

Why Rome Fell

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Every interest group proclaims Rome fell because their cause was ignored. Environmentalists blame the fall of Rome on lead pipes or other hazards. Religious blame the fall of Rome on social decay. Gays blame the fall of Rome on not embracing the fictional Greek gay life-style. Classicalists blame the fall of Rome on the very long book of "The Fall of Rome" because if they read such a long book, they must put its conclusions to use somehow to sound sophisticated. Liberals blame the fall of Rome because of Christian fundamentalism. It can be safe to say that everyone projects their own belief into the Fall of Rome.

Why the projection? It is because the above groups have a worship of History whose ebbs and flows revolve around their beliefs. After all, we know liberals believe they are the force of History while conservatives believe they are the force of history. This allows everyone to point to the Fall of Rome and proclaim that current civilization will fall.

And by fall of the Roman Empire, I do not mean the fall of Byzantium in the 1400s but a thousand years before that.

The lifeblood of civilization is trade. Profitable and safe trade. The reason why America exists in the first place was the colonists wanted to trade with whoever and wherever they wanted. Poor nations almost always have poor trade.

Just as we have our tupperware and storage containers used in everyday life, the Romans had their pots and other containers. Archeology can trace these pots and measure their quality. What was amazing is how high quality pottery was used throughout the civilization straight down to the peasant class. This meant the ratio between prices and earnings had to have been favorable.

There is an example of a Syrian village that thrived in rocky country whose soil was good only for growing olive trees. This village sustained a ridiculously high population for many, many years -- a population that was far higher than could be supported from the agricultural yields of that area.

So what were they living on? Trade. They grew their olives and shipped the oil abroad. Apparently their oil was so highly regarded throughout the Mediterranean that it enabled them to import almost all the food and wine they required to sustain their population.

They had specialized. It worked very well for them -- until the whole system of trade broke down and there was no way for them to get their goods out to their potential markets. Either it was no longer safe enough to transport their oil and sell it profitably, or the markets had dried up because of the crash of the economy elsewhere. Whatever the immediate cause, the result was predictable: Without the revenues to let them import food, the population crashed back to the very low levels that could be sustained by the miserable local farming.

So what caused the decrease of trade leading to the crash?

Solid trade requires protection. The Roman military was posted on borders and did their job so well that city walls were not used. The Roman Empire had a series of crisis after crisis: plagues, civil wars, and other problems. None of that brought down the system. If the local economy crashed, it soon sprang up again.

But due to the civil wars, the military became weakened. Emperors began a self-destructive policy of paying barbarians to leave the borders alone. This worked for a while. But the barbarians kept showing up again and again and soon there wasn't money to pay to bribe them away. Also, the barbarians had to show they were serious. If they looted one city, that would compel Rome to act. But by looting that city, it caused effects among the nearby citizens to flee.

When they ran out of money, Rome began giving the barbarians land. So now the barbarians became the new overlords for an area and, likewise, the new tax collectors. Except they kept all the taxes to themselves. They didn't understand the tax collection system as looting and pillaging were much more effective. They didn't enforce public safety and merchants became at risk. They took too much and those areas became removed from the Roman Empire's grand trading network.

The Roman Empire could absorb some of this. But not lots and not all at once.

The point was not that a nation fell but an *international* economic system. The city-states were dependent on one another. As trade broke down, artisans crashed because who could pay for their goods? Since no one wanted to become an artisan since you couldn't survive doing it, the workmanship would survive a generation or two afterward until disappearing. Pollen counts indicate that crops decreased. Cities turned into villages.

In the twentieth century, America became much of an economic cushion. I don't say this with American narcissicism, I say it because it fits the pattern of that century. America was not invaded during World War I so it could help be the economic cushion to help get England and France back on their feet. When America did enter its Great Depression, the stage was set for a new barbarian uprising which came from Hitler and the Nazis. Like before, civilization tried to appease the barbarians. When money failed, they gave them land. After World War II, America became an economic cushion to Japan and Western Germany.

Over the past sixty years, economies performed fantastically when sustained by the American military. A *Pax Americana* existed that allows for an international economy, for more trade zones, and so on. This system of safe trade has allowed for greater degrees of specialization and mutual sustained prosperity.

Unlike Rome, America is not imperial. America also does not tax the lands its military is located in. What happens is that America *taxes itself*. Since Japan and much of Europe does not have to pay for the high taxes of that Defense requires, they can create socialism and other government projects.

America's defense budget is not a menace to the world. To the contrary, it has allowed places like South Korea to Japan to Taiwan to eastern Europe to thrive mostly because they don't have to pay for that defense.

Communism were holdouts outside the wall of American security. They thought they could subvert the international economic system. When they fell, places like China and Russia wanted to join. But nations like Russia made the same mistake of not protecting merchants. It became too dangerous to do business in Russia. So the nation began to move back to doing things the old way and Putin becomes a dictatorship in anything but name only. Naturally, America is blamed for all this.

China has a demographic crisis as there are two men for every girl. This means, in time, it may become

unsafe to do trade in China. And they may become cut off from the International Economic System.

The new barbarians are the Islamic Fascists. This is because they attack trade and, where they abound, make it unsafe to do business there. Think of those French districts where even the French police are scared to enter.

The point is that they, and many America's "allies" oddly, do not understand the International Economic System, see it as oppression rather than what it is: uplifting and prosperous, and are bent on destroying it.

This is why the targets of 9/11 were the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Ultimately, the two are not seperate. *They are one.*

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