

Pax Americana

Definition: A period of relative peace in the Western Hemisphere starting mid twentieth century, due to the dominance of the United States.

Pax Americana manifests through capitalism, open markets, free trade, NATO and a military presence in 150 countries around the world. It is reflected in the presence of American “soft” power through American culture, style and music.

To understand where we are and where we're going, it is helpful to see where we've been. To understand that process we must attempt to identify and examine the threads that make up the fabric of modern society and institutions.

The optimism of the 19th century with its belief in the progress of man paralleling the progress in science and increasing mastery of the natural world, has given way to pessimism in the 20th century after the experience of two world wars and nuclear power. Seeing the rise in technology fostering the expression of man at his worst brought the inevitability of continued progress into question.

The rise of liberal democracy was challenged by fascism and communism, among other forms of government. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and communism in the 1980's,, the initial pessimism of the post war period began to seem misplaced. Pax Americana gained its strength, becoming transcendent in the moment of uni-polarity in 1989-1991, as communism began to implode on the world stage.

So why did democracy outlast the other forms of government? Does capitalism correlate in some way with democracy? How did “Man” in the collective sense arrive at this point in history. The why of what motivates man's behavior has occupied a place in men's minds since the beginning of recorded history. Our discussion today would be incomplete without mentioning the beliefs of three seminal thinkers, Hobbs, Locke and Hegel.

I am going to present some theories about what motivates man to do what he does, by way of John Locke, Thomas Hobbs, Frederick Hegel and Francis Fukuyama. I will then illustrate some tools used to evaluate organizations and institutions. Applying the theories and using the tools I will point out how they apply to our present situation, regarding Pax Americana and attempt to draw some conclusions.

I begin with a brief summation of the philosophy of John Locke, an English philosopher living from 1635-1704, commonly known as the father of liberalism. It was his writings that Thomas Jefferson drew upon when he wrote the Constitution .Locke felt the basic nature of man is violent and needs to be checked, a position he shared with Thomas Hobbs, another English philosopher about the nature of man. Per Hobbs” No arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary;poor;nasty;brutish, and short” For Locke, the nature of man leads to “war of all against all”. They differed in their idea of ideal government, Hobbs favoring monarchy, Locke less trusting of any monarch's ability to resist despotism, favored a constitutional government with separation of powers, all men being equal, free and independent. Hegel had view distinct from any predecessor. He saw man's basic motivations as a desire to dominate and a need for respect, seeing self esteem earned by interactions with other men. Hegel's saw progress in history arising not from the steady development of reason, but through the blind interplay of the passions that led men to conflict, revolution and war. His view of history is that it proceeds through a

continual process of conflict, where systems of thought as well as political systems collide and fall apart from their own internal contradictions. They are then replaced by less contradictory and therefore higher system, which give rise to different contradictions, the famous dialectic view of history. Hegel is credited with a famous aphorism: "The Eastern nations knew *one* was free, the Greek and Roman world knew only that *some* are free; while we know *all* are free." For Hegel, the embodiment of human freedom was the modern constitutional state, we call it liberal democracy, many consider it the final, best system of government.

Turning now to conceptual tools, we can look at some principals and viewpoints to help direct our attempt to discern a pattern to unfolding events. Samuel Huntington list four criteria for measuring the degree of development of the institutions that make up the state: adaptability-rigidity, complexity-simplicity, autonomy-subordination and coherence-disunity". That is to say, the more adaptable, complex, autonomous and coherent an institution, the more developed it will be. Think congressional gridlock.

Two poles of world view, the presumption that a high rate of continuous economic growth is possible puts a premium on investment in the sorts of institutions that facilitate political stability, property rights (including intellectual property rights), technology and scientific research. If on the other hand we assume there are only limited possibilities for productivity improvements, then societies are thrown into a zero-sum game in which predation, or the taking of resources from someone else is a more plausible road to power and wealth. Think globalism vs nationalism.

On the subject of modern government, Francis Fukuyama states, referring to the moment when modern government emerged after the French and American revolutions, "From that point on, a number of polities appeared that encompassed all three important categories of political institutions; *the state, rule of law, and accountable government.* "

Having a state is a basic precondition for intensive economic growth. Economic growth is dependent on rule of law, property rights and contract enforcement. Greater administrative capacity and good governance strongly correlates with economic growth. Governance is a product of growth, however good government costs money. There is a correlation between capitalism and democracy as the preponderance of nations leading in per capita GDP are democratic. There is a connection between economic growth and stable democracy. Transition into democracy from autocracy can occur at any level of development, but are less likely to be reversed at higher levels of per capita GDP. The tipping point seems to be between \$6000-\$8000 GDP. Free markets can undermine democracy as capitalism leads to income inequality and eventually that is incompatible with democracy. At this point political leadership and institutions are critical to regain balance. Think fostering democracy by investing in global institutions, economic outreach and statesmanship.

Today science, technology, and communications advances have led to greater integration of societies around the world and increased the level of competition among them, producing a higher rate of political change and convergence of political forms.

In conclusion once constitutional government emerged, it produced a political and economic system so powerful, it was copied around the world. Once the principles of equal respect and dignity are articulated, it is hard to prevent people from demanding it for themselves. The work of democracy is balancing a strong central state and a strong society.

Our place in the world today is the result of an evolution, not an accident. What has brought us to this place and time is our institutions, our optimism, our work ethic, competitiveness and most

importantly our belief in the freedom and dignity instilled in men at birth. They are rooted in historical trends and the search for achieving freedom. Pax Americana has manifested itself in institutions, representative governments, open markets, respect for human right, economic and military power and culture. Those factors and the fundamentals of human nature will continue to shape our future, how we interpret and respond to them will determine our success.