

# Recurring Dynamics of History



It's good to learn about history;  
it's even better to learn from history.



1. Major cultures and empires have followed a general pattern of growth, flowering, and decline throughout history.
  2. Oftentimes nations and empires have brought about their own decline through poor choices and internal weaknesses.
  3. Maintaining stable national government is difficult. Democracies have often fallen to authoritarian rulers, and authoritarian governments have often been replaced by democracies.
  4. Humans exhibit an instinct to exercise control over others, and humans exhibit a countervailing instinct to resist external control.
  5. Humans exhibit a propensity to fear, dislike, kill, subjugate, and discriminate against people from groups different than their own.
  6. People tend to promote their self-interest and the interest of their group, so bias is all around us.
  7. Leaders often try to get their way by appealing to the emotions of their followers—particularly fear and dislike of other groups.
  8. Humans tend to position themselves along a political spectrum that ranges from conservative to liberal.
  9. Government actions tend to produce unintended consequences.
  10. Major events usually result from multiple causes, some long-term and some more immediate.
  11. Economies tend to be unstable and can malfunction if proper balance isn't maintained.
  12. Epidemic diseases have repeatedly claimed countless lives and altered human societies.
  13. Technology is both a blessing and a curse; it produces brilliant new innovations and perilous new challenges.
  14. Three basic motives for war are fear, honor, and self-interest.\*
  15. Unprovoked invasions have been common in history; they occur when Country A invades Country B, although Country B has done nothing to threaten or harm Country A.
  16. Powerful nations tend to prey on weaker nations.
  17. Rising powers have a tendency to go to war against established powers.\*
  18. Wars have often been started, it seems, to satisfy the ego needs of aggressive leaders who show little interest in the human suffering they will cause.
  19. Those who promote war tend to scorn those who resist war as cowardly or unpatriotic.\*
  20. Many or most military invasions of distant lands have failed over the long term.
  21. Even superpowers experience limits to their power.
- And finally...
22. People typically try to come up with persuasive reasons to support actions they desire. But if the underlying dynamic of the situation is not recognized, the reasons may be faulty and the desired outcome unlikely.

\* Identified by Thucydides in 431 BC

Recurring dynamics of history from *The Student's Friend Concise World History*