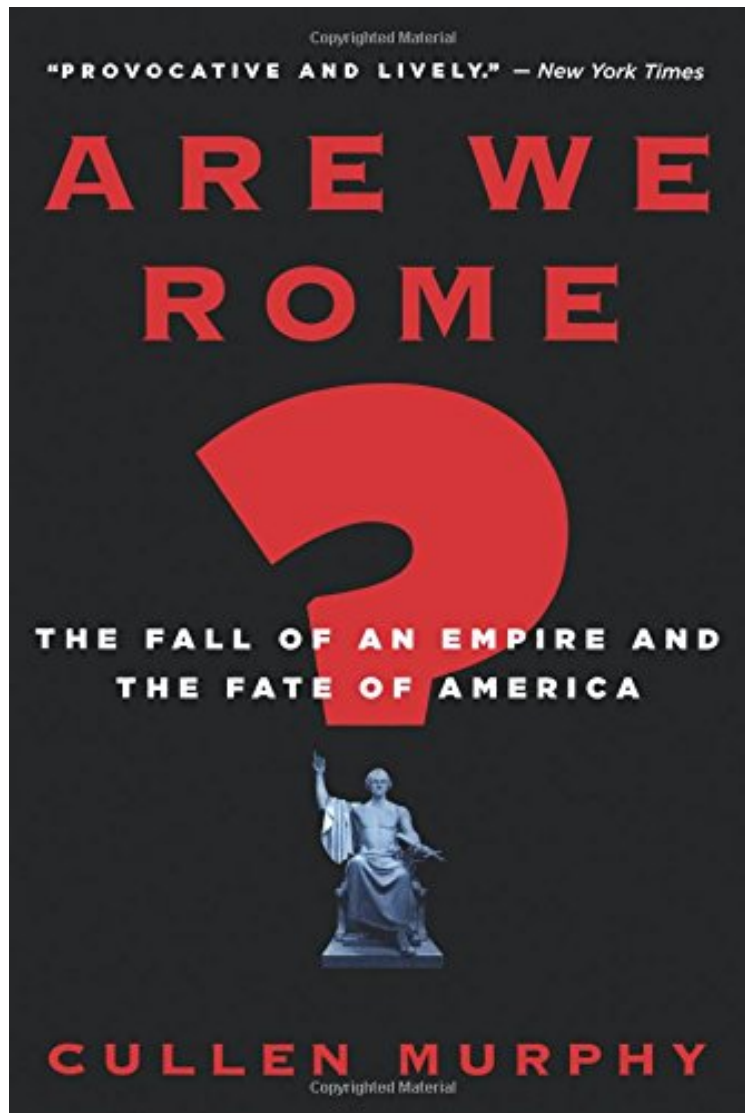


[Ebook free] Are We Rome?: The Fall of an Empire and the Fate of America

# Are We Rome?: The Fall of an Empire and the Fate of America

*Cullen Murphy*

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#690816 in Books Murphy, Cullen 2008-05-05 2008-05-05 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.25 x .74 x 5.501, .59 #File Name: 0547052103272 pages | File size: 46.Mb

**Cullen Murphy : Are We Rome?: The Fall of an Empire and the Fate of America** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Are We Rome?: The Fall of an Empire and the Fate of America:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A well-researched meditation on the similarities differences. Eschews easy answers. By Sagar Jethani Murphy brings his considerable knowledge of classical history and contemporary American politics to bear in this riveting account about the future of America. The final answer to the book's title question is both no and yes. No, because the differences that separate Rome and America are far from

trivial, and no serious attempt to answer the question can blithely dismiss them as inconsequential. Yes, because, like its Roman forebears, America is letting its sense of superiority blind it to the centrifugal forces tearing at the seams of its global empire. "Are We Rome?" was published in 2007, and Murphy draws heavily from the US debacle in Iraq to make the case for American imperial overstretch. One feels he is on familiar ground here, and he quotes authoritatively from US military documents, diplomatic memoirs, and official dispatches. I wish Murphy would have recounted some of the central episodes which attended America's 19th century slide from republic into empire-- the Spanish-American War and the colonization of the Philippine Islands, Guam, Puerto Rico and Hawaii, the Monroe Doctrine and its replacement by the Truman Doctrine, and-- especially --how the belief in Manifest Destiny drove a sense of inevitability about American empire from the very origins of the Republic. One wonders what Murphy would have interpreted Trump. American Caligula? One can't help feeling that if "Are We Rome?" had been published in 2017, Murphy would have answered this question in the affirmative.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I would strongly recommend it.

By B. O. Reilly This short book makes some very telling comparisons between the United States and the Western Roman Empire in its final days. As the book notes, the Roman Empire has been used as a mirror in which Americans have seen themselves since the United States gained independence. The book was written during the presidency of George W Bush but it is probably even more topical under the Trump presidency. Perhaps it is time for an updated edition to take into account the truly bizarre developments which have taken place since Trump assumed the presidency. Who could avoid noticing the similarities with some of the more colourful Emperors? In any case, it is a very instructive introduction to a number of key issues relating to the question of how to sustain a proper system of civil governance over a prolonged period. I would strongly recommend it.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. well-researched, even-handed, and enlightening

By Robert Reid This exhaustively researched and even-handed exploration of the question "Are We Rome" puts to shame all the under-researched and over-conclusive bar stool variations I've ever heard on the topic. A systems thinker with a natural grasp of extreme complexity, Murphy draws from over 200 references, but cautions against any notion that we can ever really learn from history. Without being prescriptive, he warns of the dangers of privatization, and notes that when the line between public and private responsibility becomes blurred (as it was in Rome and is in America), central government "becomes impossible to steer." He downplays the traditional culprits of America's "decline" (decadence, military might, barbarians), and notes that we are mistaken in believing that a superpower influences everything on earth. Rather, it is everything on earth which influences a superpower. Large systems (such as our over-extended and over-privatized nation) are inherently unstable. That said, his vision of America's future is not a grim one- he cites America's system of checks and balances and free elections as evidence that we are more adaptable than Rome, and notes that even when the Roman empire declined, the life of ordinary citizens was relatively unchanged. His prescription for positive change is brief and saved for the very end- essentially, he makes an argument that we need to assimilate with the wider world, and to reclaim our civic engagement in our government. At the end of this work, it's impossible to really agree or disagree with such a nuanced and indistinct premise. But you will surely feel enlightened.

The rise and fall of ancient Rome has been on American minds from the beginning of our republic. Today we focus less on the Roman Republic than on the empire that took its place. Depending on who's doing the talking, the history of Rome serves as either a triumphal call to action or a dire warning of imminent collapse. In *Are We Rome?* the esteemed editor and author Cullen Murphy reveals a wide array of similarities between the two empires: the blinkered, insular culture of our capitals; the debilitating effect of bribery in public life; the paradoxical issue of borders; and the weakening of the body politic through various forms of privatization. Murphy persuasively argues that we most resemble Rome in the burgeoning corruption of our government and in our arrogant ignorance of the world outside -- two things that must be changed if we are to avoid Rome's fate.

From *Publishers Weekly* Lurid images of America as a new Roman Empire either striding the globe or tottering toward collapse, or both are fashionable among pundits of all stripes these days. *Vanity Fair* editor Murphy (*The World According to Eve*) gives the trope a more restrained and thoughtful reading. He allows that, with its robust democracy, dynamic economy and technological wizardry, America is a far cry from Rome's static slave society. But he sees a number of parallels: like Rome, America is a vast, multicultural state, burdened with an expensive and overstretched military, uneasy about its porous borders, with a messianic sense of global mission and a solipsistic tendency to misunderstand and belittle foreign cultures. Some of the links Murphy draws, like his comparison of barbarian invaders of the late Empire to foreign corporations buying up American assets, are purely metaphorical. But others, especially his likening of the corrupt Roman patronage system to America's mania for privatizing government services a "deflection of public purpose by private interest" are specific and compelling. Murphy wears his erudition lightly and delivers a lucid, pithy and perceptive study in comparative history, with some sharp points. (May 10)

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From *The New Yorker* Murphy writes that "Americans have been casting eyes back to ancient Rome since before the Revolution," and goes on to interrogate the comparisons drawn both by "triumphalists," who see the world's only superpower in terms of

the Roman Empire at its height, and by "declinists," who see America as "dangerously overcommitted abroad and rusted out at home," like Rome before its fall. Murphy makes telling points about the solipsism of political elites and the impact of corruption and cronyism on civil society, but he stops short of predicting America's fall. (Indeed, he argues that it is simplistic to say that Rome fell.) Instead, he points to a malaise exemplified by the debasement of the term "franchise," once associated with freedom to vote, and now with commerce: "Here, in miniature, is the political history of America." Murphy prescribes antidotes, and finds grounds for cautious optimism in the words of Livy: "An empire remains powerful so long as its subjects rejoice in it." Copyright 2007 [Click here to subscribe to The New Yorker](#) From Booklist Murphy lists six parallels to support his argument of why the U.S. today is much like the Roman Empire: a powerful military but not enough people to fill it; a practice of contracting government work to private agencies; immigration problems and immigrant communities that threaten us from within; prideful ignorance about the outside world; accelerating decadent national character; and leaders influenced by moralizing religion and superstition. Murphy points out that the U.S. is seen as "dangerously overcommitted abroad and rusted out at home, like Rome in its last two centuries." He quotes the historian and columnist Chalmers Johnson: "Roman imperial sorrows mounted up over hundreds of years. Ours are likely to arrive with the speed of FedEx." Murphy, editor at large at Vanity Fair, believes that improvement is possible. Whether readers agree with him or not, the book is bound to be persuasive and provocative. George Cohen Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved