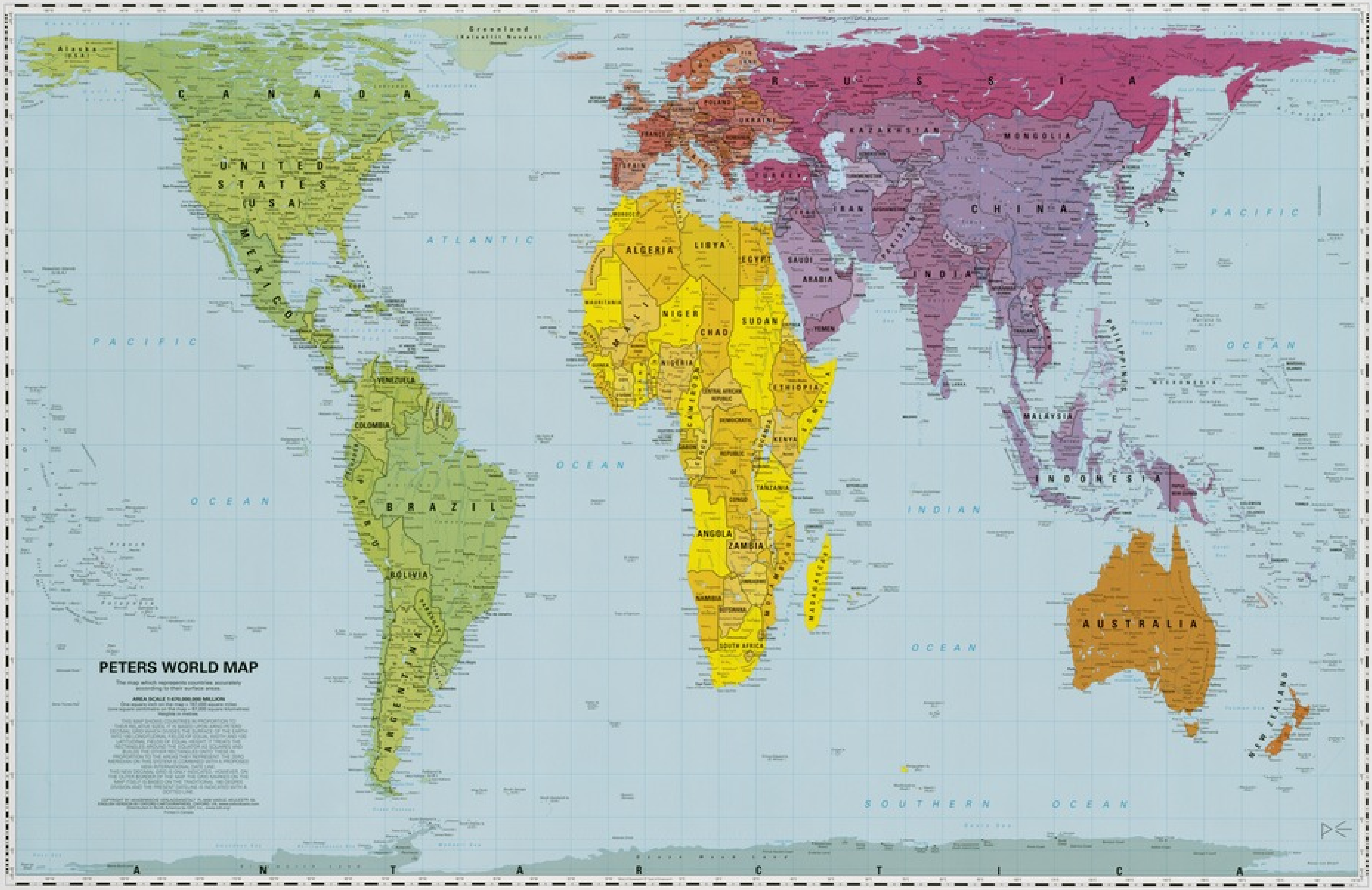


THE PETERS WORLD MAP

Five thousand years of human history have brought us to the threshold of a new age. It is an age of science and technology, and an age of growing interdependence of all nations and peoples.

Such a moment in history demands that we look critically at our understanding of the world. This understanding is based, to a significant degree, on the work of map-makers of the age when Europe dominated and exploited the world. Surprisingly, some maps still reflect that bygone era.

This new map, the work of the German historian Arno Peters, provides a helpful corrective to the size distortions of these maps. While the Peters Map is superior in its portrayal of proportions and sizes, its importance goes far beyond questions of cartographic accuracy. Nothing less than our world view is at stake.

MAP PROJECTION: Showing the round earth as a flat map.

Cartographers can "project" the round globe of the earth onto a flat surface in many ways. The Peters Projection belongs to the category of maps that retains true proportionality (equal area). Each country's area (as well as the areas covered by water) can be directly compared.

All north-south and east-west lines on the Peters Map run at right angles thus preserving a characteristic that is present on the globe itself.

Other map projections emphasize different qualities. For example, Mercator's projection features lines of constant compass bearing for navigation.

The Peters sets forth all countries in their true size. Dr. Peters asserted that his projection thus treated all people fairly.

In this complex and interdependent world in which the nations now live, the peoples of the world deserve the most accurate possible portrayal of the actual sizes of their countries. The Peters map achieves that goal.

OTHER PETERS MAP RESOURCES

Call or email ODT for additional resources or to find a local source of Peters Maps

ODT, Incorporated
PO Box 134, Amherst MA 01004
1-800-736-1293
www.odt.org

This very common map of the world, on the Mercator projection (1569), has often been used with Antarctica cut off, thus making the northern hemisphere appear much larger than the southern hemisphere. It also greatly exaggerates sizes with increasing distance from the equator. Note how the equator is below the mid-point on this version of Mercator's map.

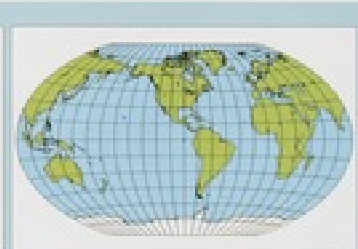
Mercator's map is, however, quite useful for navigators since straight lines on the map represent lines of constant compass bearing. But the size distortions of the Mercator make Greenland appear to be the same size or even larger than Africa. In reality, Africa is over fourteen times larger than Greenland.

The Homolosine projection, created by J. Paul Goode (1923) is an "interrupted" equal area projection, but with better representation of shape than the Peters. It achieves this because of its "orange peel" form. This map is useful for land-based data but not for the seas. Many people find the interruptions disconcerting.

By longstanding convention, which arose in Europe when the southern hemisphere was little-known, maps have shown north at the top. There is no reason why south should not be shown at the top as on this version of the Hobo-Dyer equal area map. Viewed thus, the vast size of the Southern oceans becomes more apparent.

Each approach to projecting the round globe surface onto a flat map has unique strengths and corresponding weaknesses. A map's value depends upon how you intend to use it. Here is Steve Waterman's Equal Area Butterfly map (2006), a 14-sided polyhedron which preserves shapes remarkably well and is also an equal area projection.

Maps are only as good as the purposes for which they are intended. This azimuthal map by Dyelke (2000) uses a projection formula developed by Lambert (1772). It is a Chicago-centered equal area map, showing the whole world as though in a single hemisphere. It has interest chiefly for the people living in Chicago, from which bearings to all other places are correct.



Some projections avoid extreme distortion of both size and shape by compromising both, as in the Winkel Tripel, invented in 1921 by Oswald Winkel. This is the projection the National Geographic Society currently uses for its world maps. It looks good, but true size comparisons are impossible.