



The Guy in the Grey Range Rover

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The US has begun a long slog into the cycle of decay and vacuum of leadership that characterizes all great empires whose suns are fading.

We have witnessed the hubris of endless cycles of war and conquest that have characterized the Roman, Greek, British and Spanish empires, and more recently, the German Reich and the Soviet Union. Nearly every continent and empire has held unbridled power briefly, but none has been able to hold it for long. The Romans succeeded chiefly because of the relative weakness and tribal instincts that characterized their vanquished enemies, but even they were ultimately defeated by their own demons and internal failings.

These failings were principally characterized by an inability to recognize the unsustainable nature of their societies and the economic models on which they were premised. Marching vast armies through multiple continents became economically and politically unsustainable for the Roman Empire, which entrusted its unceasing demands for territory and power to professional armies that would spend years abroad and far removed from the Roman homeland. The German Army would march its Panzer units abroad for years, virtually requiring that these specialized army units reposition themselves as occupiers, rather than conquistadors.

Meanwhile, the local populace, ignorant of the back-breaking cost of these armadas, continued to cheer the endless conquests and territorial expansion of their homelands. Nationalistic fervour and pride, bordering on nihilistic self-approbation, continued unabated. No sacrifice was required, no penalty or tax was paid for this unceasing expansion, until virtually the end of their empires. The populace was ultimately deluded into a vision of guilt-free expansion, politically and economically, that required no excessive or burdensome levy on their current lifestyles.

We have witnessed a similar paradigm of empire-building and decay in the United States in the last 30 years. We have fought wars, namely the Korean, Vietnam, Iraq 1, Iraq 2 and Afghanistan wars. These wars have required little to no participation, tax or pain by the general American public, socially, politically or economically. Indeed, most Americans have come to believe that

these wars have been relatively painless and have cost little in blood, sacrifice and economic contraction.

While these wars were fought, serious economic and political challenges occurred at home. American's have inured themselves to the severe economic challenges facing this country. A duopoly of two political parties, both entrenched by extremists within their own ranks, contributes to a toxic environment of extreme political correctness. No major reforms are possible and public discourse is reduced to the merely inane. Vacuous platforms have numbed and desensitized our citizenry. Outside of the Beltway, no one really pays attention anymore.

Who is the Guy in the Grey Range Rover? He is every upper-middle-class individual who continues to ignore the symptoms of failing empire. He uniquely characterizes the suburban class in this country. He is every man enamoured of his own image, enthralled by his economic self-sufficiency and independent means. This is the group that stands to lose the greatest in this seemingly unending downward spiral, and yet remains blissfully oblivious to its decay. The Guy in the Grey Range Rover is a white, suburban male, in his 40's, married and has children. He owns his own business, has children who are in private schools, his wife drives a BMW, and his house is heavily mortgaged. He is quite likely Republican, drinks scotch, and is rabidly anti-tax. He is the perfect portrait of a contented, domesticated, upper middle-class existence. He is satisfied with his life, rejects any substantial social or political changes, and views the inertia favourably. Even if his marriage is poor, he refuses to disrupt his marriage, and is largely content with the status quo. He ignores the epochal changes enveloping him, society and his family. He is the epitome of upper and middle class America, immune, smug, and satisfied.

This characterization could have been repeated in ancient Rome, Greece, the German Reich, or any other empire facing systemic struggles. The fact remains that change is uncomfortable, destabilizing, stressful and filled with unknown and unintended consequences. As selfish as past generations and empires, the Guy in the Grey Range Rover is intent on preserving his social and economic well-being at the expense of future generations. The Guy in the Grey Range Rover has faced no serious consequences from these wars and the deficits they've occasioned; in fact, his overall tax burden has likely been lowered. His businesses continue to cater to crowds much like himself, oblivious to the impending schism occurring throughout society, and not caring much about its impact, as long as he and his family's lifestyle remains unaffected.

The chasm occurs between the Guy in the Grey Range Rover and the rest of America. The reality of American life is such that a growing polarization between the Range Roving elite and the rest of the country is quickly occurring. Those that still hold power and the economic strings remain

largely unaffected by the economic malaise affecting working class Americans and the backbone of our own reach. The costly wars, endless bailouts, and near-constant money printing have yet failed to impact the Guy in the Grey Range Rover, but have decimated the working class existence of middle and lower class America. These groups will find themselves burdened by permanent and structural 10% unemployment for the foreseeable future. No longer will young Americans look forward to rising prosperity as part of the social contract resulting from years of acquiring costly and increasingly meaningless student loans. No longer will future generations enjoy a heightened standard of living.

The very rich and merely rich will always remain unaffected by economic strains and discontent, their real living standards largely unaffected. The lower classes, never having acquired much in even the best of economic circumstances, will merely work harder to subsist. The greatest impact will occur to the Guy in the Grey Range Rover and his family, as his customer base is whittled, his taxes inevitably rise, and his savings and investments are consumed. For at least the near-term future, we will increasingly begin to resemble the Latin American continent, which has long exhibited a shrinking or insubstantial middle-class. Increasing wealth concentration among a substantially smaller upper class will create havoc for the Guy in the Grey Range Rover, who has long aspired to join the more elite class. His ability to seek alternative means of income, a simple re-calculation and re-calibration in the last decade, will be permanently impaired.

For now, the upper middle class will remain pliant, content in its bohemian excess and business-as-usual attitude. The Guy in the Grey Range Rover will remain blissfully unaware of the changes enveloping his life and society, the destruction of his customer base, and the political indecision and toxicity of our leadership. The Guy in Grey Range Rover has noticed the social upheaval, but his lifestyle choices and intellectual laziness render him incapable of any drastic change. He will blame the masses for their unending entitlements, blame our leadership for their failure to relieve his regulatory burdens, and seek relief from those in social class superior to himself. In the end, all empires implode from their inability and unwillingness to seek social and economic justice and re-direct their resources to justifiable and meaningful goals. The goals of a few select classes eventually conflict with those of the greater majority, resulting in social strife and turmoil. Let's hope the Guy in the Grey Range Rover understands this, soon.