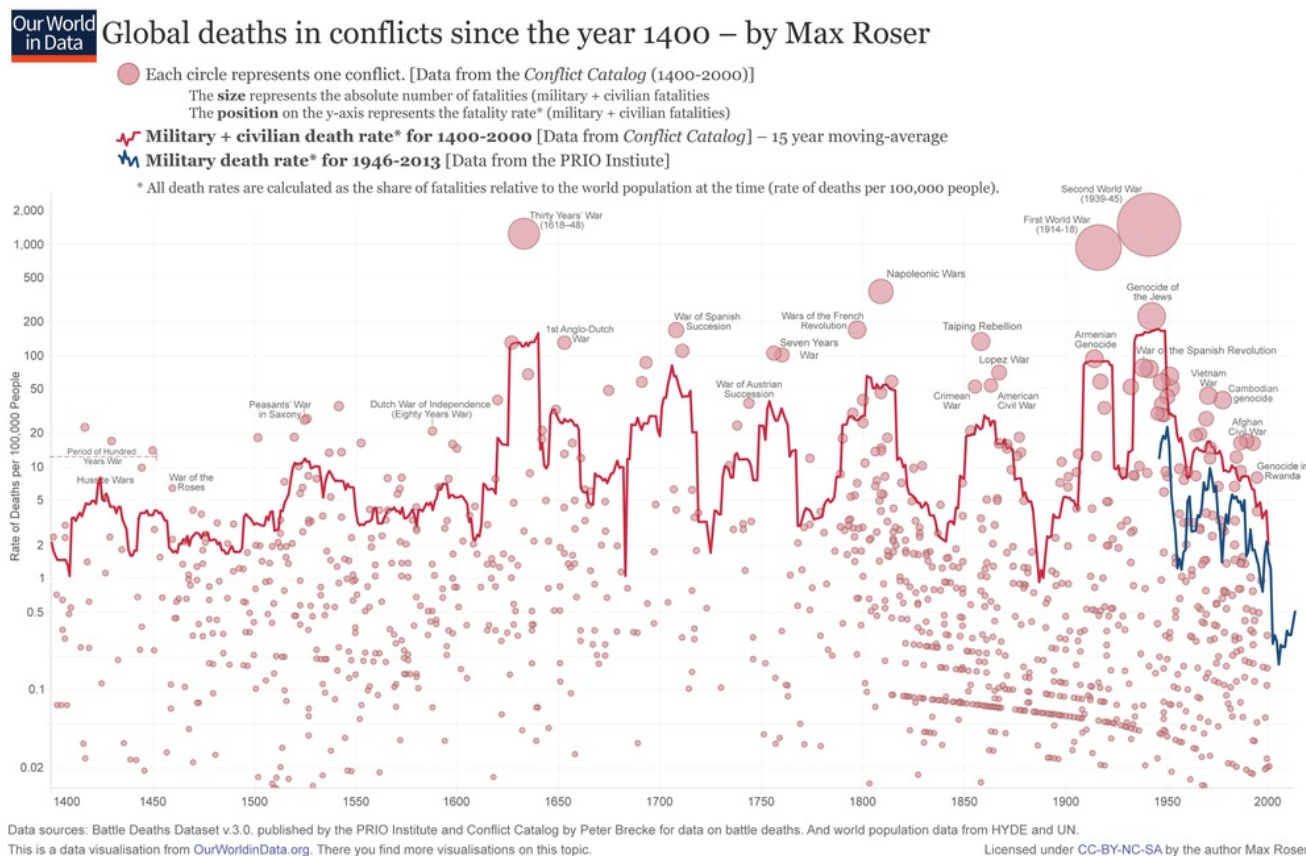


600 years of war and peace, in one amazing chart

Zack Beauchamp

You would not know it from the headlines, but today we're living through one of the most peaceful times in human history. This great chart from [Oxford's Max Roser](#) — which shows the global death rate from war over the past 600-plus years — shows just how lucky we are.

The red line in Roser's chart shows the worldwide rate of war deaths per 100,000 people, streamlined over a 15-year moving average. Each red dot shows an individual war or episode of killing; larger dots mean more people died. The blue line, based on a different data set, shows combatant casualties only.

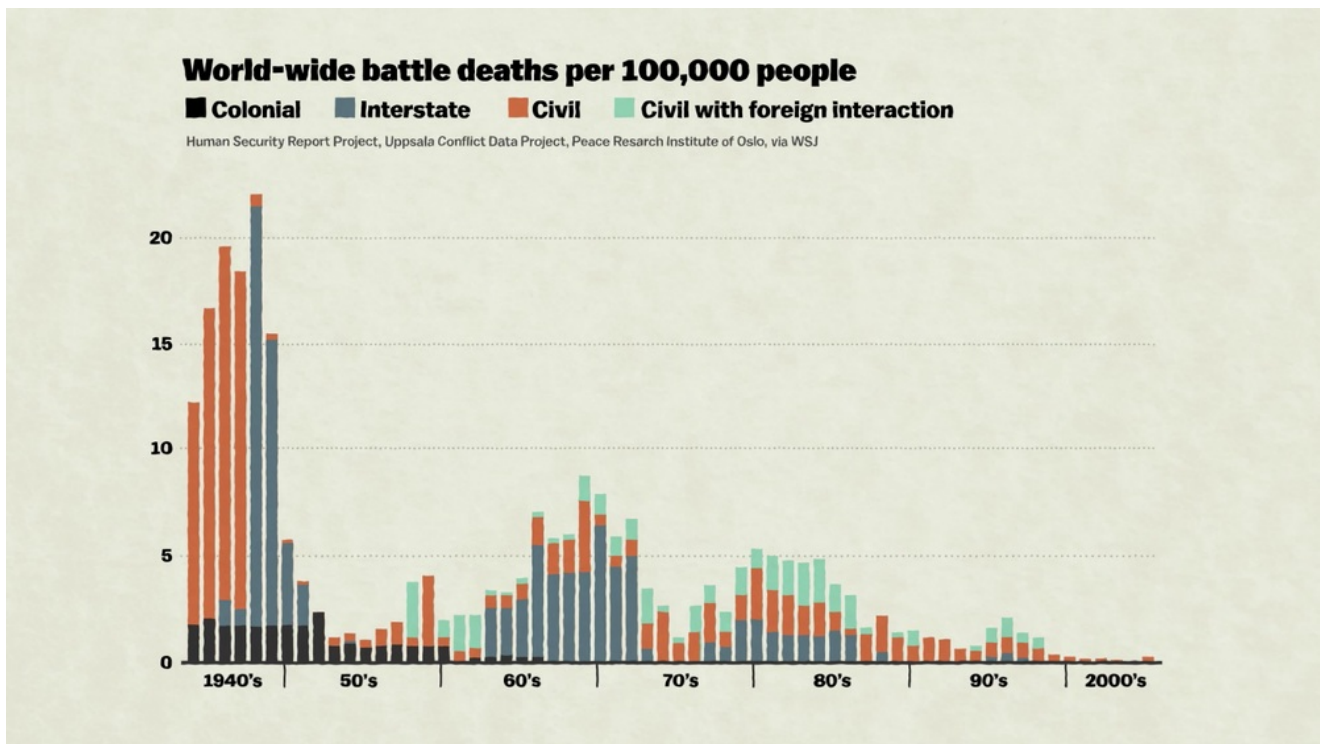


(Max Roser)

What you basically see is a pretty consistent amount of war over the centuries — but with some of the highest highs and lowest lows in the 20th century.

The red line stops at 2000, which is right about when global conflict was on its way to a plunge toward historic lows. You can see that in the blue line's drastic decline.

If you zoom in a little bit on the 21st century, this trend becomes much clearer. At the dawn of the 21st century, according to both Roser and some more recent data from [Steven Pinker](#), battle deaths appear to drop to close to zero per 100,000 people:



That's pretty extraordinary: periods with five or 10 battle casualties per 100,000 people look like they've been pretty common throughout history, in addition to huge wars such as the Thirty Years' War, the Napoleonic Wars, or World War II. By historical standards, humanity today is extraordinarily safe from war.

This is why one of the biggest and most important questions today is whether our so-called "Long Peace" will last.

A recent paper, by Nassim Nicholas Taleb and Pasquale Cirillo, argued that our current peaceful era was a [statistical myth](#): that dips in war deaths should be expected, as Roser's chart shows, and that there's no reason to believe this time should be different. Pinker and others argue, by contrast, that things really have changed: that the rise of democracy, capitalism, industrial civilization, and international institutions like the UN have radically transformed the way global politics operates.

It's impossible to know who's right for sure. But Roser's chart makes clear that, whatever the reason, we should be counting our blessings today.