Futurist alumnus forecasts a nomadic human future

Singapore-based futurist Parag Khanna (SFS'99, G'05) uses the lens of geopolitics to research the forces driving mass migration. In his new book, *MOVE: The Forces Uprooting Us*, he forecasts that despite two years of COVID-19 lockdown, the future of human civilization will be defined by mobility.

What drives voluntary and involuntary mobility around the world, Khanna explains, are forces like political instability, imbalances in labor markets, and climate change. His research analyzes trends in civil wars and conflicts, failing economies, technological disruption from AI and automation, and climate change displacement, and then synthesizes takeaways.

"These deep, fundamental drivers of human mobility long predate COVID and will long outlast COVID," Khanna says. "The mass migrations of the past are not only going to continue, but also expand significantly, because all of these drivers are in overdrive."

In *MOVE*, Khanna predicts that more Asian populations will move into Central Asia and Russia, and that both Asian and African populations will move into Europe. In the Americas, he sees Canada taking leadership in accepting migrants, to the benefit of its cultural and economic future. And within the United States, he sees many people becoming climate migrants.

"There's a large number of climate refugees in America, from forest fires, floods, and rising sea levels," Khanna says. "America itself needs to think about climate adaptation and migration as a domestic issue, as well as a global one."

MOVE also explores youth subcultures like #VanLife—in which young people voluntarily forego hyperconsumerism to live sustainably while staying digitally connected—as an important signal of change.

"One of the things I learned in this process of research is to take young people really seriously," Khanna says. "We need to rebuild our economic, social, and political institutions to cater to their values, because they're actually the right values to have for the kind of world we're in today."

Khanna says his interdisciplinary work was deeply influenced by his undergraduate experiences in the Walsh School of Foreign Service, especially in Professor Charles Pirtle's Map of the Modern World class.

"Georgetown is one of just a handful of institutions that continue the tradition of teaching classical geopolitical theory. Very few people have the breadth of knowledge across disciplines to actually teach it. And Charles Pirtle was that man for an entire generation."

Khanna remains close with Pirtle and connects his book to Pirtle's class in particular.

"One of the most important things that he taught us is the complex layering of physical, political, and human geography," Khanna says. "That's really fundamentally what *MOVE* is about." ✠

—Kate Colwell



Photo courtesy of Parag Khanna