

# The Empire Syndrome

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An empire is a life form. Like all living things, if it survives and completes a total life cycle, it goes through stages e.g. birth, middle age and death. This is commonly referred to as "Rise and Fall" e.g. Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire. They are also physical things, and are therefore, subject to the laws of physics e.g. Newton's Third Law (action-reaction).

At it's beginning, like any infant, it is fragile. It gradually grows stronger until it reaches middle age and then begins to decline until, ultimately, it dies.

The various stages have occurred in all past, and continue to occur, in present empires. This article refers to the USA.

Life was difficult for this little country when it started and like a young animal, it struggled. But youth is full of energy and enthusiasm. The founders, accustomed to hardship, were willing and able to work hard and they endured.

Skipping ahead, the USA reached it's zenith (high point of middle age) and began it's decline around 1958. This happened because of world conditions at the time.

Following the Second World War, as well as various civil wars and revolutions e.g. Spanish Civil War, Chinese and Russian revolutions etc., most of the world was in ruins and chaos. Oil in the rest of the world was mostly undiscovered and most of it came from Texas. Manufacturing in most of the industrialized world was seriously damaged and stagnant. The sleeping giant, having greatly accelerated its industrialization to produce munitions and the necessities of war, most of the cars came from Detroit. Most everything else e.g. food (agriculture), shipping, technology, energy, textiles etc. was in high gear in the USA, while the rest of the world struggled to rebuild itself. The US dollar was the dominant currency (least subject to inflation) and the US military was robust. Eisenhower was president, and as a former general (Supreme Commander-Allied Forces), president and Republican, he saw all from the inside and warned about the Industrial Military Complex. The warning has been ignored. In 1958, the USA was the, uncontested, most powerful nation in history.

During the early stages of any life, it works and struggles to grow, improve and advance itself. If it succeeds, it begins to relax at middle age. Simple analogy “Spoiled Child”: Parents work hard and when they prosper, their children inherit the benefits and, unaccustomed to difficult conditions, they are spoiled and expect all to be provided for them. This is the beginning of the **decline**. To illustrate the “Spoiled Child” analogy, I use the US Auto industry as an example. By the 70s, all involved in this industry e.g. management, labor etc., had become arrogantly convinced that, because it still dominated the world market at the time (other nations still rebuilding), it was invincible and would always remain on top no matter what happened. Management started skimming of the top with big bonuses and extreme executive privilege. Labor, at the direction of its **unions**, started sabotaging at the bottom e.g. assembly lines, shipping, design materials etc. and US car quality began to go down the toilet. And **whoops**, up pops Toyota, Volkswagen, and all the other nation’s products that, by this time, were beginning to recover. By 2000, Detroit was in big trouble and the whole mess had to go **begging**. An example of executive excess was when GM management went, hat in hands, to beg congress.....in their **private jet**. Later, these **executives** were all fired. Not only was this kind of thing happening in all US industry, but greedy corporations were outsourcing US jobs to cheaper labor in other countries and the entire US economy (subject to the third law-**action, reaction**) was following the auto mess down the toilet.

Another example of the US Empire “Spoiled Child” is energy/resources. A relatively new and large land mass country, the US has enjoyed abundant resources e.g. oil/gas, minerals, timber etc. Consequently, the US has been, and continues to be, a wasteful spendthrift with its resources. Other smaller and older developed nations e.g. Japan and Germany have always had to be much more frugal about their resources. In 1960, I noticed that water heaters in Europe were all Tankless. Only Familiar with storage (tank) water heaters (standard in the US), these were new to me. The storage water heaters, wastefully, boil water and use gas, or electricity, 24/7. The Tankless use gas/electricity and water only at the moment it is needed. At one time, in its early history, railroads linked all major cities (and even small towns) extensively, all over the US. Over the years, the US truck/auto, and oil industries have successfully lobbied to replace the railroads and public transportation in general, with trucking for freight and cars for passenger transportation. Most of the railroads are gone and the highways are crowded with trucks and cars. One large train engine can pull from 100 to 150 (equivalent to large truckload) cars. This means that moving all that freight by truck is using 100 to 150 times more fuel and causing an equal amount of (carbon) pollution. This kind of extravagant waste (and pollution) is common in all US industry. Public and freight transportation in European, and most other countries, is still abundant e.g. trains, busses, Trams, subways etc. This means better fuel economy and much less pollution. In general, all US resources are squandered in similar ways.

To relieve itself of dependence on foreign oil, the US is now doing **fracking** on a massive scale. For now, it is working but eventual consequences are yet to be seen. Some possible are already being noticed e.g. earthquakes in areas where they are not historically common. You can't create enormous, solid earth/rock vacuums underground without eventual **consequences** e.g. **sinkholes**.

Living in Europe at the time, I first began to notice what has come to be called the "Green Revolution" in the **60s**. The USA, at a snails pace, is gradually trying to catch up with it e.g. tankless water heaters on display (not yet commonly used) in major **home building retailers**, **solar homes** etc. But other nations (less resources) realized (and adapted long ago) that frugality and sustainable energy sources were not only environmentally critical but necessary for their economic wellbeing.

Another consistency in the Empire Syndrome is that, during the "Spoiled Child" period, all empires begin to have their spoiled children at the top e.g. **Nero**, **Caligula** etc. Most likely, George W. Bush (**manipulated**) was the US Nero and Caligula has yet to come. During the W. Bush years, I found it best to wear Canadian T-Shirts when traveling abroad.

Over the years following 1958 (often with USA assistance), other nations rebuilt themselves and their economies. When I arrived in Spain in 1960, my USAF paycheck was a meager sum back home, but the US dollar bought 300 pesetas and I could buy just about anything I saw. The

prevalent new car brands were Ford and General Motors. Friends stationed in other countries, told me it was pretty much the same all over the world e.g. German DM, Japanese Yen, British Pound, French Franc etc. Returning to Europe many times over the years; irrespective of my income increase, the diminishing dollar value has gradually (drastically) changed all that. Recently in Poland and Germany, I noticed about one US car brand to 10-15 international brands.....some that didn't even exist in 1958. During this visit, I watched international news in various languages e.g. German, Italian, Spanish, French etc. I speak these languages well enough to get the gist of what was happening. It was embarrassing when Europeans asked me about the **bad cop problem** happening in the US. I could only say that I didn't like it and try to explain some US history, not necessarily shared by other nations. Racism in the US is nothing new e.g. European abuse of indigenous people of the Americas (Spain), Black African slavery, the US Civil War (some still fighting it) etc. What's new is the internet, cameras on cell phones, traffic lights, cops in security areas, and everywhere. Not only is it immediately exposed but it's on international news within hours. Bigotry is a human condition that was as common at the time of the Caesars as it is now.....no Civil Rights, cameras etc. back then.

As with all living things, once the decline has started, it is irreversible. Because it's almost imperceptible in daily life, it can only be seen by backing off and looking at the **Big Picture** of **history**. From this perspective, enough study will reveal the same pattern in all past empires e.g. the

Great Khans, Holy Roman, British, Spanish, Egyptian, Babylonian, Ottoman, Russian etc.

Normally, the life span of an Empire depends on the condition of communication/transportation at the time it lives. This is analogous to its neurovascular system e.g. “All roads lead to Rome”. Communication/transportation at the time of Rome was good because of its roads but it took longer then than it does now e.g. air travel, telephones, and internet. However, sometimes the whole thing happens in a short time e.g. The Third Reich.

I’ll be long dead by the time historians write the “Rise and Fall of the US Empire”. But if humanity does not annihilate itself, that time will come.

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May 13, 2015