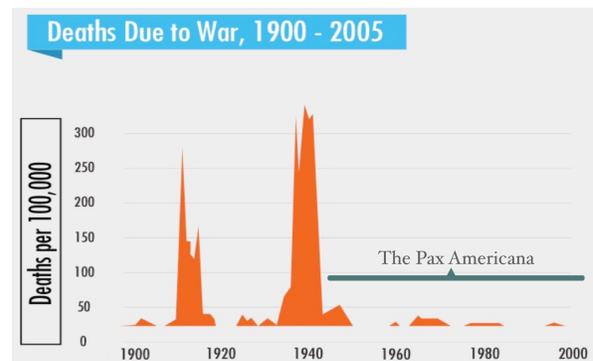


VIII. Contemporary Life

A. The Indispensable Country: America as World Police Power

1. In “contemporary” history—which means “existing for only a short period of time”—America had acted as the self-appointed world police power since 1947. Since that time, the level of violence in wars has been the lowest in human history. This is known as the “Pax Americana.” (“Pax” is a Latin word meaning “peace.”)
2. Today two major problems still threaten world peace: 1) North Korea, a communist regime that oppresses its people and threatens its neighbors and America with nuclear weapons, and 2) Iran, a theocracy that oppresses its people and whose leaders regularly chant “Death to America! Death to Israel!” and who seem to be developing nuclear weapons as well.
3. If the Pax Americana is to succeed, the United States will have to find solutions to both these problems.
4. Right now America is locked in a “cold war” with both of these countries, which means that there is no “hot war,” but since both sides are always preparing to fight and threatening each other, one cannot call it peace.



The world has experienced more peace under American policing than ever before.

B. Contemporary Rights Issues

1. Since America enshrined civil rights for “African-Americans” by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965, there has not been any great transformation in the rights framework of government.
2. Small changes have occurred but these do not have the historical significance of the major milestones we have seen this year.
3. The “right to healthcare” seems to be the next asserted right that Americans will embrace. Although the legislation known as “Obamacare” was passed in 2010, the power of the government to force Americans to buy health insurance was since taken away by the Trump administration, dealing a temporary setback to the march towards a system of healthcare completely dominated by the federal government.
4. Given the notoriety of gun-related violence in America, both in relation to terrorism and to other forms of violence such as school shootings, it also seems likely that Americans will move in a gradual way towards more limitations on the “right to bear arms.”

C. Contemporary Technological Developments

1. Although the advanced technologies of space exploration and nuclear energy have stalled for the time being, one technology seems to be moving forward at an almost continuous and dizzying rate of progress: computing.
2. The incredible progress in computing is symbolized by the smartphone, which is 40,000,000 times smaller than the ENIAC, but 1700 times more powerful!
3. Imagine if, by contrast, cell phones were still at the ENIAC stage?! Of course, they would not even exist. Imagine if the most advanced computer had been developed in 1969, which represents the peak of space exploration so far. You still wouldn’t be able to

carry one around; it would be the size of a fridge! In the computing field, at least, progress continues.

4. Indeed our entire civilization seems to have become “computerized.” “Computerism” might be an appropriate term to describe how much we as a society now rely on computers for work, education, recreation, shopping, warfare, banking, etc.
5. Until now the positive aspects of computing have dominated the story, but the notorious whistleblower Edward Snowden revealed that the American government now uses computers to spy on its own citizens and pretty much the whole world.
6. This indicates a potentially dangerous evolution of computing, to permit the rise of a powerful government that can use computers to control its citizens. Such a system would be called a “technocracy.” It is up to Americans not to fall into that trap.