

We take it for granted that our world today is the inevitable benefit of evolution. Comparing today with any other century in the past, and we can see that most human beings are freer, have more choices, than our ancestors. This is certainly true for technological changes. Modern energy (replacing fire and the horse); travel (train, plane, car, ship) is better than horse and carriage; medicine (vaccines, drugs, surgery) is light years better than the barber/surgeon; even how we treat women and children as fellow human beings is a great improvement over the violence that was expected in all previous human history. None of us would opt for a time-machine opportunity to live any time in the past.

But taking our world standards today for granted would be a great mistake. It is not social evolution that provided a world order in which goods enjoy mostly free trade; that most nations live free of warfare and the bullying of a neighbor (except for Putin's Russia and its attacks on Georgia and Ukraine); where famine and emergencies are addressed by a United Nations ready to help; where dozens of democracies where voting and free elections are the norm rather than dictatorships; where the majority of government representatives speak English, French, or Chinese, rather than thousands of mutually incomprehensible languages; none of this was an accident.

World order does not happen by accident, nor can it survive without effort. It is not inevitable. In historian Robert Kagan's book, *The World America Made* (2012), we can see that if America had not existed, we could not have seen the great powers no longer at constant warfare since 1950; billions of people lifted out of poverty (4% annual GDP increase rather than 1%); Polio and Smallpox eradicated globally and other endemic plagues on the way to eradication; the growing expectation that women are fellow human beings, not breeders and servants, despite centuries of just that; that the world can have a unified monetary system; unified rules for international mail, air travel, and other essential systems. We could not have had a war trial for the Nazis and Japanese after their loss in World War II, thanks to an international court established by an international system (United Nation) without America's leadership.

The world does not order itself; order requires enforcement by a very strong leader. We have had world order makers before: Ancient Rome created one that lasted for 500 years, but when Rome fell, its world order fell with it. The Dark Ages demonstrated what a world looks like when world order falls: chaos, endless warfare, hunger, and even loss of literacy. People lost the recipe for the glue that holds things together for the next 500 years.

Technology and the evolutionary benefits resulting from the scientific revolution jump-started social revolutions: the invention of the printing press was essential in breaking the stranglehold of religion and monarchy. Empire building propelled formerly minor powers into superpowers spanning the globe. The great states of Europe were evolving politically at home, and spreading these values to the weaker states they conquered.

The great European states, particularly England, became the monetary giants of the world, financing much of the new developments in technology and in politics. Some of the world lived better than ever in human history since the height of the Roman Empire. Yet this otherwise progressive period was blighted by two devastating world wars, and at the end of that period, another world war, a nuclear war between the Soviet Union and US loomed.

How was this threat ended, and what kind of world do we see ahead?

The United States has been the one essential nation since the end of World War II. We were responsible for the birth of the UN, the World Bank, free trade protected by the American navy, tutoring in democracy for many nations with horrible histories before now, and social changes in civilizing issues: the treatment of women, the decline of religion, the norm of rule of law, the rise of literacy and scientific progress, and raising millions of people out of poverty.

Next time: America's greatest advantage.

688 words

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