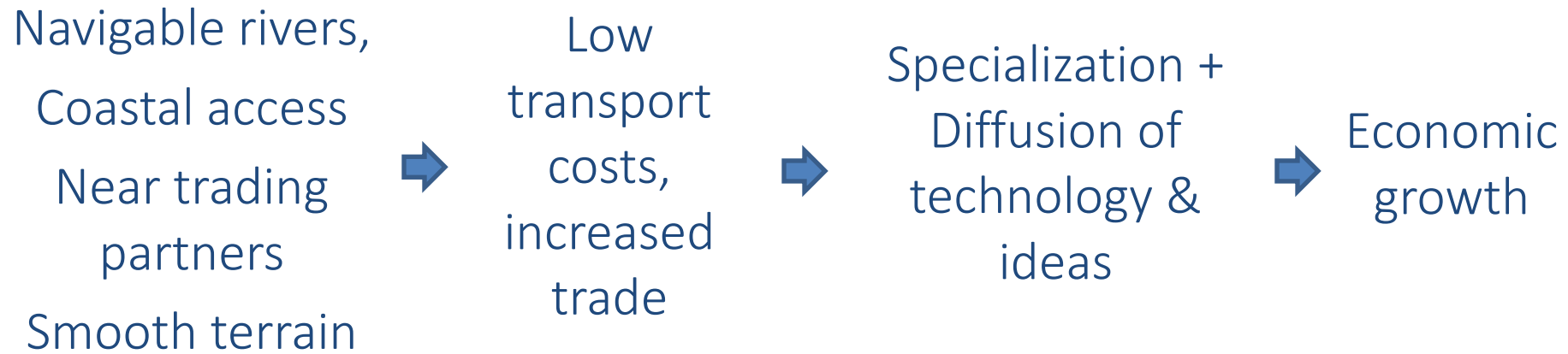
Economists since Adam Smith have associated trade with economic and political development

“*As by means of water carriage a more extensive market is opened to every sort of industry than what land carriage alone can afford it, so it is upon the sea-coast, and along the banks of navigable rivers that industry of every kind begins to sub-divide and improve itself, and it is frequently not till a long time after that those improvements extend themselves to the inland part of the country.*

—Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations* (1776)

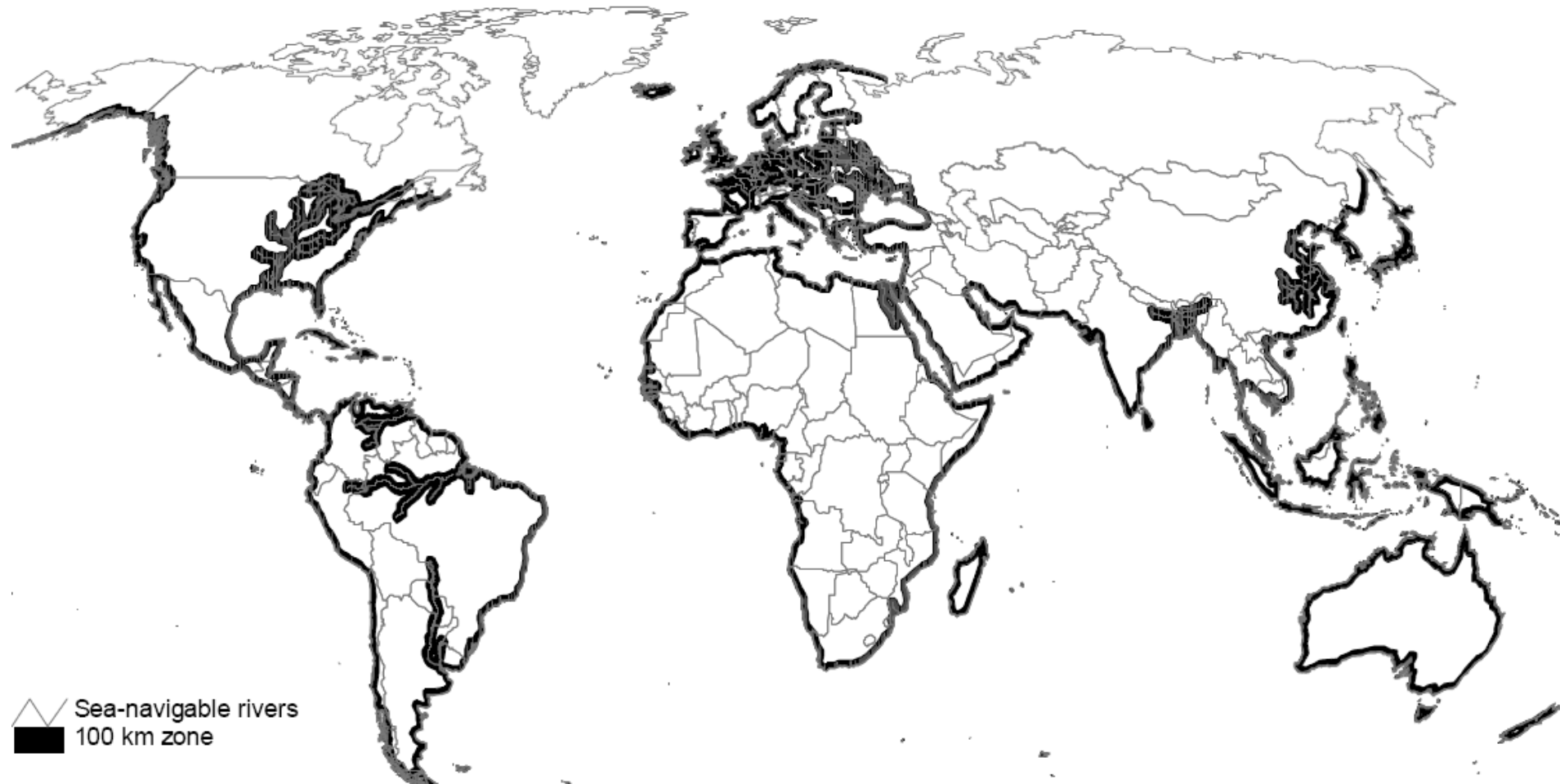


Geography confers certain trade advantages to some parts of the world over others



State development is endogenous to this process: Specialization and trade needs order and low transaction costs to emerge, and also provides a base of revenue (and incentives) for the state to exist

How do these natural advantages vary around the world?
Land within 100km of an ice-free coast or navigable river with coastal access

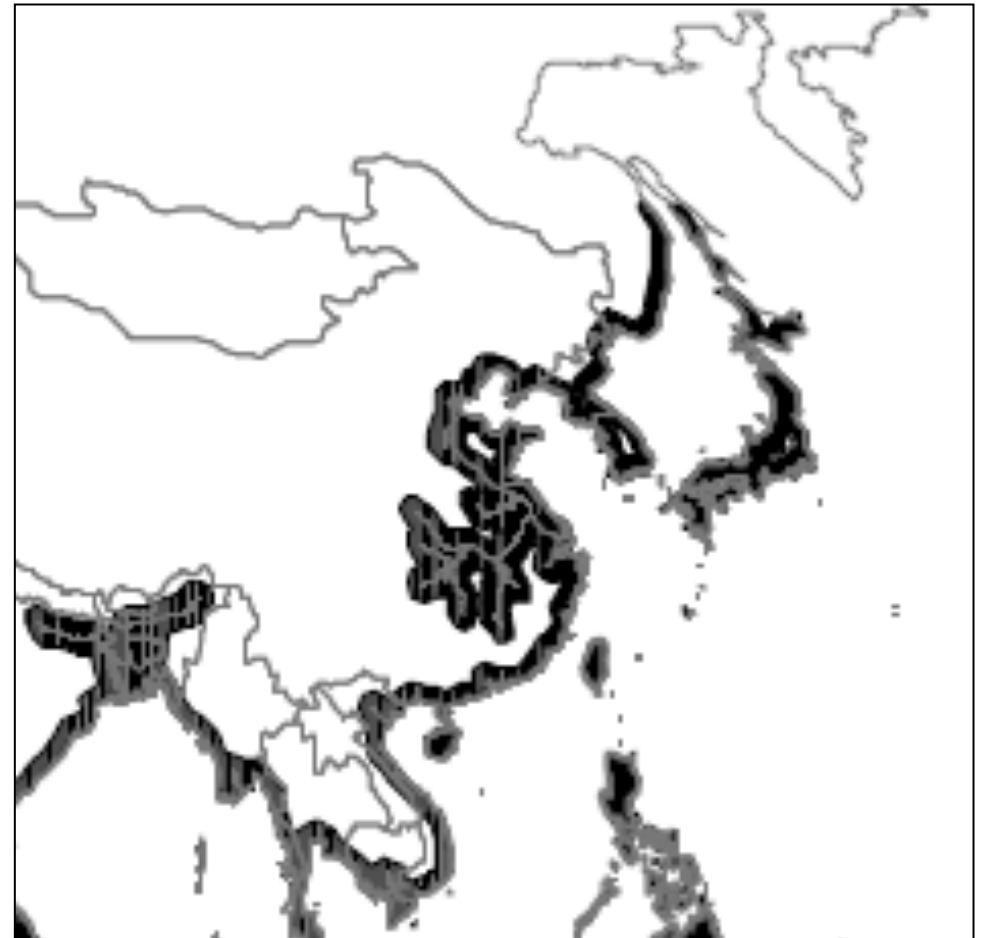


Unlikely to be coincidence that some of the most hierarchical, centralized states emerged in areas with natural trade advantages

Europe

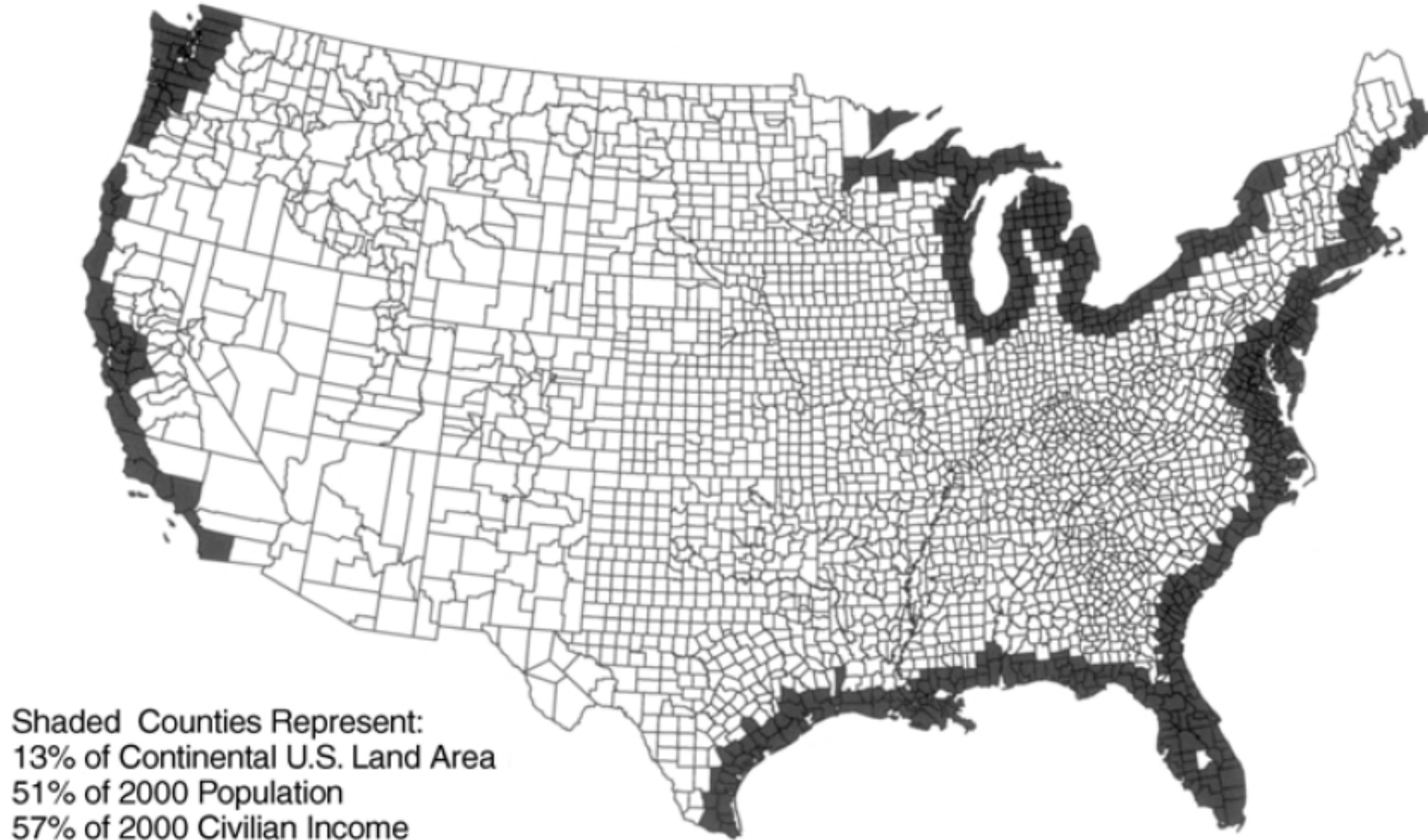


China & Japan



Continues to have strong correlations with development today

Proportion of income in U.S. counties with centers within 80km of coast



Contrast to Africa, which developed fewer centralized hierarchical states

- Question: Why are the great inland rivers of Africa not highlighted here?



“ *All the inland parts of Africa, and all that part of Asia which lies any considerable way north of the Black and Caspian Seas... seem in all ages of the world to have been in the same barbarous and uncivilized state in which we find them at present...*

There are in Africa none of those great inlets ... to carry maritime trade into the interior parts of that great continent...

—Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations* (1776)



Smith underestimated state development in Africa.

But note that many of the early states that did form in Africa were located near major inland lakes and waterways (none of which had coastal access)

Selection of historical states

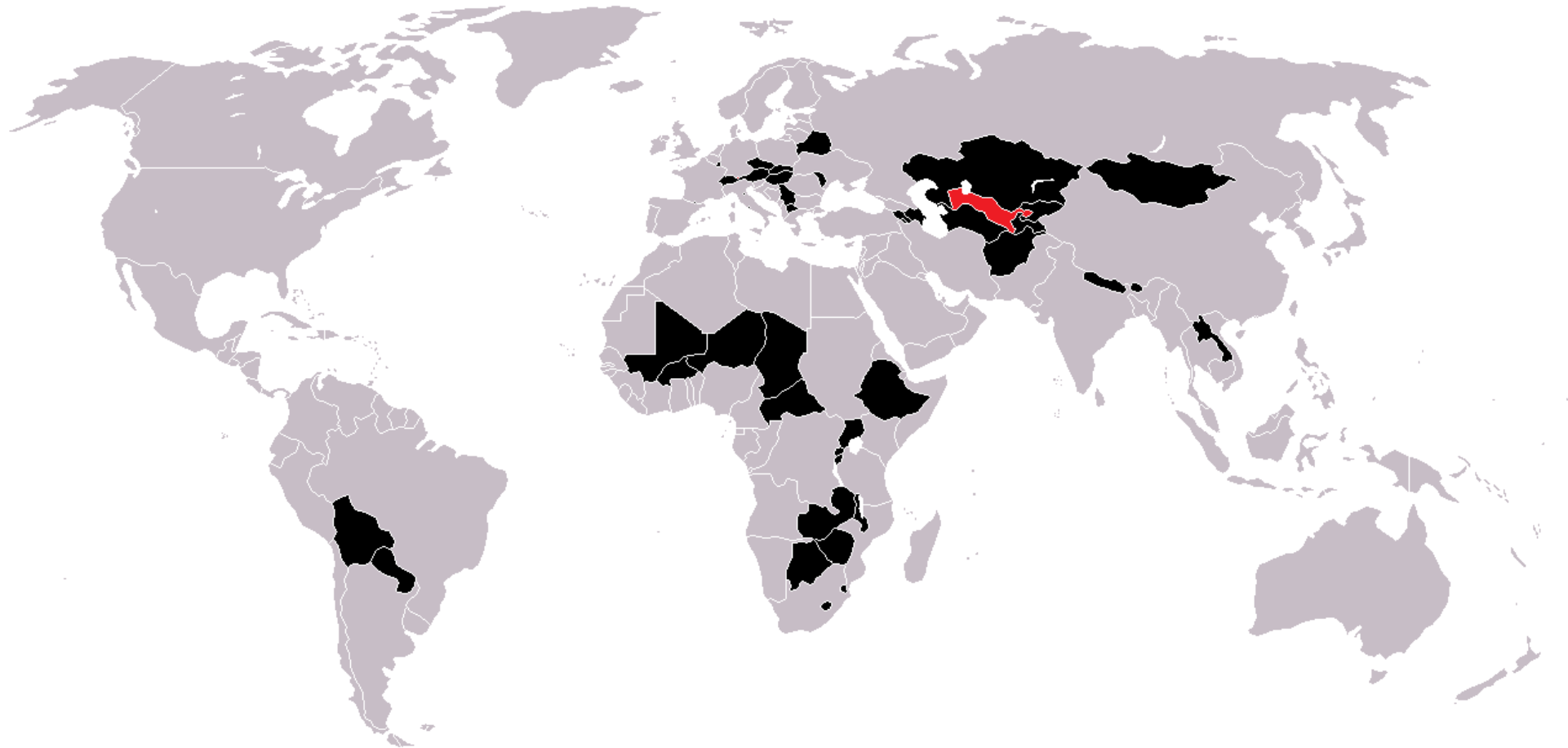


Population density, early 1900s



Note that these disadvantageous trade and transport conditions persist somewhat to this day

Landlocked countries



What gives rise to population density, economic specialization, and early state development?

a) Natural trade advantages

– e.g. Navigable rivers, coastal access, near potential trading partners, smooth terrain

b) Access to domesticable animal and plant species

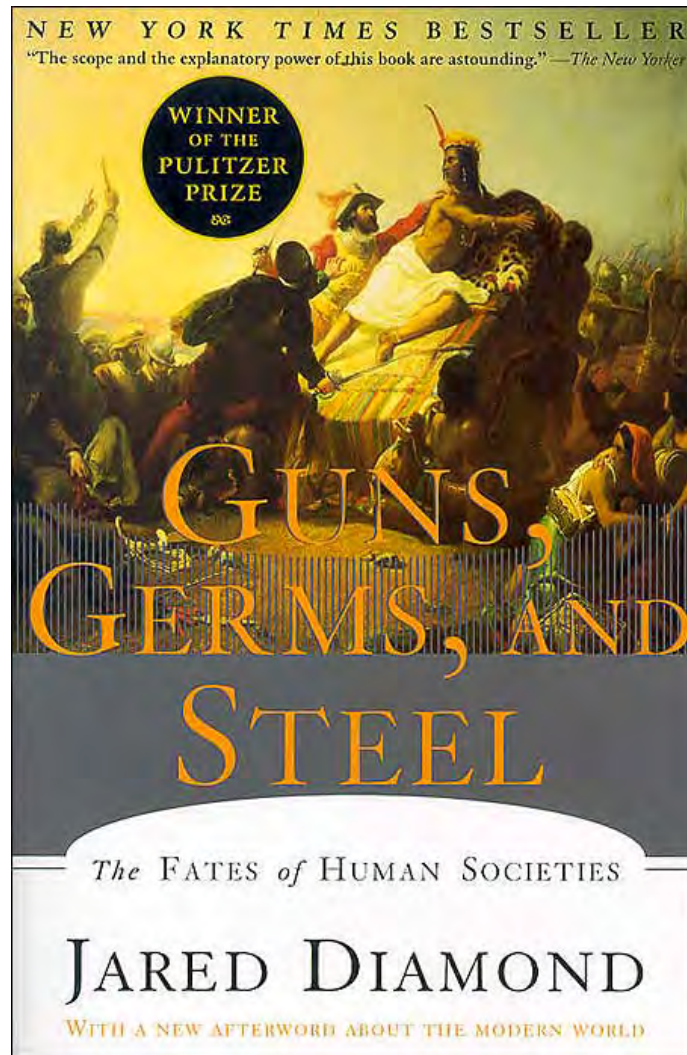
– Combined with suitability of climate to agriculture, plus continental axes and the ease of species diffusion

c) The disease environment

– Mortality risk for humans and livestock

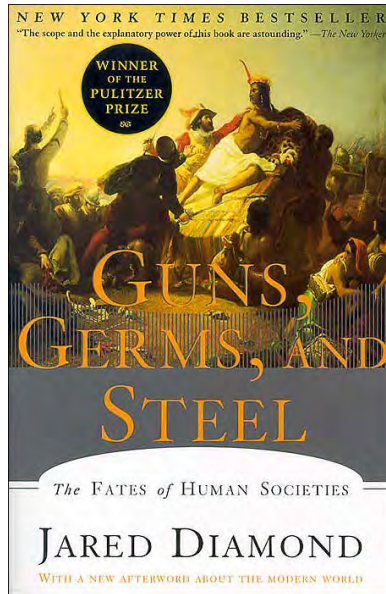
– Also disease as a societal “weapon”

(b) Endowments of domesticable species and continental axes

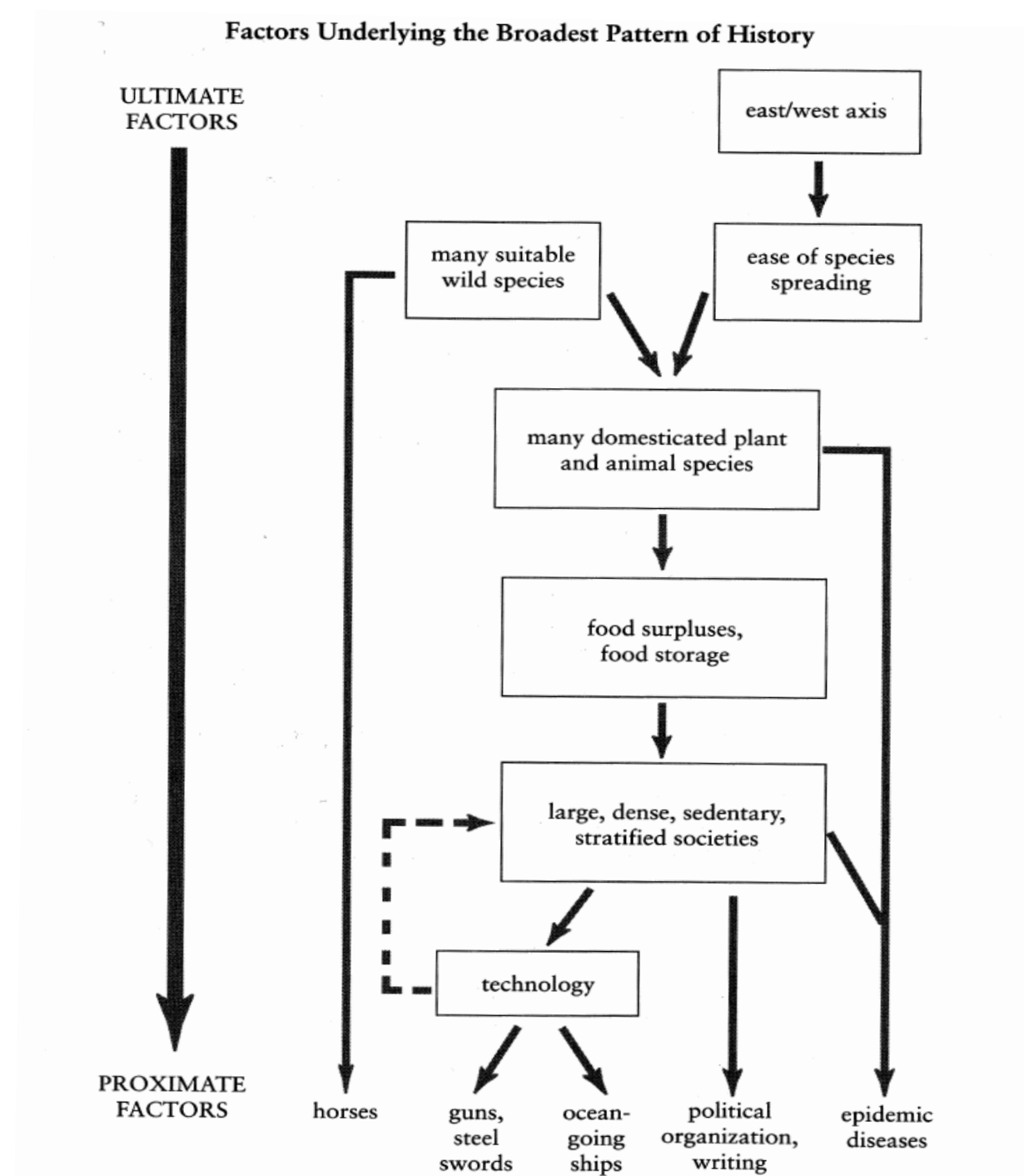


- Jared Diamond is an evolutionary biologist
- He asked why, by the 1500s and 1600s, Europe was technologically and economically advanced enough to conquer most of the world?
- He links inequality in world income, technology, and state development in 1600 (or so) to geographic endowments
- One of the most influential and widely read books on development in the last 30 years

Diamond summarizes his entire argument in a one-page diagram

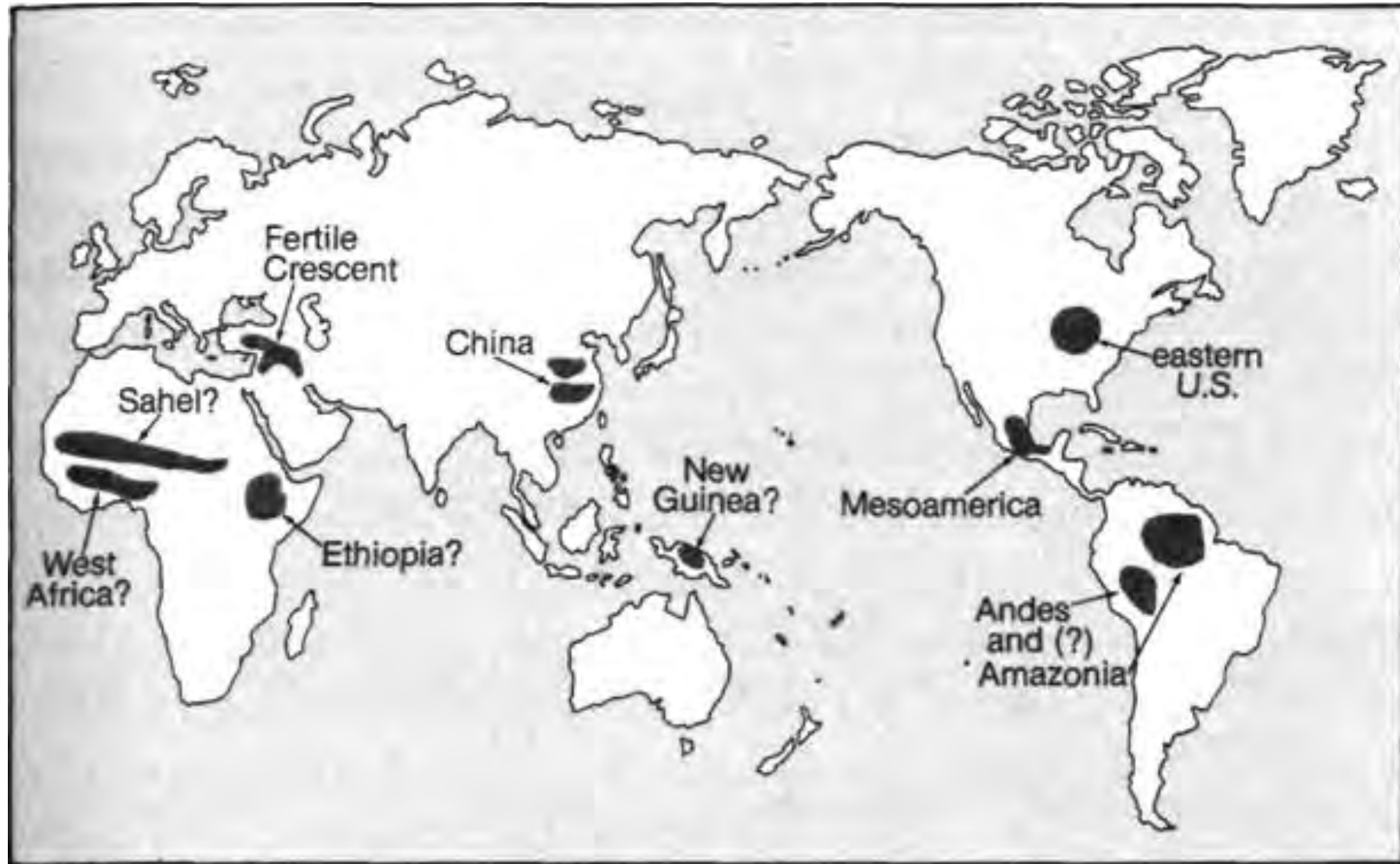


(p.87)



He starts with the major prehistoric centers of food production

Figure 5.1



Species of nutritious grains were unequally spread around the world
Some regions (especially the Fertile Crescent) were endowed with edible grains

TABLE 8.1 World Distribution of Large-Seeded Grass Species

<i>Area</i>	<i>Number of Species</i>
West Asia, Europe, North Africa	33
Mediterranean zone	32
England	1
East Asia	6
Sub-Saharan Africa	4
Americas	11
North America	4
Mesoamerica	5
South America	2
Northern Australia	<u>2</u>
Total:	<u>56</u>

So was the distribution of large mammals that could be domesticated
These were key for (1) health, (2) wealth, (3) productivity (plows), (4) transport and trade

TABLE 9.2 Mammalian Candidates for Domestication

	<i>Continent</i>			
	Eurasia	Sub-Saharan Africa	The Americas	Australia
Candidates	72	51	24	1
Domesticated species	13	0	1	0
Percentage of candidates domesticated	18%	0%	4%	0%

A “candidate” is defined as a species of terrestrial, herbivorous or omnivorous, wild mammal weighing on the average over 100 pounds.

Finally, a society had more access to foreign species if they shared the same ecological zone

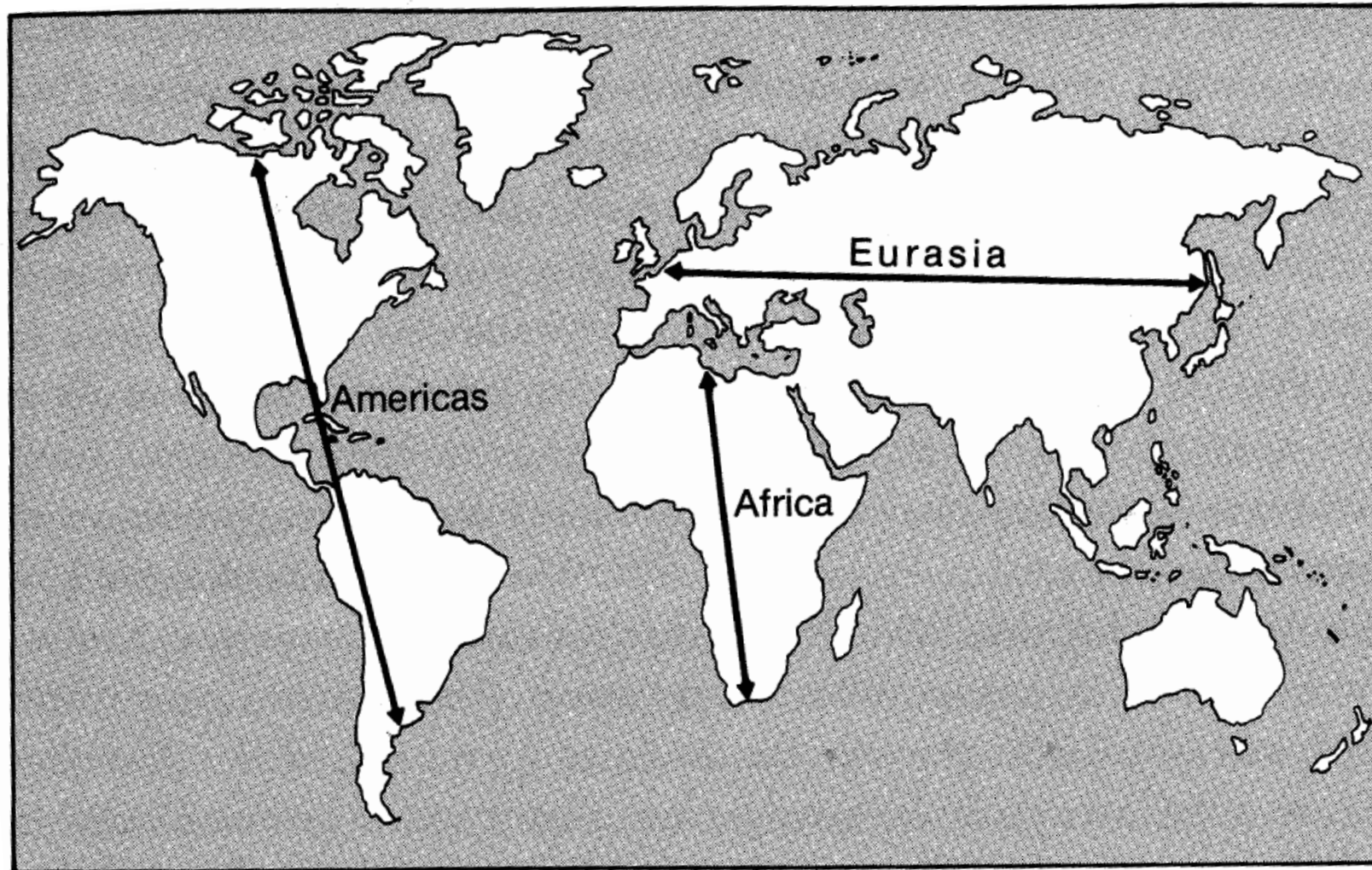
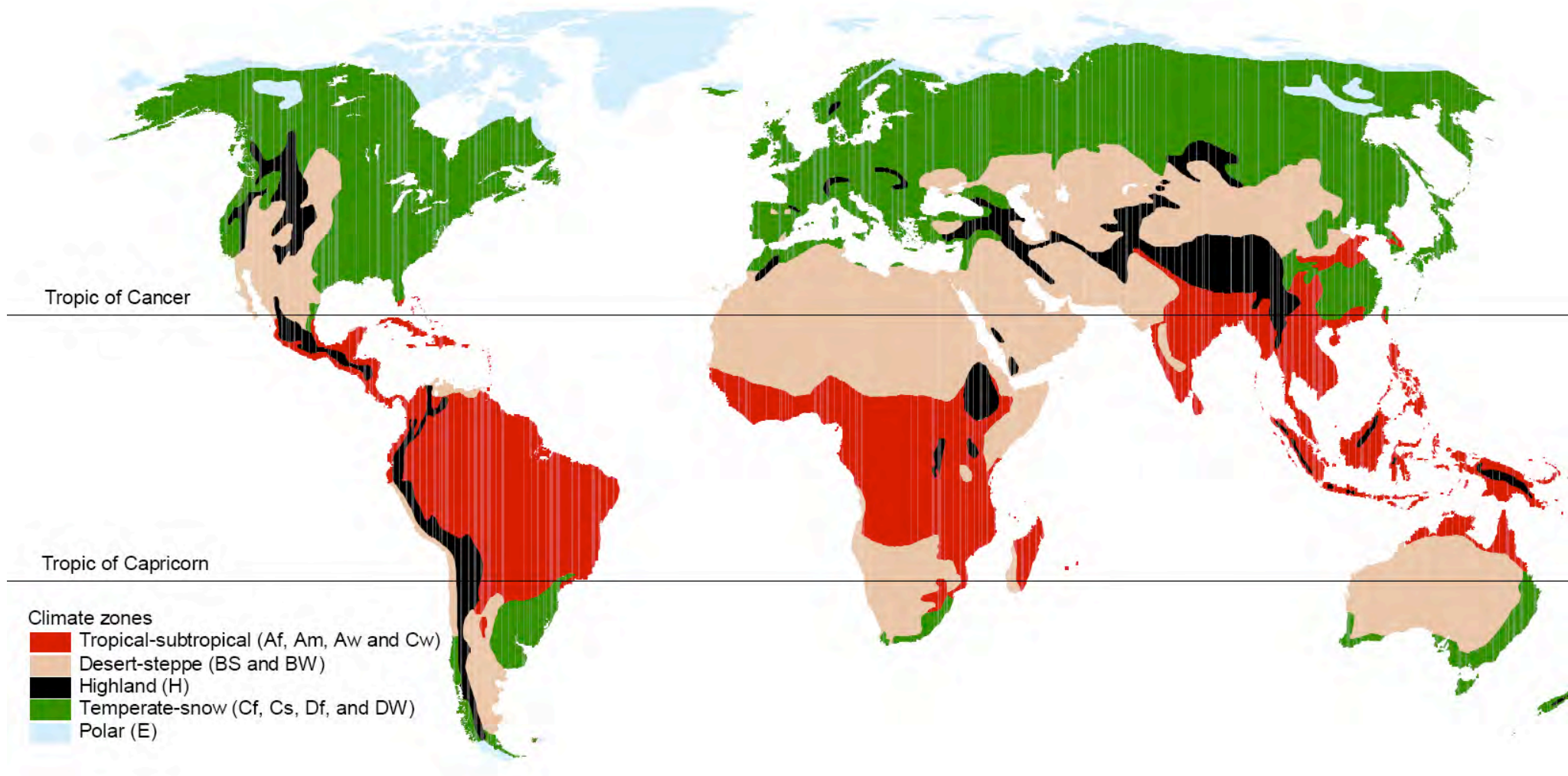
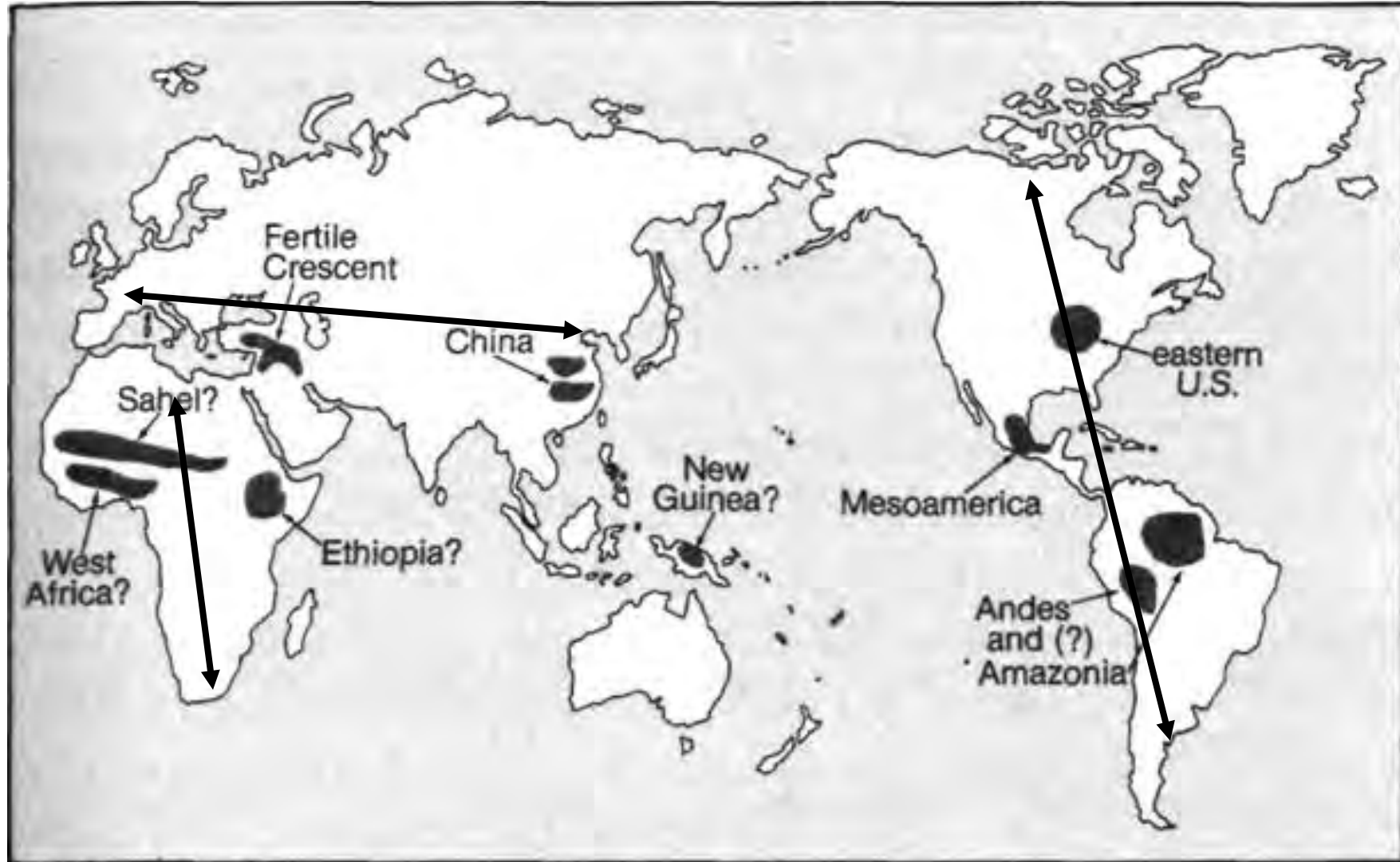


Figure 10.1. Major axes of the continents.

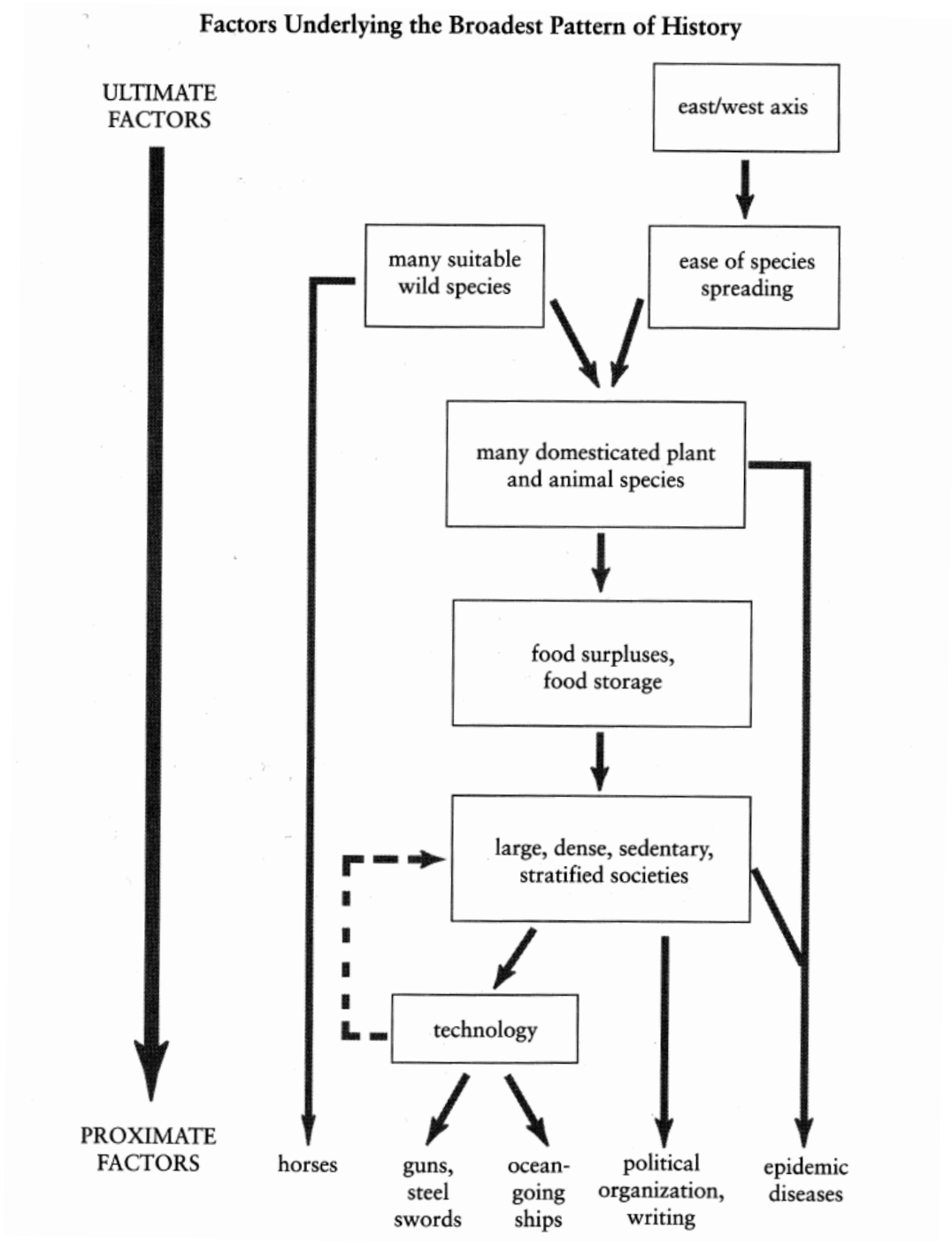
Before the invention of ocean-going ships, grains and livestock species crossed climatic zones with great difficulty



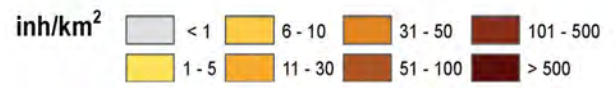
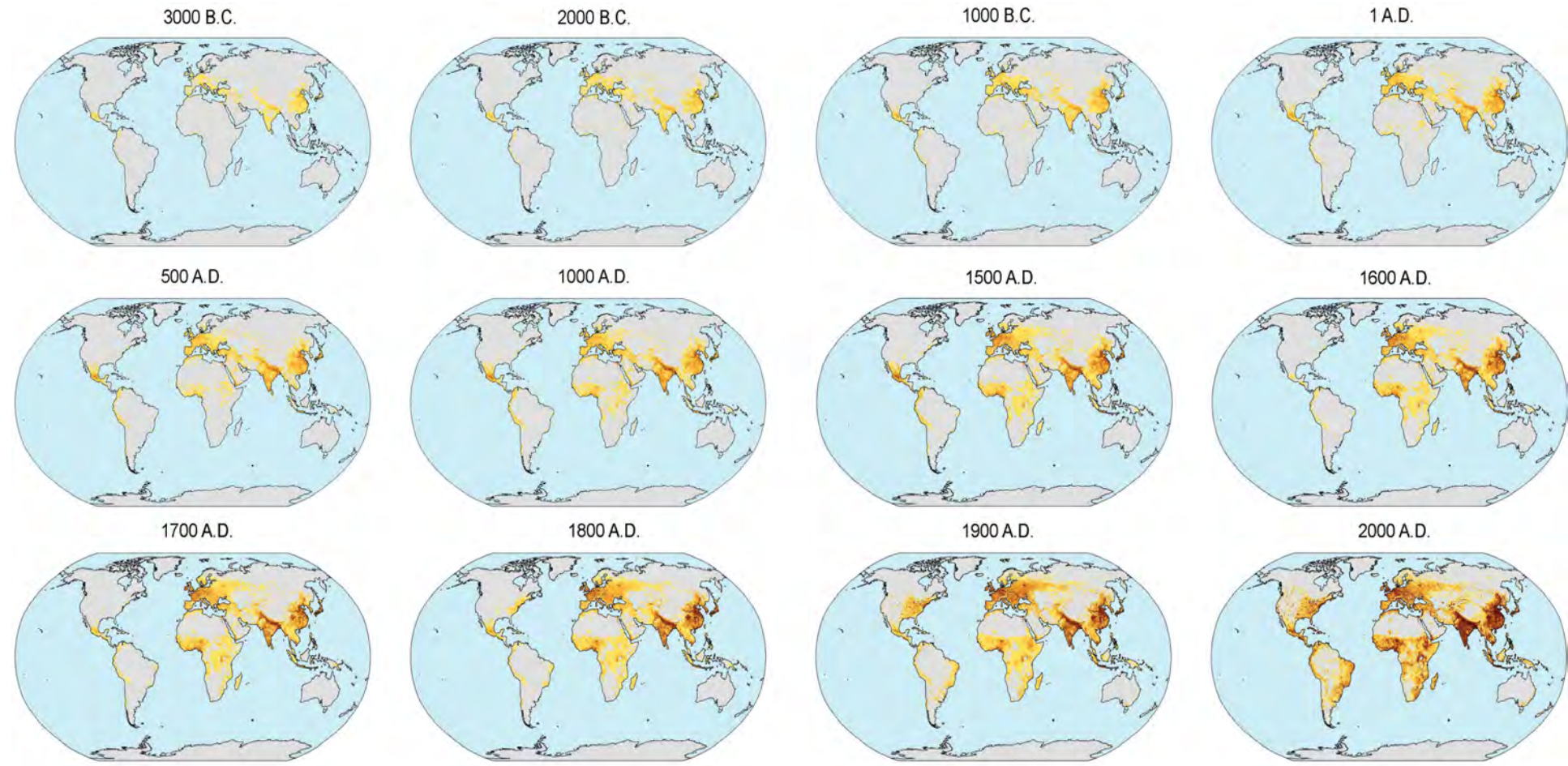
Therefore, what agricultural “technologies” do we expect to spread most easily?



Thus by 1500 Eurasian temperate areas are more densely settled, productive societies with incentives and opportunities for political centralization



Helps to explain population densities up to the middle of the second millennium



Source: Kees Klein Goldewijk, Arthur Beusen and Peter Janssen (2010) – *Long-term dynamic modeling of global population and built-up area in a spatially explicit way: HYDE 3.1*. The Holocene June 2010 vol. 20 no. 4 565-573.

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(c) The disease environment

Tropical areas in general (and sub-Saharan Africa in particular) had additional constraints on population

e.g. Distribution of potential malaria transmission stability, 2004

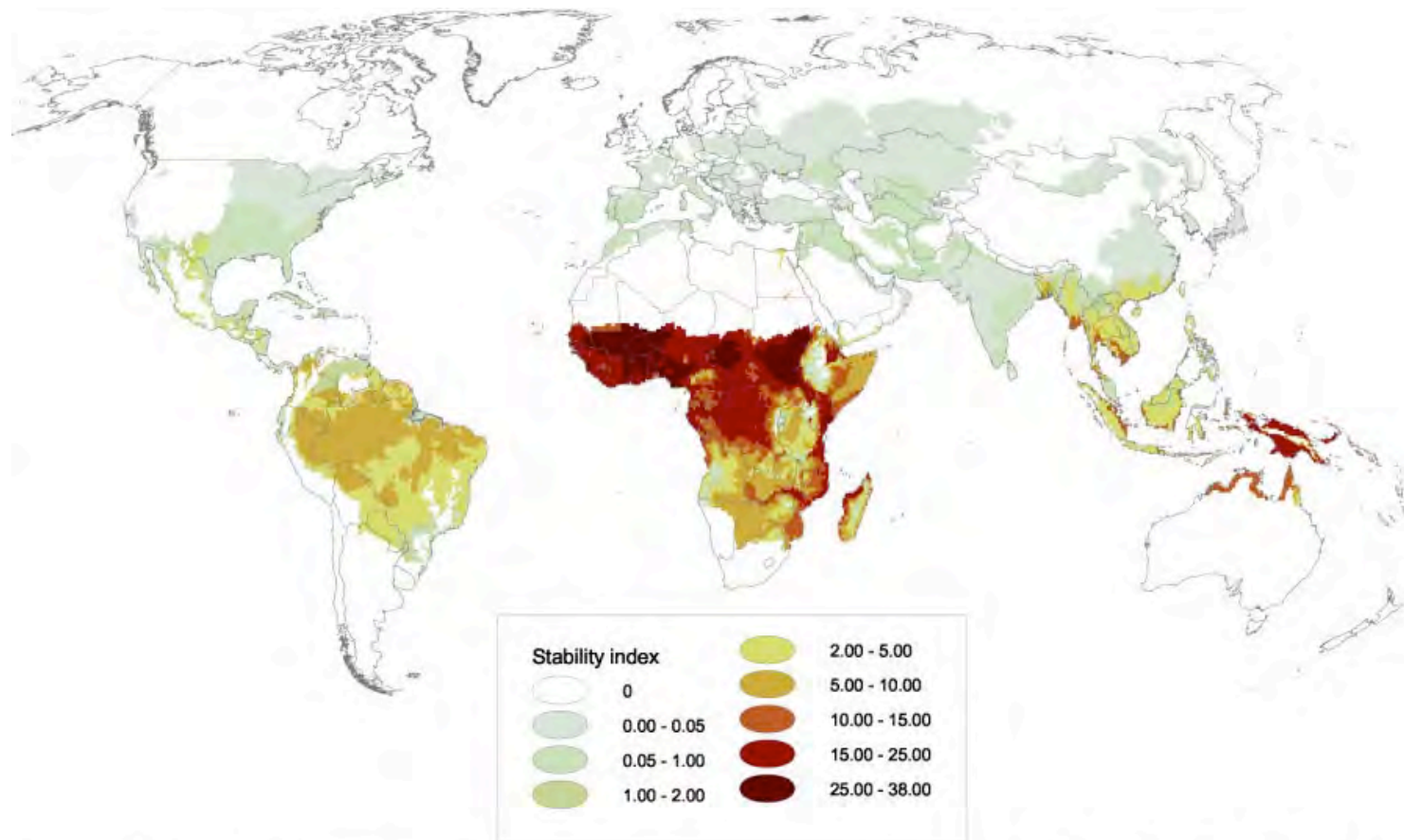


Figure 1 from Anthony Kiszewski, Andrew Mellinger, Andrew Spielman, Pia Malaney, Sonia Erlich Sachs, and Jeffrey Sachs. **A Global Index Representing The Stability of Malaria Transmission.** *Am J Trop Med Hyg* 2004 70:486-498.

Another example: The TseTse fly and poor state capacity in Africa
(Alsan 2012)



“ It seems reasonable to suppose that for hundreds of years tsetse dictated that the economy of the African should be based on the hoe and the head-load...”

Entomologist T.A.M. Nash (1969)

“ The TseTse is the "greatest curse" nature laid upon Africa and the "value of the country would be centupled" in its absence

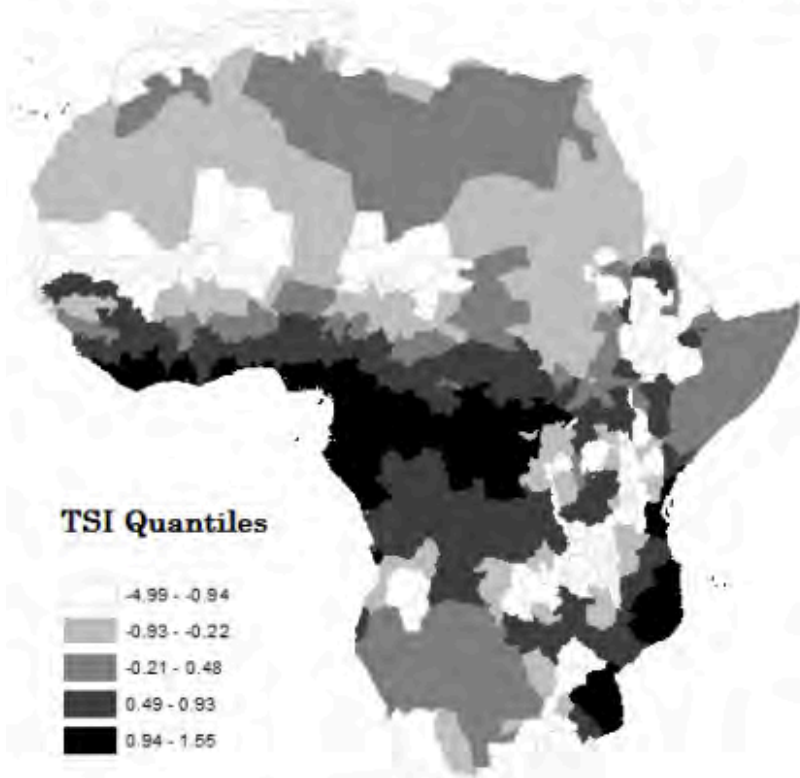
Commissioner H.H. Johnston (1894)

“ The presence of Tsetse-fly preclude the animal transport by carts, which in the interior is the great incentive for road-making. In Witu, for instance, ...the bullocks employed for the waggons on it all died, and the old wretched system of human portorage has still to be resorted to for transport.”

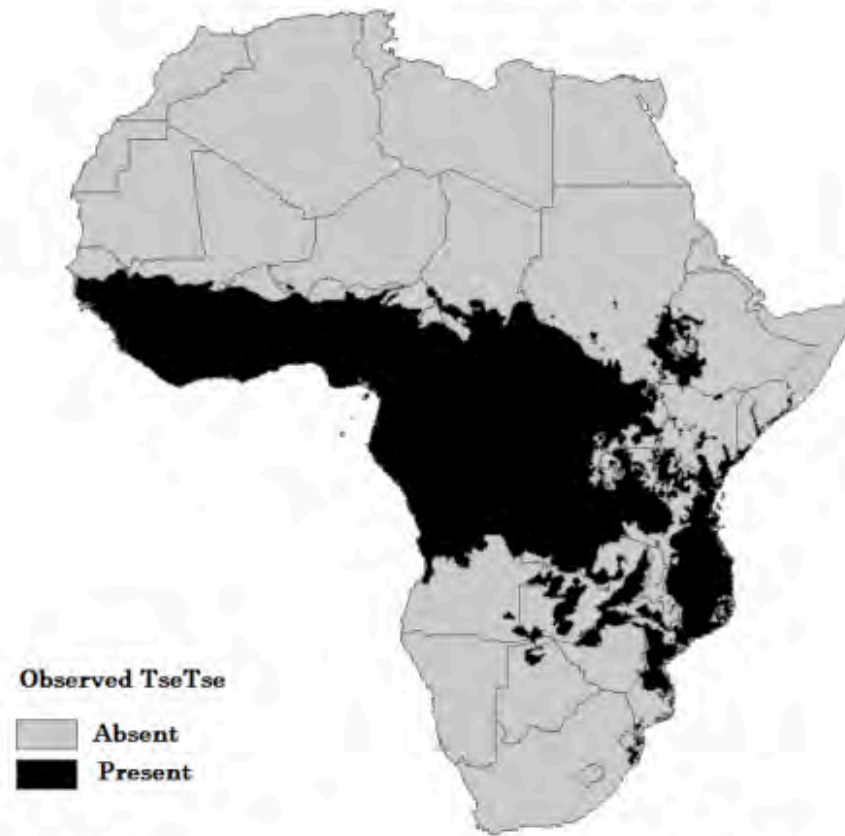
Sir A. Harding (1897)

Figure III: TseTse Suitability Index Versus the Observed TseTse Distribution

A. TseTse Suitability Index (1871)



B. TseTse Distribution (1973)

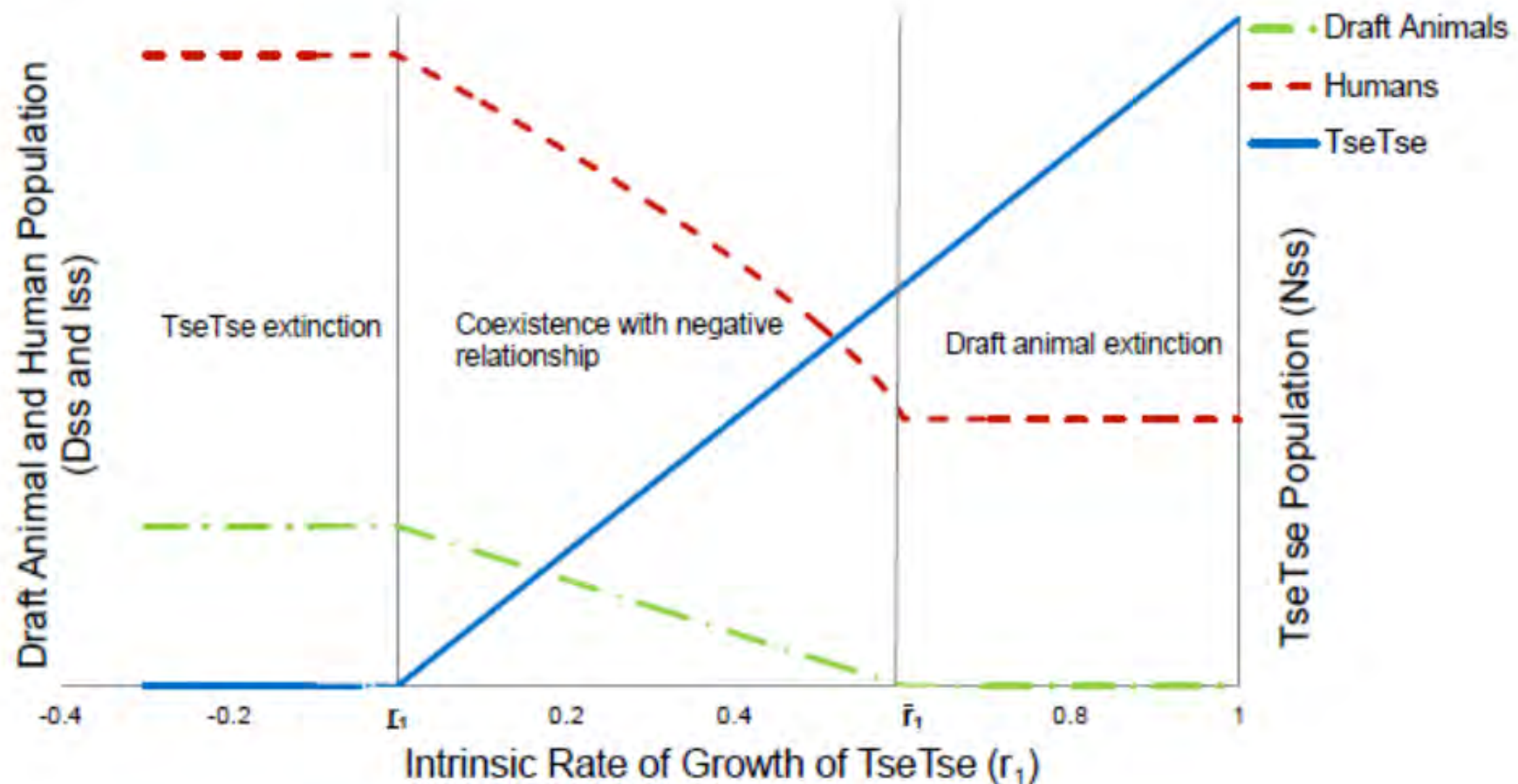


Notes: Panel (A) shows the historical TseTse suitability index created using climate data from NOAA's 20th century reanalysis for the year 1871. Panel (B) shows the observed TseTse distribution in 1973 (Ford and Katondo, 1977).

The effect of Tse Tse on draft animal and human populations

Linked to capacities for food production and surplus

Figure IV: TseTse, Draft Animal and Human Steady State Populations



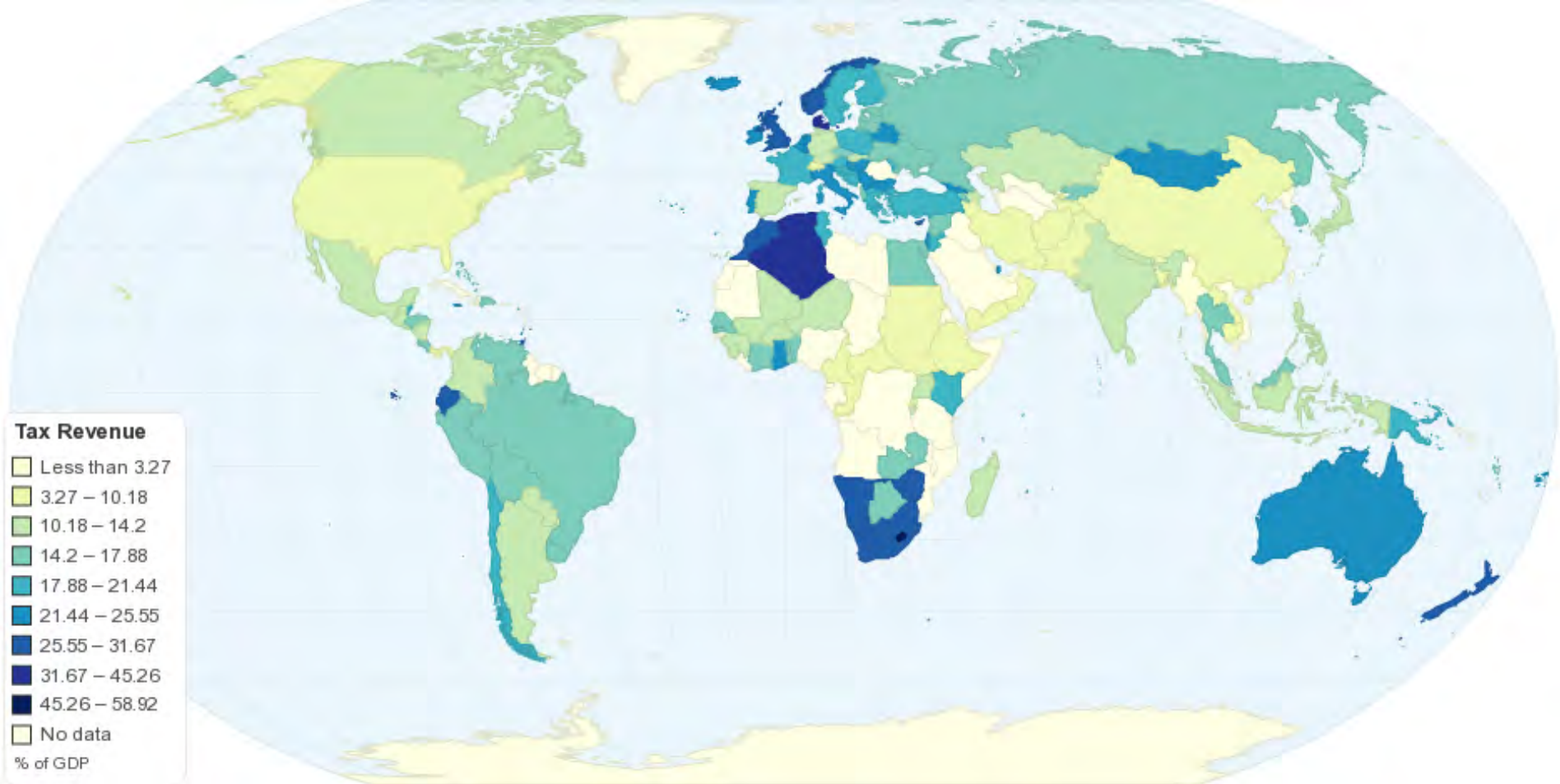
Staggering precolonial impacts of just one disease on social organization and state formation

- A one standard deviation increase in the TseTse suitability is associated with:
 - 21 percentage point (pp) decrease in the likelihood of large domesticated animals
 - 9 pp decrease in cultivation
 - 6 pp reduction in plow use.
 - 45% reduction in population density in 1700
 - 11 pp increase in the likelihood of using slaves
 - 8 pp decrease in the probability state was centralized



Overall, these initial conditions help explain some of the variation across regions, but there is still a lot of variation within regions to explain

A common proxy for state capacity: Tax revenues as a % of GDP



V. Why and when do states “modernize”?

“Stateless”

Informal systems of rule (chiefdoms, bands, and other small political units), typically linked by personal and kinship ties, with limited ability to shape society



“Weak states”

Larger, more hierarchical, coercive, personalized political authority that provides some order and loosely controls society

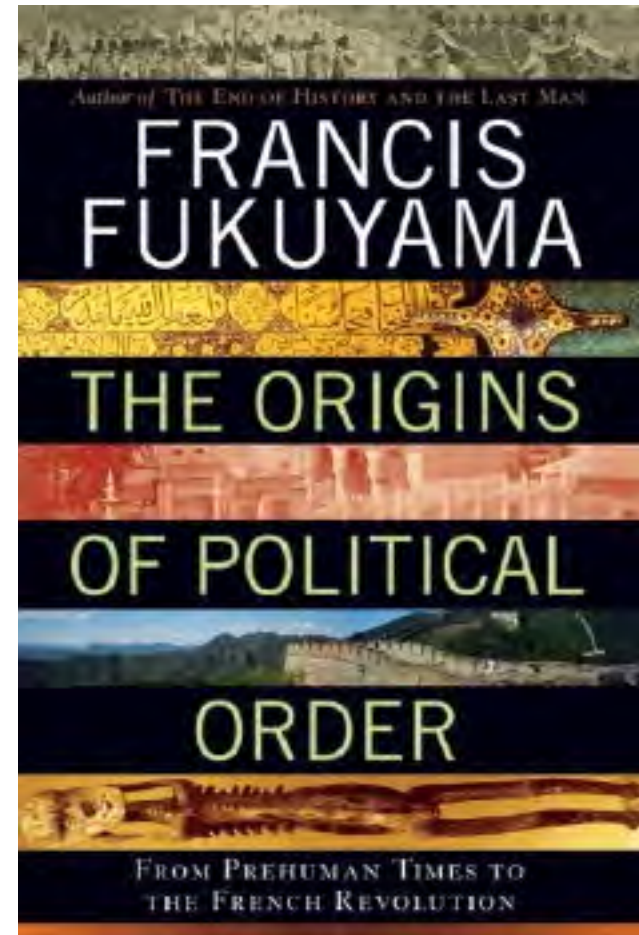


“Strong states”

More stable, centralized, rule-governed, bureaucratic, depersonalized political organizations with sovereign territorial control, a monopoly on legitimate force, and able to shape society

Note that the natural path of most states for most of history has not been to “modernize”

- Today, some leaders in weak states aspire to a rule-based state and professional bureaucracy
- But only recently is this seen as the mark of a successful state
- Organized groups—often the rich and powerful—tend to entrench themselves over time and demand privileges
- The history of statebuilding is this patrimonialism asserts itself in the absence of strong incentives to depersonalize the state



Is there a natural human tendency for patrimonialism: to favor family and one's network of clients?

- Social organization is based on kinship and common descent in most stateless societies (including ones that currently have modern states)
 - It is a basis for the social cooperation that makes us successful as a species, e.g.
 - Reciprocal altruism: Human beings gravitate toward the favoring of kin and friends with whom they have exchanged favors
 - Kin selection: Behaviors that favor survival of your genes not you
 - Parochial altruism: Altruism toward in-group and hostility to out-group
- When tribal societies evolved or were subjugated by early states, tribalism did not simply disappear
 - State institutions were merely layered on top of tribal institutions
- Early states broaden personalized connections beyond kin to allies, populations, or territories

Major theories of state development

A. Initial conditions

- a) Trade
- b) Species
- c) Disease

B. Competition between states

- Especially (but not only) war

C. Competition within states

- Between elite groups
- Between elites and broader “society”

D. Choices and events at critical junctures

So when have we tended to see this modernization occur?

A. Initial conditions

- a) Trade
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Powerful incentives are needed to break out of this patrimonial “natural state”

a) External competition

- Competition from nearby states eliminated the weak
- War making as state making (Tilly)
- Potentially peaceful forms of competition too (e.g. trade)

b) Internal competition

- Rulers, elites, and society at large continuously compete for power
- Organizations and institutions of various forms emerged from this competition, strengthening some states and groups more than others
- Especially in times of crises

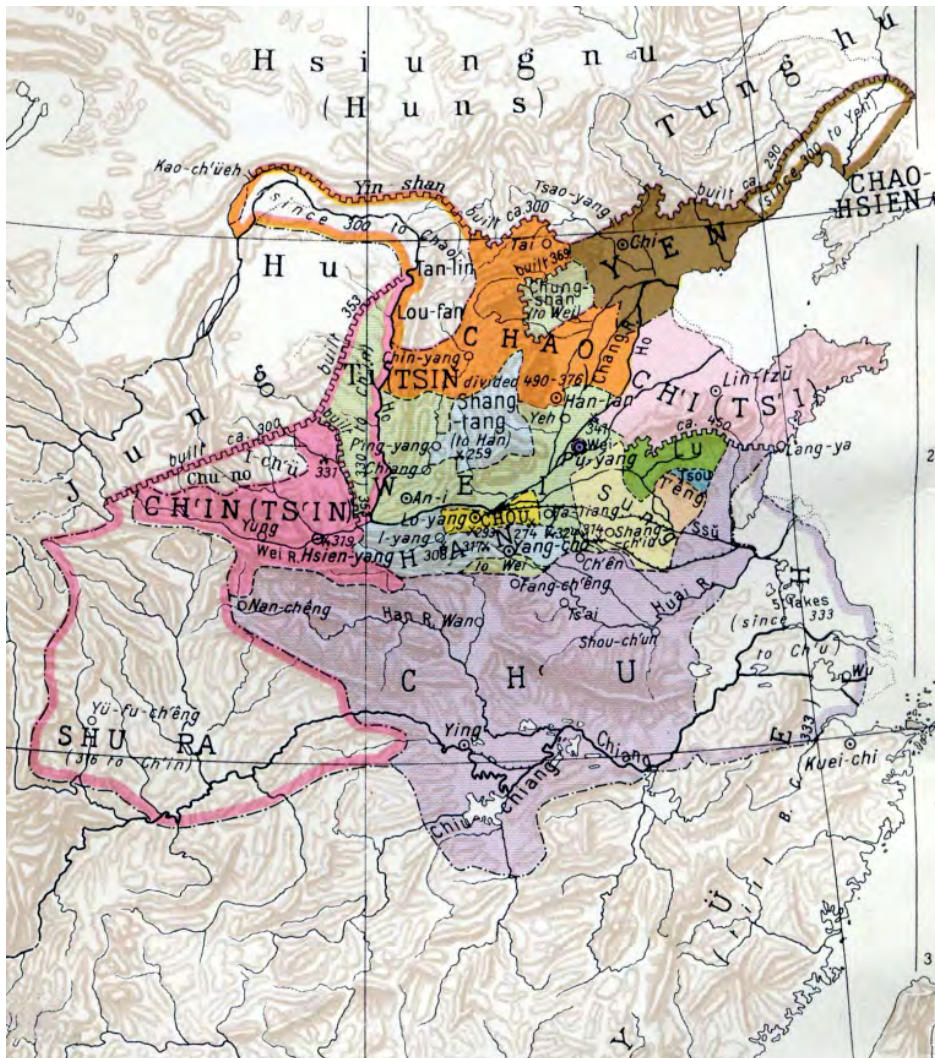
Often stronger states and “institutions” moved together, something we will discuss next week

I will focus on the external competition argument today

In 1500, Europe has a densely packed system of at least 500 “early” states, warring against one another, which over 400 years consolidate into the states we know today



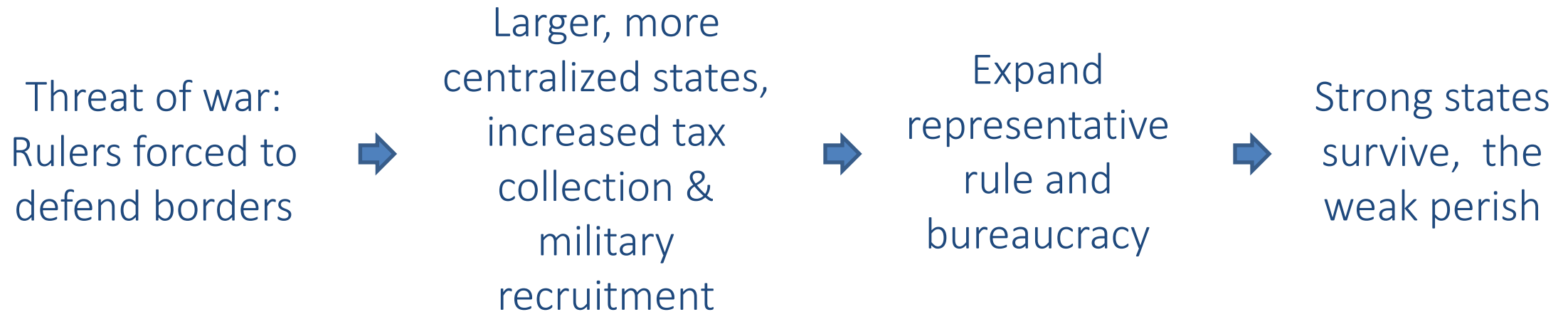
And an analogous period of warring states in China, 770-221 B.C.



- Sometimes referred to as China's feudal period:
 - Spring and Autumn Period (770-476)
 - Warring States period (475-221)
- More than 1000 wars fought between early states
- Ended in 221 BC with the Qin state's victory and the first unified Chinese empire: the Qin dynasty
- First example of a centralized, uniform system of bureaucratic administration that was capable of governing a huge population and territory

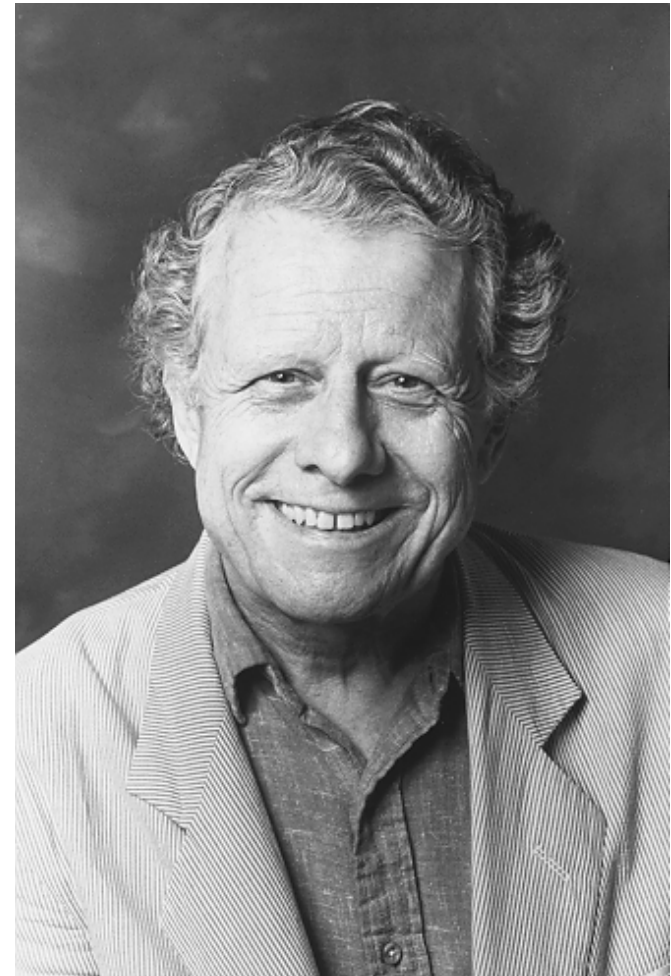
A classic answer from Charles Tilly: “Wars made the state and the state made war”

- This is an evolutionary argument for state building where there are state systems (dense concentrations of states who compete for population, territory, and survival)
 - War is a selective survival mechanism



Why might competition between states lead to permanent increases in capacity?

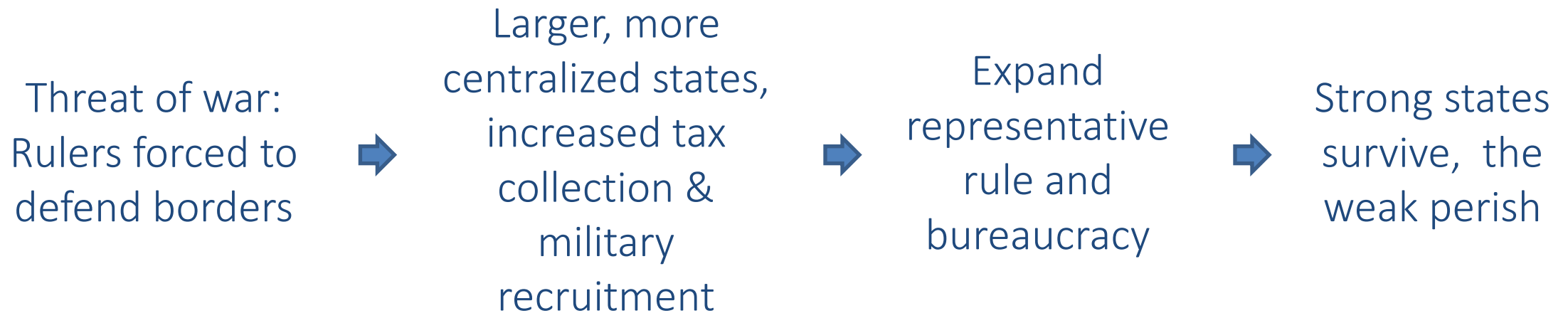
- War puts tremendous strain on leaders to find new sources of income, forcing them to invest heavily in tax collection (fiscal capacity)
- Mass mobilization and recruitment also requires an efficient state apparatus
- Citizens may also be more willing to acquiesce to taxation when the nation is at war
 - Because of the real threat to their survival
 - Because this common threat generate feelings of nationalism—a common association, united around common symbols, events and memories
- Revenue collection seldom falls after a war



Charles Tilly

But is this always true? What was it about China or Europe at these points in history that led to modernization of the state?

- This is not a dynamic we observe everywhere or in all periods



Initial conditions favored not just states but “state systems”
Waterways, endowments and disease environment favored many competing states in a dense area

Europe

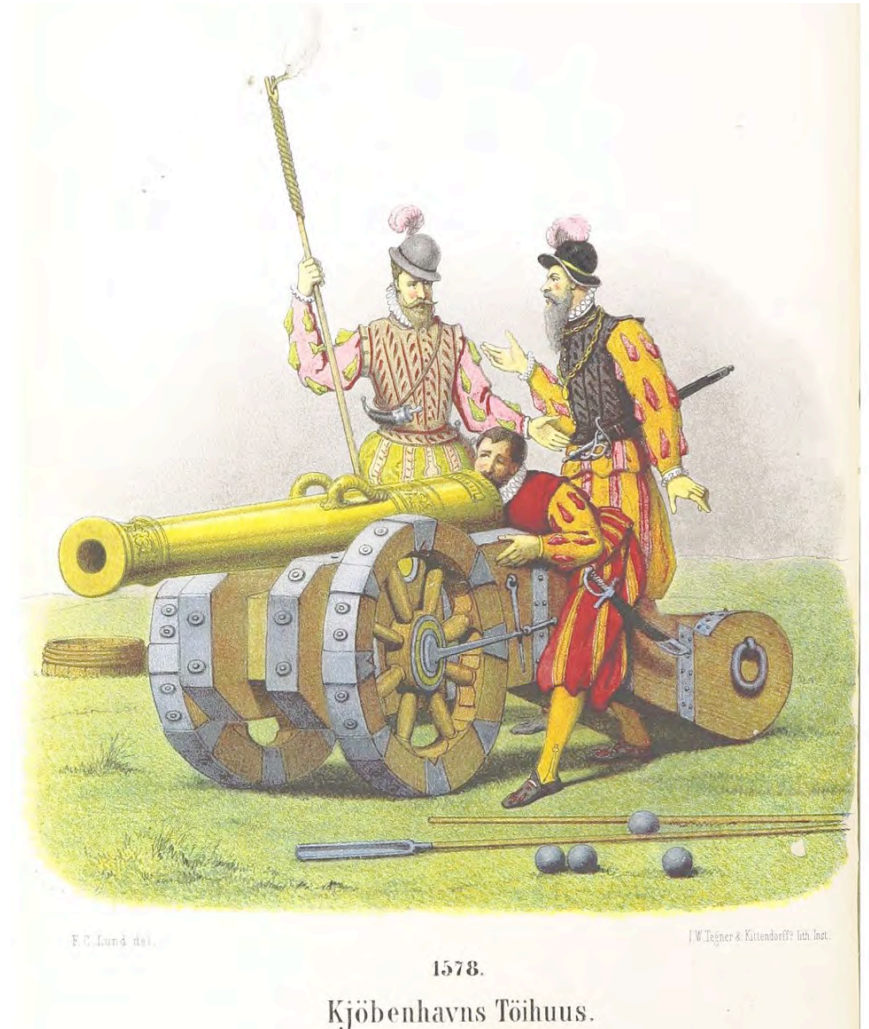


China & Japan



Another common argument: Efficiencies of scale in military technology favored larger states

- Armaments
 - Mass infantry
 - Artillery & firearms
 - Fortifications
 - Replace private-owned, specialized fighting forces (e.g. cavalry)
- Organizationally
 - Easier to form alliances with other central states
 - Credible commitment problems easier to solve



Africa is huge

18% of the world's surface area

But 6-11% of the world's population before 1750

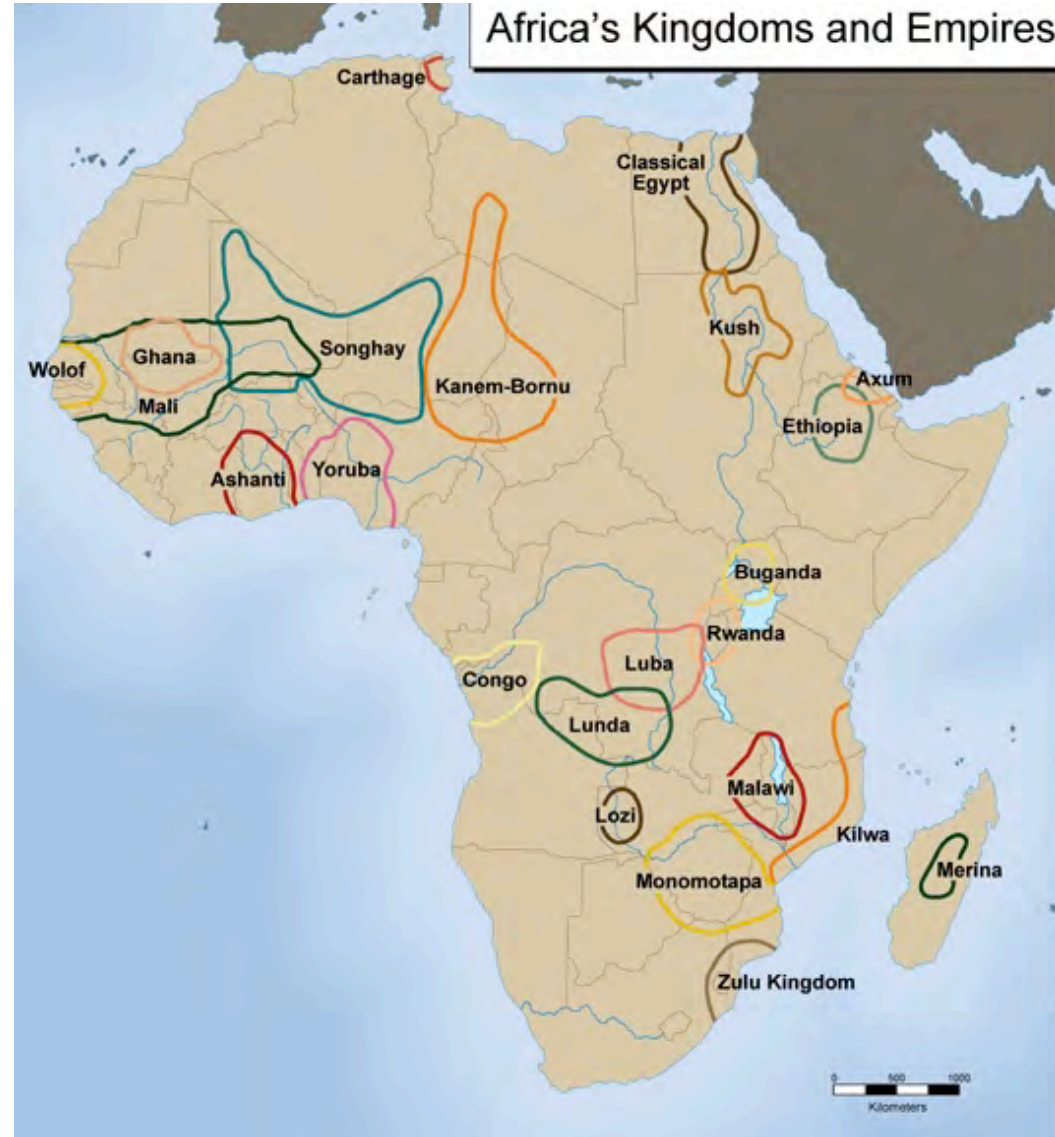
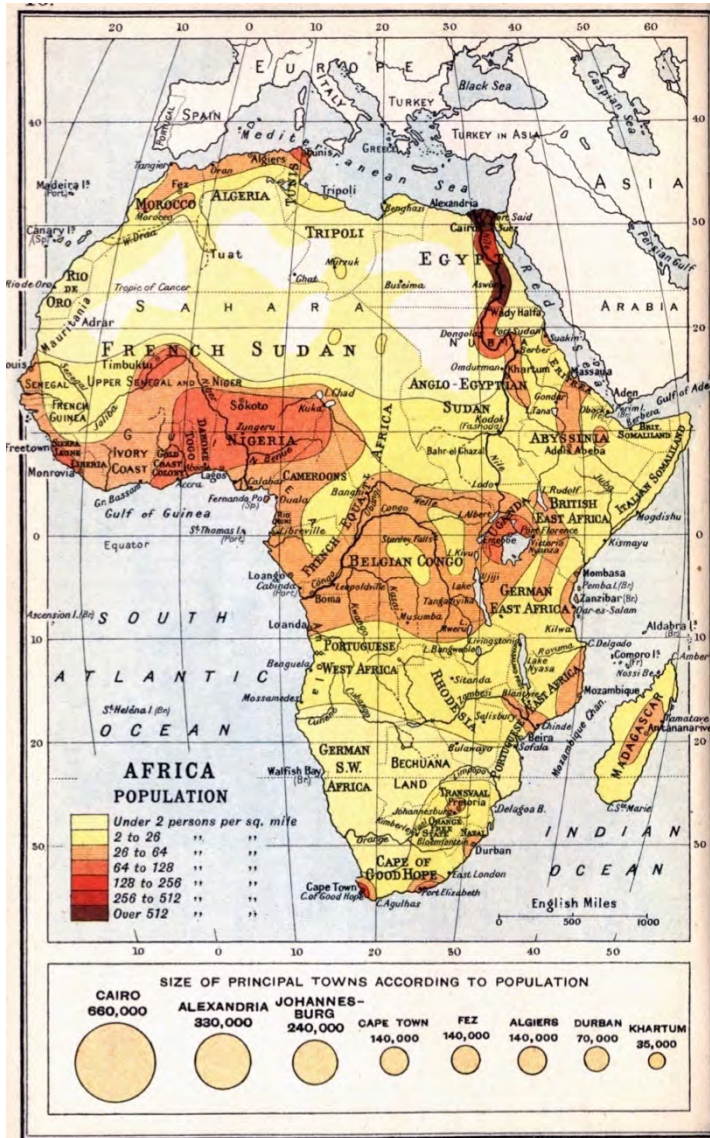


Other geographic factors do not favor population growth and dense, stratified societies in SSA

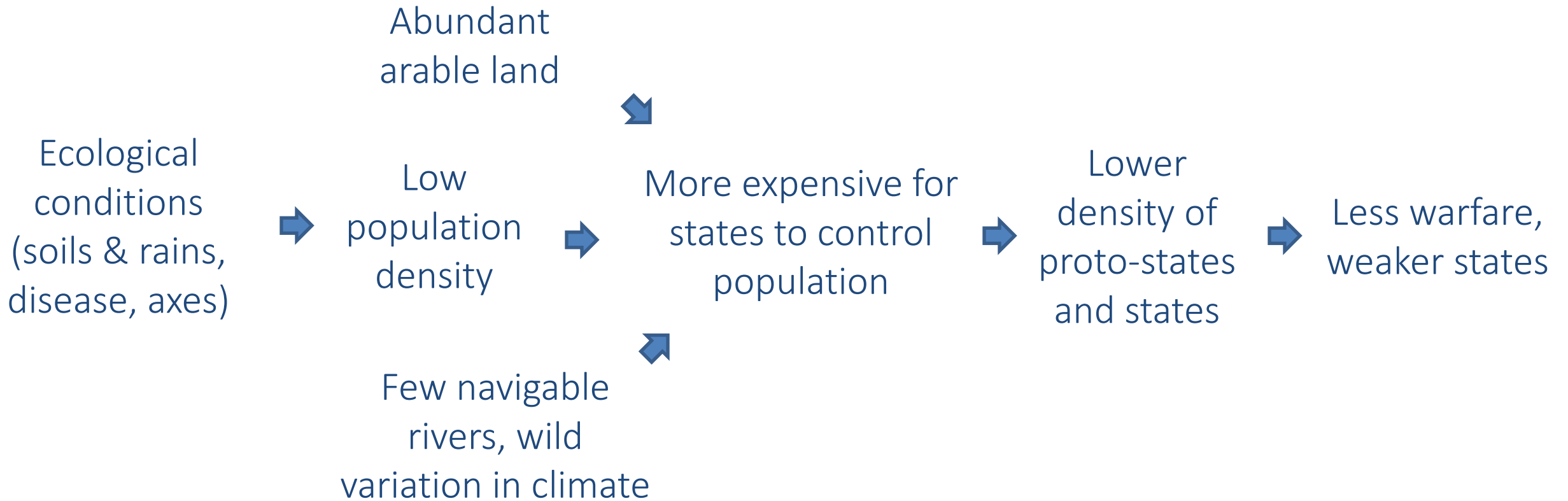
- Interior of continent inaccessible from by water from the ocean
- Disease environment
- Low endowment of domesticable grass and animal species + vertical axis
- Notable exceptions, perhaps because of trading opportunities and climate:
 - Area around Lake Victoria
 - Area along Niger River



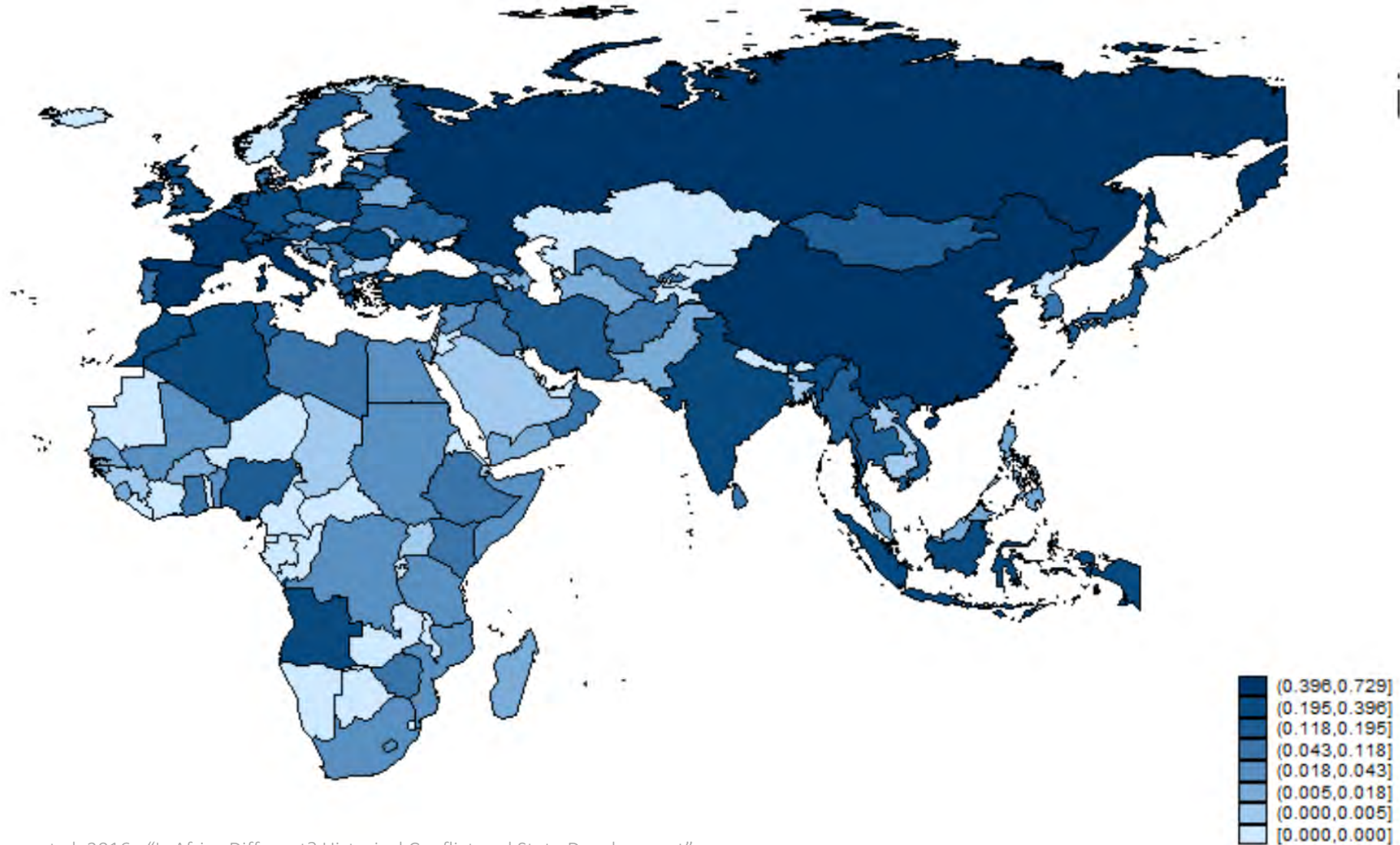
While there were many powerful dense, stratified kingdoms and empires in Africa, there were relatively few dense “state systems”



Herbst: Africa's endowments did not favor enough dense, settled societies that could engage in specialization, trade, or international war



We see this in the conflict data: A less dense state system means less warfare
Share of years 1400-1799 modern-day country experienced a conflict (darker = more conflict)



What Harry Potter can or cannot teach us about African political development



VI. Postscript: What can we do with this information today?

Recommend more war?

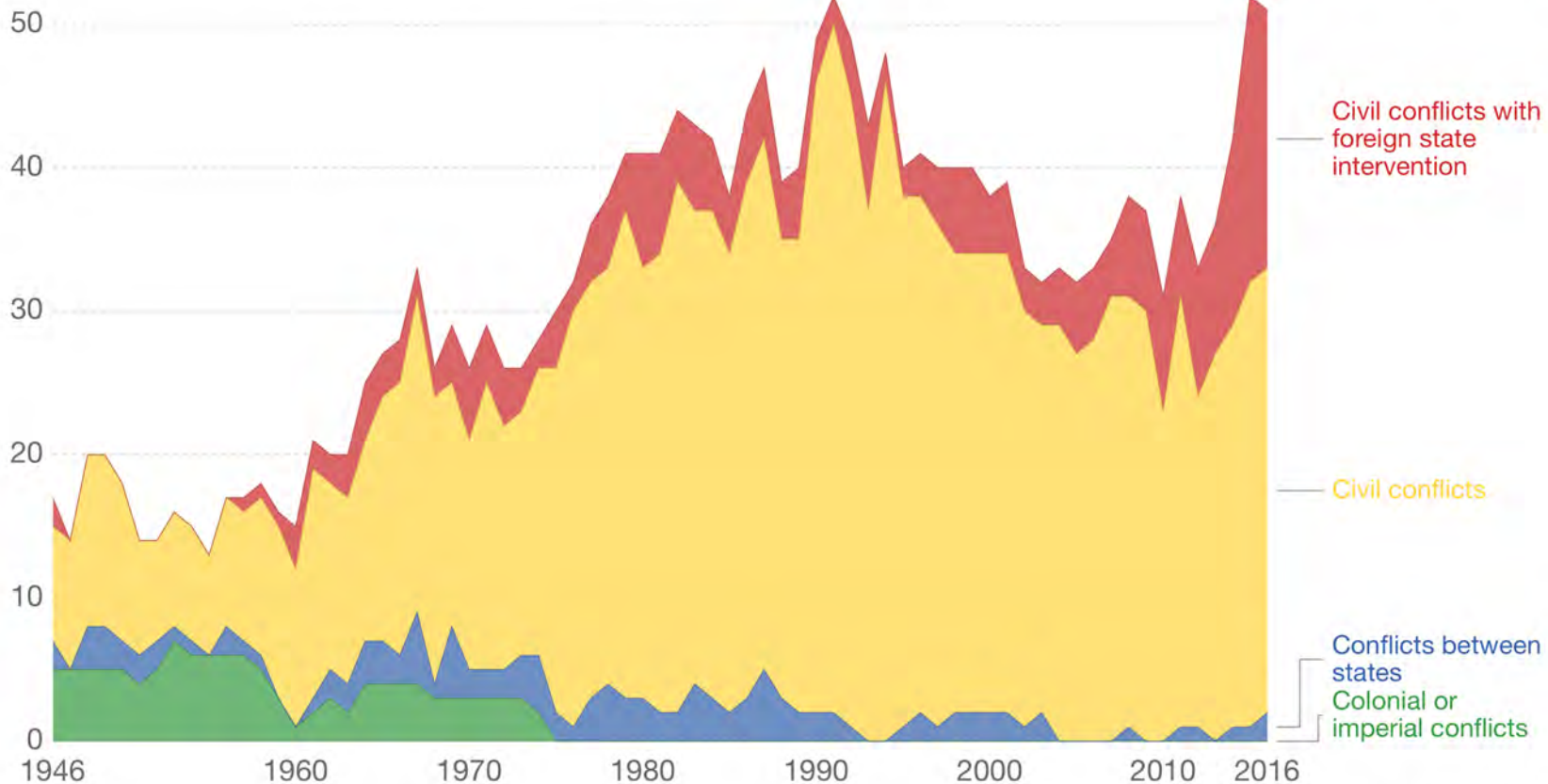
Dredge navigable waterways?

At first glance, history seems unhelpful to policy

How will changing patterns of warfare affect state building? Especially decline of international war?

State-based conflicts since 1946

Only conflicts in which at least one party was the government of a state are included. Ongoing conflicts are represented for every year in which they resulted in at least 25 battle-related deaths.



Source: UCDP

OurWorldInData.org • CC BY-SA

Note: The war categories paraphrase UCDP/PRIO's technical definitions of 'Extrasystemic', 'Internal', 'Internationalised internal' and 'Interstate' respectively. In a small number of cases where wars were ascribed more than one type, conflict incidences have been apportioned evenly to each type.

The post-WWII & post-9/11 international system discourages war



- Powerful nations helped to create and preserve national borders
- Patron states protect the borders of their client states if necessary
- As a result, few states faced large external threats
- Pushed conflicts to be more internal
 - For control of de jure state
 - As proxy wars

Herbst is somewhat pessimistic

“

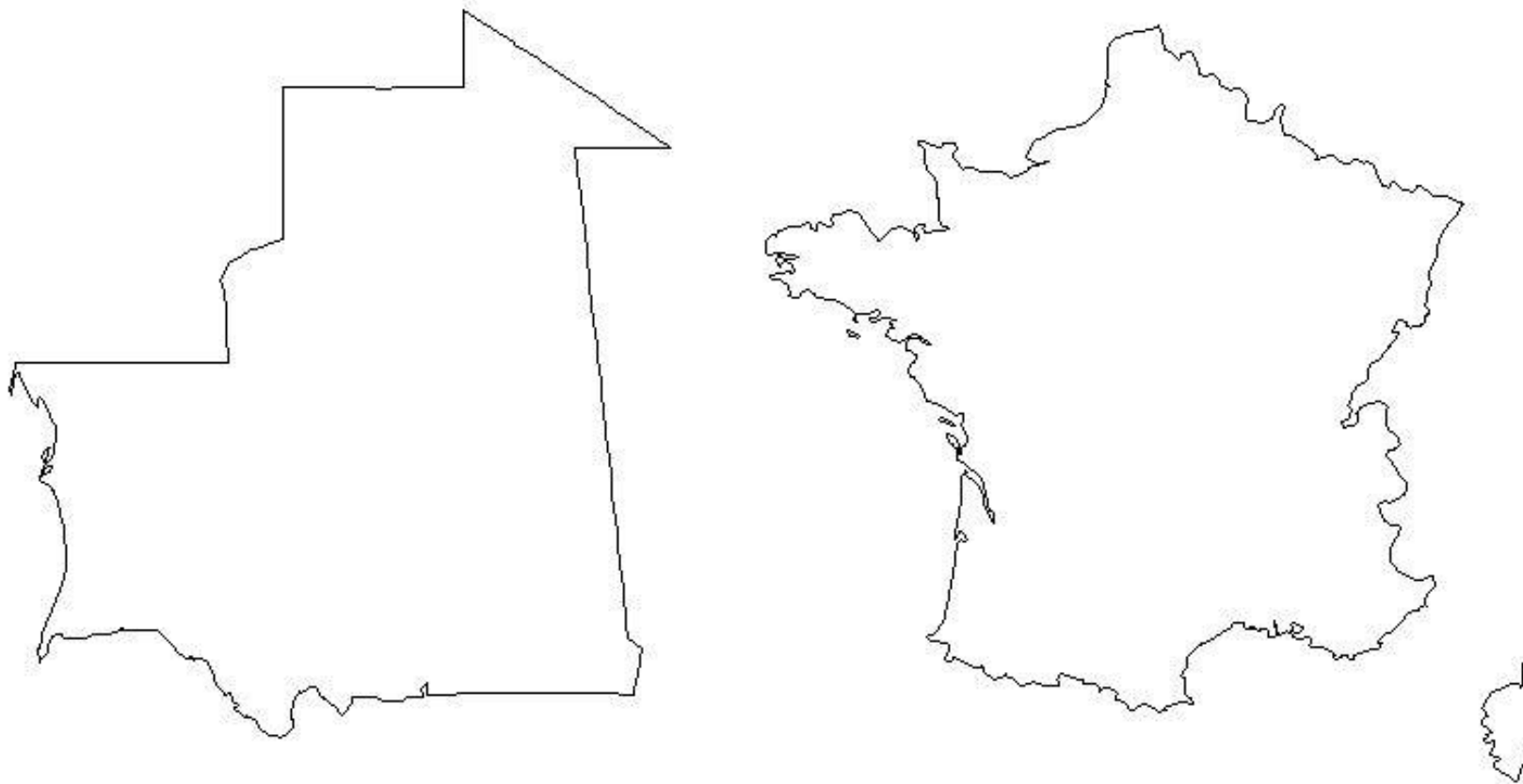
While there is little reason to believe that war would have exactly the same domestic effects in Africa today as it did in Europe several centuries ago, it is important to ask if developing countries can accomplish in times of peace what war enabled European countries to do.

I conclude that they probably cannot because fundamental changes in economic structures and societal beliefs are difficult, if not impossible, to bring about when countries are not being disrupted or under severe external threat .

—Jeffrey Herbst, “War and the State in Africa”

Worse still, the post-WWII economic system preserves a large number of “artificial states”

80% of non-coastal African borders follow latitudinal and longitudinal lines



One consequence is territorial-states not nation-states: De jure not de facto statehood

- For the colonial powers, drawing lines on the map was cheaper than war, defense, and control of the periphery
- Thus political borders do not coincide with the division of nationalities desired by the people on the ground
 - Gave territories to one group ignoring the claims of other groups.
 - Drew boundaries lines splitting “nations” (ethnic/linguistic groups) into different countries, frustrating national ambitions of some groups
 - Combined into a single country groups that wanted independence.
- Colonial powers only tried to rule in ‘core’ areas
 - Beyond the core, weak systems of formal rule
 - Make have explicitly or implicitly place the “core” group
- No process by which weak states reform or are eliminated

1. Most difficult political geography

(Herbst Chapter 5)

- Large, dense, but non-contiguous populations
 - Difficult to consolidate power
 - Different groups and ethnicities consolidate around different symbols and systems

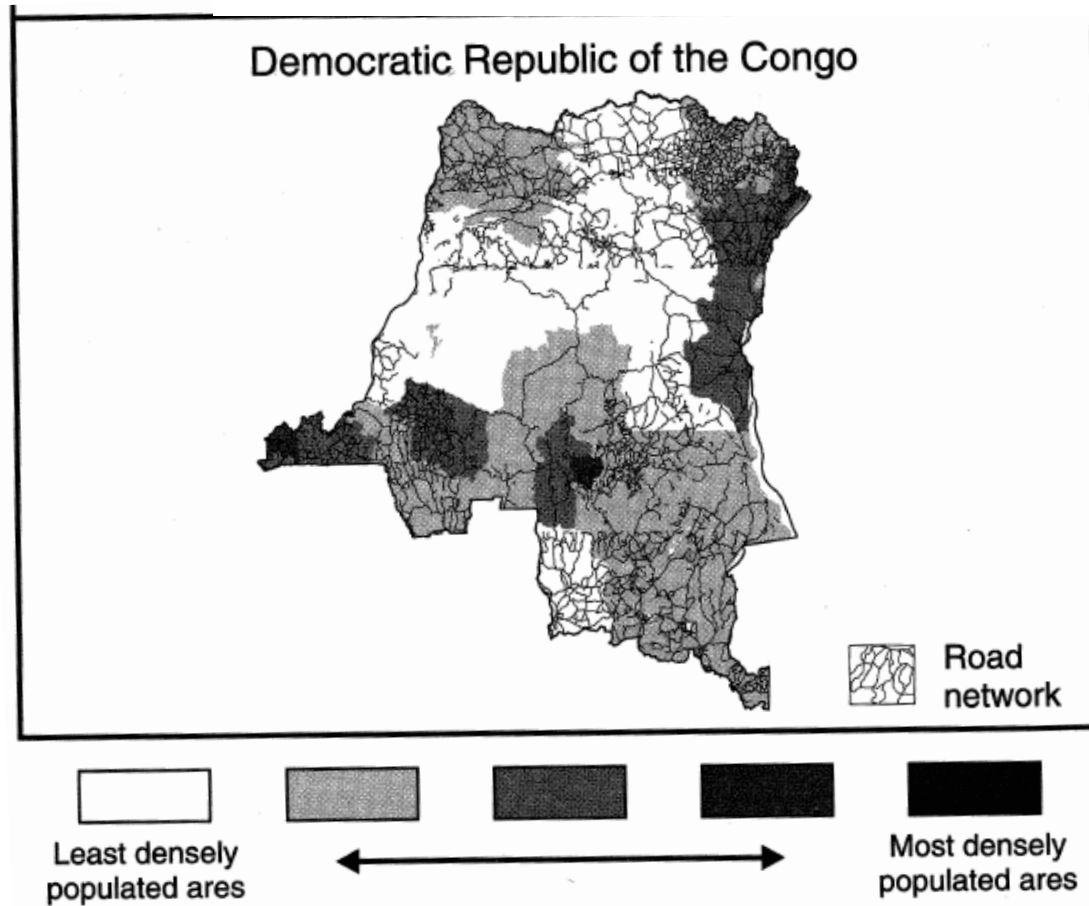
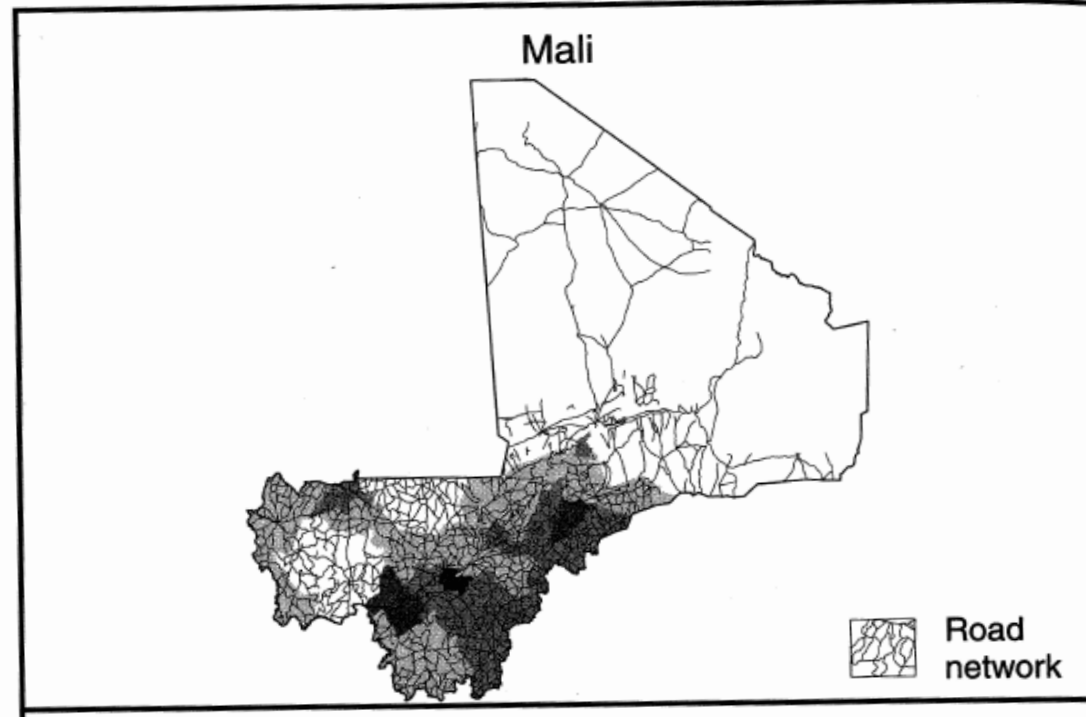


Figure 5.7. Mali and D.R.O.C. Compared

2. Also difficult: Hinterlands

- Large, countries, undispersed populations
 - Often Sahelian
- Capital is challenged to control the periphery
- But at least government is close to the population



3. Favorable geographies

- Smaller size
- Dense populations near capital
- No large hinterland
- Easier to exert authority over populations

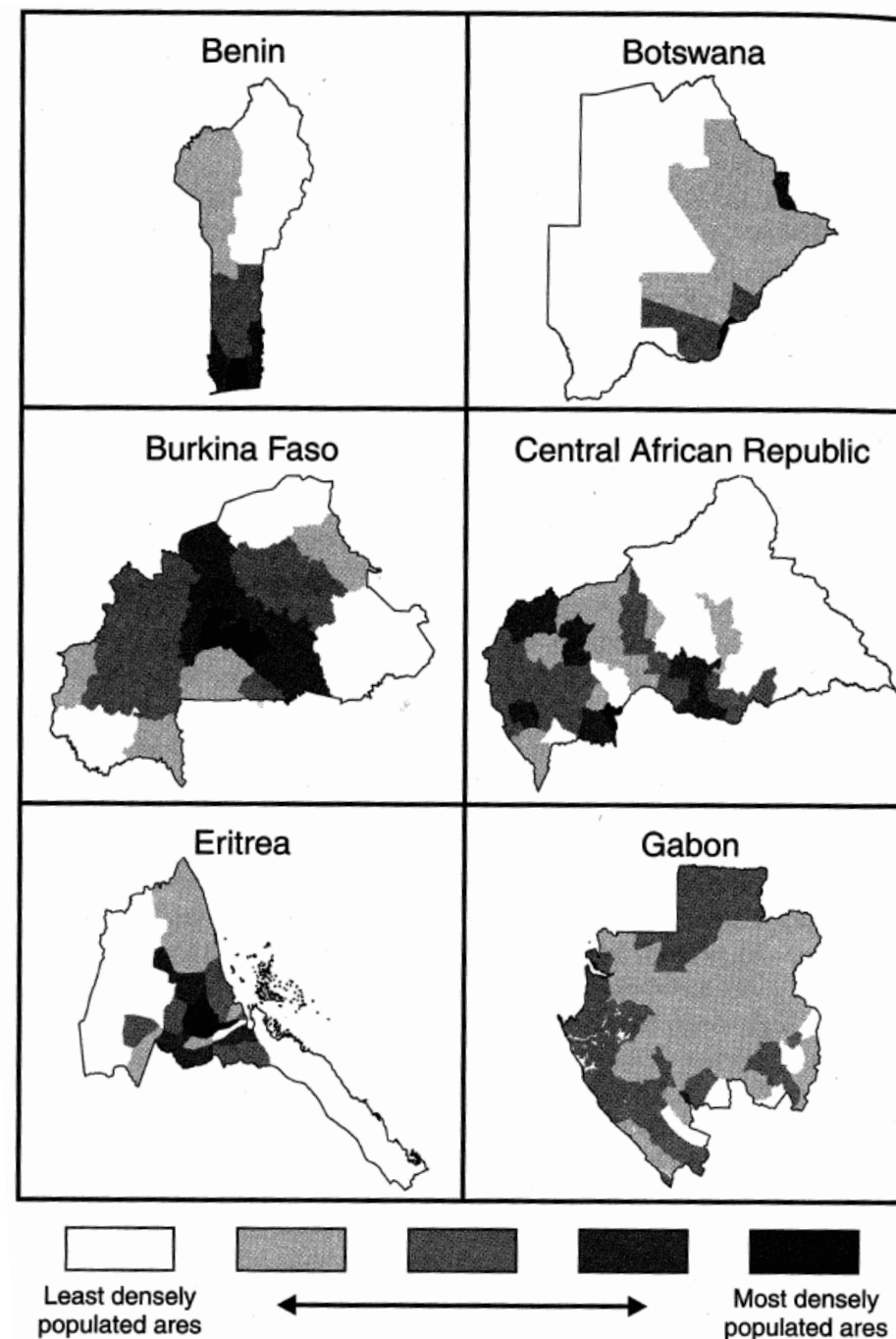


Figure 5.3. Countries with Favorable Geographies

Herbst has suggested that

- “Other than war, no type of crisis demands that the state increase taxes with such forcefulness, and few other situations would impel citizens to accept those demands”
- Will at some point African leaders recalculate and see self interest or national interest in war or seizing the assets of another state?
 - “when the futility of domestic reform becomes clear”
- Has suggested that some places might be better off if we allowed borders to change
 - e.g. Allow Rwanda to govern eastern Congo



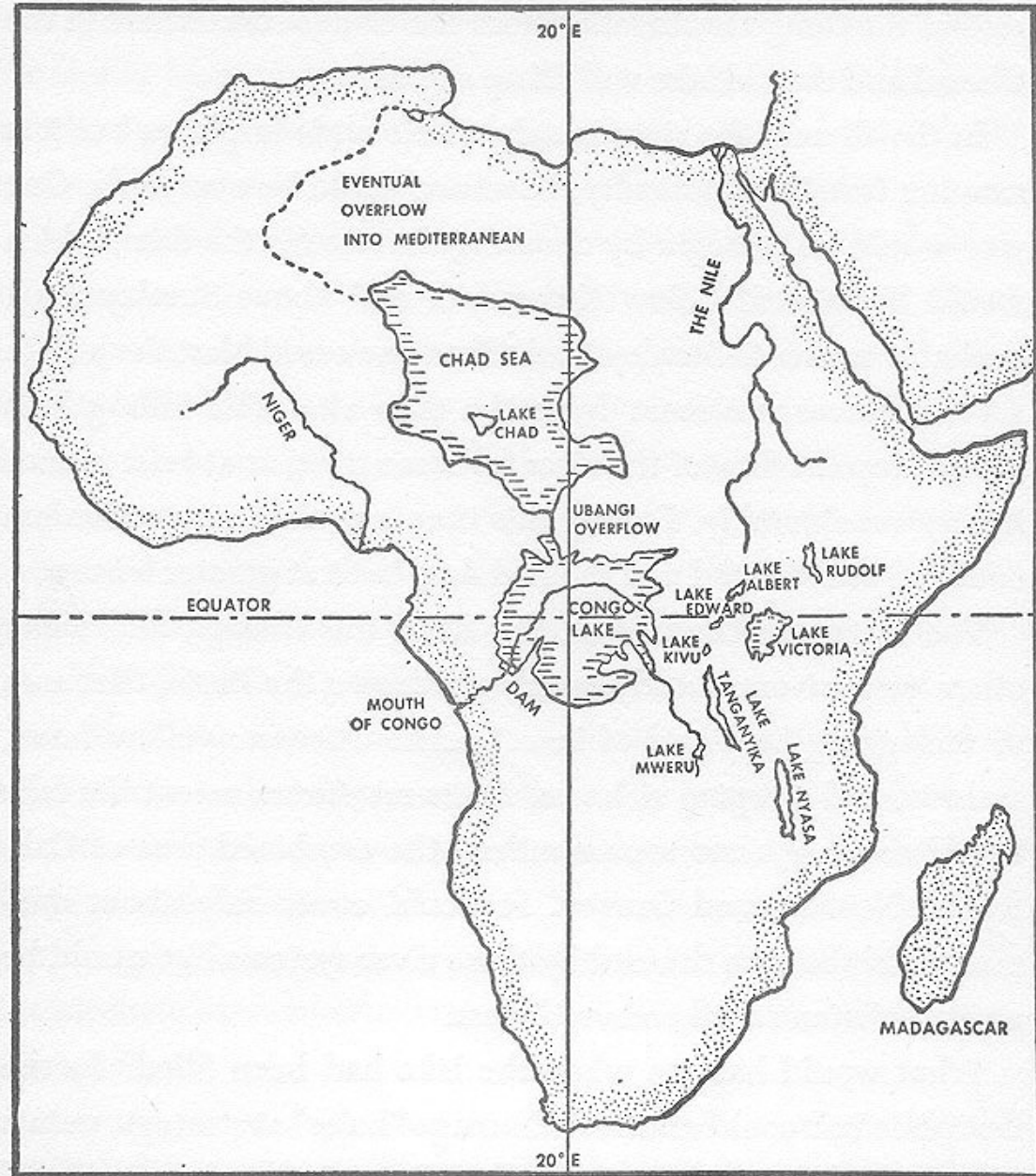
What are the policy options for landlocked nations?

Invade your coastal neighbors?

Dredge gigantic rivers?

Proposal by German architect and engineer Herman Sörgel in 1935 to dam the Congo river

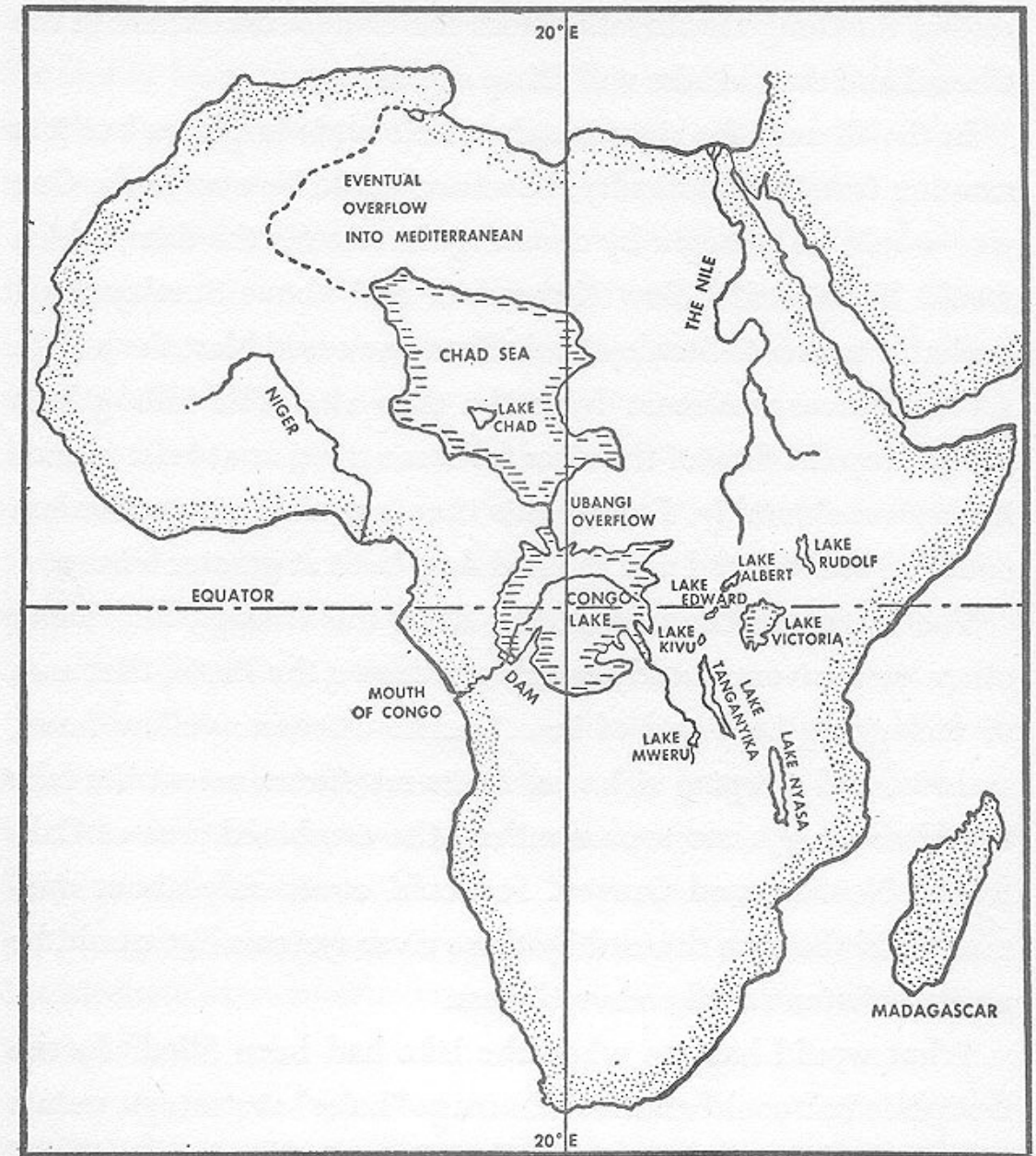
(Did not specify what would happen to people previously living in Congo or Chad...)



Just to illustrate that you can take the history too literally

Proposal by German architect and engineer Herman Sörgel in 1935 to dam the Congo river

(Did not specify what would happen to people previously living in Congo or Chad...)



What can a landlocked actually country do? (Paul Collier)

- Domestic
 - Reduce costs of trade and doing business
 - Specialize in high-value services and agriculture
 - Reduce costs of air transport
 - Encourage remittances
- Regional
 - Improve regional transport infrastructure
 - Increase the openness of neighbors
 - Regional integration
 - (But what incentives does the coastal country have?)

Some reasons I am slightly more hopeful (and a preview of Weeks 8-10)

- I think Herbst looks over too short a timeframe
 - European states formed over hundreds of years
 - African states have made reasonable progress in just 50 years
 - Might they already have reached the levels of bureaucratic functioning or taxation of many 18-19th century European states?
- Being an imitator is different from being a leader
 - Today's weak states have models, and citizen expectations are high
 - Their elites and populations have access to information and strong norms to emulate developed states
 - Societies can coordinate to emulate stronger states
- There are other incentives to modernize
 - Intense, non-spatial economic and political competition
 - Gains from industrialization and trade
 - Also people vote with their feet and migrate out