



MOVE: THE FORCES UPROOTING US

BY PARAG KHANNA

Book Review by Zahra Mughis

Research Assistant, GIDS

March 2022

Publication Year: 2021

Publisher: Scribner

What will the world look like in thirty years is question often asked, pondered on, and attempted to be answered. However, a question almost never asked is: where will you live in thirty years? The material "where" of this question uproots one's confidence in their philosophical notion of the same. That's exactly what Parag Khanna does in the prologue to his latest book, *Move: The Forces Uprooting Us*. Through an account of the history and likely future of the world based on the innately human instinct for migration, the futurist writer helps his readers answer the question in one phrase: *On the Move!* It's said that books take readers to places far and wide. *Move* does that theoretically and metaphorically

Khanna's *Move* is a book of scenarios for where we will be in 2050. It argues that the human geography is far from settled and the forces shaping it are stronger and more rigorous than ever. The book draws on history to illustrate that the human geography of the earth, i.e., the distribution of people across habitable land, is shaped by the prudent forces of nature, economics, and politics. It walks us through our history as Civilization 1.0 that was nomadic and chose to migrate across continents to feed itself and survive in the face of droughts and other challenges. It also chronicles our evolution as Civilization 2.0 that developed tools and technologies to facilitate a sedentary lifestyle and chose to draw artificial boundaries. Yet, it remained on the move for access to or capture of resources and to seize opportunities for a better lifestyle. Faced with climate change, economic crisis, and political instabilities across the world, but the Global South in particular, Khanna predicts that people will move across borders to survive and take better chances at life as they have done for thousands of years.

Post the Great Lockdown, forced by the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, awaits us a Great Migration, posits Khanna. He explains that there are multiple routes that this threatened civilization may take, from building military-protected green-zone regions to a violent revolt

Zahra Mughis

against oppressive elite powers. However, the route that shall optimize welfare of all shall be mass global migration.

The demographic imbalance between the aging and depopulating Global North and the young and overpopulated Global South, higher climatic vulnerability of the southern latitudes, and related politico-economic crisis shall push billions away from what they call home. The global war for talent to correct this demographic imbalance has already begun and the number of climate refugees is multiplying by the year. Regardless of fervent nationalism and nativism, the meaning of identity is changing in the increasingly connected global village. Identity is more generational than national for the youth looking for better lives. The borders may never be re-drawn, but the human geography will shuffle, argues Khanna. When it does so, we may always be on the move like our nomadic ancestors of Civilization 1.0.

Move predicts that a mobile generation, forced by the need for resource-access and the instinct to survive, is on the rise. It defines this evolution as the rise of Civilization 3.0 that shall choose circular migration to ensure its survival and choose the historically successful model of open, multicultural, resilient cities over static national identities. But where will it move to? To the intersections of the seasonally green and the blue zones that are climate resilient, have robust infrastructure, and support people on the move is Khanna's answer. The future is, thus, a circularly mobile Civilization 3.0.

Science fiction and fantasy writers to climatologists and geopolitical pundits, whoever, whenever and wherever, has ever written on or opined about the twenty-first century earth has painted a frightening picture. Parag Khanna's book of scenarios is no different as it pictures sinking coastal cities, melting glaciers, dry riverbeds, heat waves, and loss of cultivable land along with continually mobile humans on truck-houses! It warns, provides solutions, and promises survival rooted in migration, infrastructure development, and technological advancement. However, it takes us to a theoretical dystopia that both resembles and contradicts our history.

Move is an interesting and compelling read. It draws you in but keeps you going in a circle. The prologue sets the scenario, and the first two chapters concretely summarize the arguments with the final chapter retelling the story in a concise summary. In between, however, is a whirlpool of chronicles of the past, scenarios for the future, and some numbers but mostly anecdotal evidence and observation to support them. In an overarching framework of "mobility

Zahra Mughis

is destiny”, going in concentric circles can leave the central idea stranded in the middle of nowhere on a truck-house without fuel.

One might not need an atlas and an encyclopaedia but Google and a notes app to navigate through this complex map and remember the checkpoints of both our history and future. But Move is a recommended read for everyone interested in the changing dynamics of today and the world of tomorrow. Parag Khanna is a futurist who relies on the yesterday and today to model our tomorrow. His ideas are insightful and resourceful. They are worth investing in.