

(Free download) Why America Is Not a New Rome (MIT Press)

## Why America Is Not a New Rome (MIT Press)

*Vaclav Smil*

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**Vaclav Smil : Why America Is Not a New Rome (MIT Press)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Why America Is Not a New Rome (MIT Press):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Entertaining but Light WeightBy Patrick L. BoyleI started reading Smil about a year ago. I think I've read at least a half dozen of his books. All of his books are easy to read in spite of the fact that he addresses serious topics. His books are always fact heavy. He less of an 'idea man' than a 'fact man'. He's hard to disagree with because he typically smothers all opposing views with indisputable facts.This is not one of

his most important books. In his books about the modern world he usually has a section praising the diesel engine. In all of his books he decries that Americans know so few foreign languages. He apparently speaks all European languages. In this book he first of all tells us how much he knows about Rome. That seems to be true. I took a couple semesters of Latin in school (no Greek) but I read all the historians of Rome in English translation. I presume that Smil read Tacitus and Livy in Latin and Plutarch and Polybius in Greek. I'm sorry but I don't think that sort of thing matters much. The main reason this is not a very important book is that it is a refutation of a rather silly assertion. Smil right at the beginning draws attention to all the recent books and YV shows written comparing the current decline of America to the decline of Rome. The rest of the book is meant to show that this idea is not much of an idea - and he's right. But that also means that this then isn't much of a book. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Rome needed new territories and increasing natural resources; the US relies mainly on science and technology for growth. By Chad M. This book is Prof. Smil's answer to several news articles that compare the United States to Rome. As usual, the analysis provided is thoroughly documented. One of the assumptions of the new articles is that continuous expansion of territory and gaining natural resources was essential for Rome, a lack of territorial expansion led to stagnation, and that the same facts will apply to the US. On this major point, Smil explains that for the US, in contrast, technological innovation can greatly improve living standards with approximately the same amount of land. Also, technology provides energy and electricity for the average American that would rival or exceed the household energy use of Roman nobility. Other key points in this book range from lifespans, heavy manual labor, public health, literacy, and so on, each well argued and documented with encyclopedic detail. Also, while this single book would be an accomplishment for most authors, Prof. Smil has written a dozen or so major scientific books. The only remaining question I have after reading this book is: Since innovation is so important, why isn't the US funding energy RD at a higher level? 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. offers an excellent response to the current "woe-sayers" penchant for plotting the ... By Customer. Vaclav Smil's book, *Why America Is Not A New Rome*, offers an excellent response to the current "woe-sayers" penchant for plotting the decline and fall of America, much as Edward Gibbon did for Rome. In addition, it lays the groundwork for a more reasoned approach for comparative studies.

An investigation of the America-Rome analogy that goes deeper than the facile comparisons made on talk shows and in glossy magazine articles. America's post--Cold War strategic dominance and its pre-recession affluence inspired pundits to make celebratory comparisons to ancient Rome at its most powerful. Now, with America no longer perceived as invulnerable, engaged in protracted fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, and suffering the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, comparisons are to the bloated, decadent, ineffectual later Empire. In *Why America Is Not a New Rome*, Vaclav Smil looks at these comparisons in detail, going deeper than the facile analogy-making of talk shows and glossy magazine articles. He finds profound differences. Smil, a scientist and a lifelong student of Roman history, focuses on several fundamental concerns: the very meaning of empire; the actual extent and nature of Roman and American power; the role of knowledge and innovation; and demographic and economic basics--population dynamics, illness, death, wealth, and misery. America is not a latter-day Rome, Smil finds, and we need to understand this in order to look ahead without the burden of counterproductive analogies. Superficial similarities do not imply long-term political, demographic, or economic outcomes identical to Rome's.

Repetition by pundits and literary commentators in the mass media has entrenched in people's minds the notion that America is a new Rome. Smil's book, tightly argued and rigorously documented, is a concise and persuasive scientific demolition of the Rome-America parallel, totally deflating the usefulness of the analogy as a tool of historical analysis. *Why America is Not a New Rome* is a much-needed corrective. (Paul Demeny, Distinguished Scholar, Population Council, New York) [T]his book is both a polemic and a work of scholarship. (Daniel Headrick, *Technology and Culture*) Smil (Univ. of Manitoba, Canada) has written an entertaining response to authors who have compared the US to the Roman Empire... (S. Prisco III, CHOICE) About the Author Vaclav Smil is a Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of Manitoba. He is the author of more than thirty books, including most recently *Made in the USA: The Rise and Retreat of American Manufacturing* (MIT Press). In 2010 he was named by *Foreign Policy* as one of the Top 100 Global Thinkers. In 2013 Bill Gates wrote on his website that "there is no author whose books I look forward to more than Vaclav Smil."