

Are We at the Beginning of the American Empire—Or Still Living in the Roman One?

It's an intriguing question whether we are witnessing the rise of the American Empire or still living within the long arc of the Roman Empire. I am increasingly convinced it is the latter, particularly when viewed through a deeper structural lens.

It all begins with a tribe settling on the hills by the Tiber and claiming ownership of the land. From that moment, property became the foundation of power. Those who owned land became the central nodes of authority. And once property existed, it needed to be defended — thus, the strong man emerged as the next essential figure in the social order.

Viewed through this lens, even the infamous rape of the Sabine women takes on a calculated strategic logic. It was not merely about acquiring wives — it was about increasing manpower, fortifying the tribe's ranks, and securing the continuity of its male-dominated power base.

From this base arose the Patricians — the landowners. Next came the strong men who defended the land, particularly those on horseback. They became a new elite: the Equestrians, whose military utility made them second only to the Patricians in social importance. Then came the makers of weapons and tools — the Fabbri, the blacksmiths, engineers, and artisans — whose skills powered both war and expansion. As Rome grew, its military-industrial needs demanded vast logistical support: food, ships, roads, arms, armor, and coin. This industrial backbone created a powerful and enduring socio-economic structure.

Here is where the comparison to America becomes striking. At its core, Roman civilization was a military-industrial complex, organized around defense, expansion, and the machinery to sustain both. The American empire mirrors this architecture with uncanny precision.

The parallels deepen when we examine the social structures Rome formalized — many of which still underpin our world today.

In Rome, the growth of trades and professions produced an increasingly complex social hierarchy. Stratification was no longer informal; it became codified. Wealth and possessions became the legal determinants of civic standing. This was more than social class — it was state-sanctioned hierarchy, measurable and enforceable. Money was not merely a medium of exchange — it was the organizing principle of society.

Faced with the challenge of governance, the Romans devised a system that preserved elite control while offering the broader citizenry a voice — or at least the perception of one. Thus emerged the tripartite structure:

- An Executive (the Consuls),
- A Senate (representing the Patricians and aristocratic interests), and
- A Popular Assembly (granting the masses a stake in the process).

Does this sound familiar?

Roman Empire vs. American Empire — Structural Parallels

Roman Empire	American Empire	Parallel Theme
Tribe settles on the Tiber — land ownership as the basis of power	Colonial settlement & westward expansion — land grants, homesteading, property rights	Property as foundation of political power
Patricians — landed elite controlling wealth & governance	Political & corporate elite — wealth concentrated among property owners and capital holders	Elite control through ownership
Equestrians — mounted warriors protecting property and expanding territory	Military leadership & strategic force projection — officers, special forces, carrier groups	Military as second pillar of power
Fabbri (Makers) — blacksmiths, engineers, artisans enabling war and infrastructure	Defense contractors, engineers, tech innovators — Lockheed Martin, Boeing, SpaceX, Silicon Valley	Military-industrial complex
State-organized supply chains — roads, ships, granaries to sustain armies	Global logistics & infrastructure — interstate highways, naval fleets, energy pipelines	Infrastructure as engine of empire
Codified social hierarchy — legal status based on wealth & possessions	Legal and political influence of wealth — campaign finance, lobbying, property-based wealth inequality	Money as measure of social standing
Tripartite government — Consuls (Executive), Senate (elite interests), Popular Assembly (mass participation)	President, Senate, House of Representatives — executive, elite chamber, popular chamber	Governance structure balancing elite power with public consent
Pax Romana — imperial peace maintained through overwhelming force	Pax Americana — global stability enforced via military and economic dominance	Peace through supremacy
Spectacle & public entertainment — gladiator games, chariot races to pacify the masses	Mass media & sports — Super Bowl, streaming entertainment, celebrity culture	Distraction and social cohesion through spectacle
Imperial expansion justified as civilizing mission	Foreign interventions framed as spreading democracy	Ideological justification for dominance

Today's American political system — with its President, Senate, and House of Representatives — rests on the same foundational logic. And behind this tripartite facade remains the primacy of wealth, property, and the military-industrial engine that enables those in power to maintain their hold on both.

Which brings us to the question that may define the next chapter of this still-unfolding Roman saga:

If strength and money have been the twin pillars of imperial power for over two millennia — what happens when the role of the strong man is taken over by machines, and human muscle is no longer the essential currency of protection?