ENLIGHTENMENT NOW
THE CASE FOR REASON, SCIENCE, HUMANISM, AND PROGRESS
Two Questions for Our Time

- Are there universal values that all humanity can agree upon, despite differences in religion, culture, history, and national identity?
- Can humanity make progress in realizing those values?
An example of a universal value:

Peace is better than war.
THE BETTER ANGELS OF OUR NATURE

WHY VIOLENCE HAS DECLINED

"A supremely important book . . . [A] masterly achievement."
—THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW
A History of Violence

• Believe it or not:
  – Violence has been in decline for long stretches of time
  – Today we may be living in the most peaceful era in our species’ existence
The decline of violence:
  – has not been steady
  – has not brought rates of violence down to zero
  – is not guaranteed to continue
• A persistent historical development
• Visible on scales
  – from millennia to years
  – from wars and genocides to the treatment of children and animals
Examples of Declines of Violence

- Tribal raiding & feuding
- Human sacrifice
- Slavery
- Heretic-burning
- Dueling
- Debtors’ prisons
- Absolute monarchy
- War...
Trends in Great Power War, 1500-2000
(Jack Levy)
% of Years Great Powers Fought Each Other, 1500-2000

Sources: Levy & Thompson 2011; Uppsala Conflict Data Project
Duration of Wars Involving a Great Power, 1500-2000

Sources: Levy, 1983; Correlates of War Project; PRIO
Frequency of Wars Involving a Great Power, 1500-2000

Sources: Levy, 1983; Correlates of War Project; PRIO
Deadliness of Wars Involving a Great Power, 1500-2000

Sources: Levy, 1983; Correlates of War Project; PRIO
Deaths in Wars Involving a Great Power, 1500-2000

Sources: Levy, 1983; Correlates of War Project; PRIO
Deaths in War, 1900-2005

Source: Lacina, Gleditsch, & Russett, 2006
The Long Peace

• Since 1946:
  – Historically unprecedented decline in interstate war

• Some zeroes:
  – 0 wars between US & USSR
  – 0 nuclear weapons used
  – 0 wars between Great powers (since 1953)
  – 0 wars between Western European countries
    • (cf. before 1945: 2/year for 600 years!)
  – 0 wars between developed countries
5. The New Peace

- What about the rest of the world?
World Since 1946:

- Fewer Inter-state wars
- More Civil wars
- Newly independent states with inept governments vs. insurgent movements
- Both sides stoked by Cold War powers
- But: Civil wars kill fewer people than interstate wars
- After Cold War, civil wars declined, too
Battle Deaths, 1946-2016

Source: Peace Research Institute of Oslo; Uppsala Data Conflict Project
Immediate causes of the Long Peace & the New Peace

- Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, 1795
  - Democracy
  - Trade
  - International community (multilateralism)
- All have increased in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} half of the 20\textsuperscript{th}
- All are statistical predictors of peace

*Source: Russett & Onew, 2001*
• Changing attitudes toward war
  – “Heroic, glorious, thrilling, manly” →
  – Stupid, wasteful, repulsive, cruel
• Changing international norms about war
  – Previously: “The continuation of policy by other means”
  – No longer a legitimate option among respectable nation-states
  – States are immortal (may not be conquered)
  – Borders are grandfathered in
The Role of the United Nations

1. Outlawing war (except in self-defense or with approval of the Security Council)
   - despite violations
   - Oona Hathaway & Scott Shapiro, *The Internationalists*

2. Setting a norm against conquest
   - No member has gone out of existence through conquest
   - Virtually no annexations through conquest
The Role of the United Nations

- International peacekeeping forces
International Peacekeeping, 1948-2008

Source: Gleditsch, 2008
Is the Decline of War an Example of a More General Trend of Progress?
Three Drivers of Progress

- Reason
- Science
- Humanism
  - (= goals of the UN)
There are alternatives to humanism

- The ultimate good is to...
  - enhance the glory of the tribe, nation, race, class, or faith
  - obey the dictates of a divinity and pressure others to do the same
  - achieve feats of heroic greatness
  - advance a mystical dialectic, struggle, or pursuit of a utopian or messianic age
Progress: An Empirical Hypothesis

- Human well-being can be measured:
  - Life
  - Health
  - Sustenance
  - Prosperity
  - Peace
  - Freedom
  - Safety
  - Knowledge
  - Leisure
  - Happiness

- (cf. Sustainable Development Goals)
- If they have increased over time, that is progress.
Life
Life Expectancy, 1771-2015

Source: Our World in Data, based on Riley 2000; WHO; World Bank
Child Mortality, 1751-2015

Source: Our World in Data, based on UN; Human Mortality Database
Maternal Mortality, 1751-2013

Source: Our World in Data, based partly on Gapminder
Health
Childhood Deaths from Infections Disease, 2000-2013

Source: World Health Organization
Sustenance
Undernourishment 1970-2015

Source: Our World in Data, based on UN FAO
Famine Deaths, 1860-2016

Source: Our World in Data, based on Devereux 2000; Ó Gráda 2009; White 2011; EM-DAT
Prosperity
Gross World Product, 1-2015

Source: Our World in Data, based on World Bank; Maddison Project
Extreme Poverty, 1820-2015

Source: Our World in Data, based on Bourguignon & Morrison 2002; World Bank
Freedom and Rights
Democracy vs. Autocracy, 1800-2015

Source: HumanProgress, based on Polity IV
Child Labor
Child Labor 1850-2012

Sources: Our World in Data; Cunningham 1996; Whaples 2005; ILO-IPEC
Violent Crime
Homicide Deaths, Western Europe, US, Mexico, 1300-2015

Sources: Eisner 2003; Roth 2009; FBI; Vilalta personal communication
Homicide Deaths 1967-2015

Sources: FBI; Office for National Statistics (UK); Krug et al. 2002; UN Economic & Social Council
Knowledge
Literacy, 1475-2010

Sources: Our World in Data, based on Van Zanden et al.; Nat. Ctr. for Education Statistics; CIA
Basic Education 1820-2010

Source: *Our World in Data*, based on van Zanden et al. 2014
The Role of the UN

- *Many* of these data were gathered by UN-affiliated organizations (ECOSOC, WHO, UNESCO, World Bank, FAO, UNEP, Unicef, UNDHR, etc.)
- UN sets aspirations for the whole world
  - Universal Declaration of Human Rights
  - Millennium Development Goals
  - Sustainable Development Goals
The Role of the UN

• *Necessarily* humanist

• Disproves theory that without religion or nationalism:
  – No basis for morality, meaning, purpose
  – Nothing that people from diverse cultures and faiths can agree on

• Disproves the fatalistic notion that war, poverty, ignorance, oppression & other blights on humanity will always be with us