

The Decline Of American Empire: A Kübler-Ross Cycle Analysis

Description

Editor's Note: The author is looking to end his article with some optimistic message. That's highly unlikely. The End is here.

[Authored by Andrew Roberts via Quillette.com,](#)

How will the United States react domestically should she be dislodged from her role of global top-dog power by China? As well as the obvious economic and strategic ramifications of an end to American imperium, there will be profound emotional and psychological effects on a society that has taken its hegemony for granted for more than three-quarters of a century.

The *via dolorosa* presently stretched before the United States will likely encompass the replacement of the dollar as the global currency of last resort, the recognition that the South China Seas are no longer navigable by the US Navy, the understanding that Africa has been effectively colonized by China, and the possible swallowing of Ukraine by Russia and Taiwan by China. If the United States maintains its present course, Americans should prepare themselves for a century of humiliating retreats. So, how are these developments likely to play out in an already deeply divided polity and society?

An analogy can be drawn with the British Empire, and the prolonged grieving process experienced by Britons in the three-and-a-half decades after India became independent in 1947. Within a generation and a half, the largest empire in the history of Mankind was reduced to struggling with Argentina over the Falkland Islands. Empires tend to rise and fall faster in modern than in ancient history, so what can Britain's loss of Empire teach us about the possible decline and fall of America's?

A useful means of understanding how Britons slowly accommodated themselves to their postwar loss of power and prestige is provided by the Kübler-Ross Grief Cycle—the five-stage process by which individuals deal with tragedy, bereavement, and a dawning knowledge of imminent demise. The British

people's journey through those five stages of grief has profound implications for America, assuming she continues down her chosen path of impotence and retreat.

The first stage of the Kübler-Ross Cycle is **Denial**, which was the initial response of the British government after the loss of the jewel in Britain's imperial crown. Notwithstanding the ideological anti-imperialism of Clement Attlee's Labour government, it insisted that India would remain part of the British Commonwealth (as it was still then designated) and attached to the Western anti-Communist bloc. Indeed, the whole concept of the Commonwealth—founded in December 1931 but not taken seriously until 1947—can be seen as a sop to a people in denial about the loss of Empire.

America is already in the Denial stage of appreciating the loss of power overseas. President Biden's speeches and press conferences at the time of the coalition's over-hasty and humiliating scuttle from Afghanistan betray a psychology symptomatic of the first stage of the Kübler-Ross cycle. "Last night in Kabul," Biden announced in the White House State Dining Room on August 31st, "the United States ended 20 years of war in Afghanistan—the longest war in American history. We completed one of the biggest airlifts in history, with more than 120,000 people evacuated to safety. ... No nation has ever done anything like it in all of history. Only the United States had the capacity and the will and the ability to do it, and we did it today."

In fact, plenty of nations have the capacity, will, and ability to lose wars, but the United States had not done it since Vietnam. And as Biden's speeches and actions have subsequently shown, his administration is in denial about the message that defeat at the hands of the Taliban sends to vacillating allies and jubilant antagonists alike.

Britain was shaken out of her Denial stage by the Suez Crisis of 1956, which arrived less than a decade after the loss of India.

The second stage of the Kübler-Ross Cycle is **Anger**, and the fury that greeted Anthony Eden over his invasion of—and subsequent withdrawal from—the Canal Zone was symptomatic of a deeper anger about Britain's dwindling position on the world stage. The role of the United States in forcing Britain's humiliating retreat after a successful military operation further underlined the new world order, and sent a large number of Conservatives such as Enoch Powell into the barren cul-de-sac of lifelong anti-Americanism. The anger in British politics was also evident in the activities of the League of Empire Loyalists, which disrupted political meetings in the early 1960s. Its members were furious that after Suez and the independence of Sudan, the Conservatives no longer considered itself the party of Empire.

The capacity for anger in modern American politics hardly needs emphasising since the appalling scenes at the Capitol on January 6th, 2021. The mid-term elections in November 2022 may see at least some outpouring of anger over American loss of hegemony. It will be the first time that large sections of the American electorate have gone to the polls since the Afghan catastrophe. Anger with the Democrats will likely result in their loss of the House of Representatives and the relegation of Biden to lame-duckery.

Britain entered the third stage of the Kübler-Ross Cycle—**Negotiation**—in the 1960s when she made the rational choice to cleave to the United States; in Harold Macmillan's revealing phrase, to try to become Greece to America's Rome. His relationship with President Kennedy and support during the Cuban Missile Crisis were the foundations of a new post-Churchill Special Relationship. This was a

logical response to the Suez debacle, and it could not even be weakened by Harold Wilson's and Edward Heath's refusal to be drawn into Vietnam.

It remains to be seen what the United States will do in her Negotiation stage. Certainly, she starts at a disadvantage because President Biden is not as good a diplomatic negotiator as President Xi of China or Russian President Putin, both of whom seem to outmanoeuvre him repeatedly. It is therefore doubtful that the United States can negotiate with her opponents and rivals successfully in an effort to defend a rules-based world order once she is eclipsed as the world's pre-eminent superpower.

When Britain entered the **Depression** stage of Kübler-Ross in the 1970s, she did so with a total bipartisan commitment to national decline. She experienced depression in both its metaphysical and material senses. Economically and in prestige, she risked slipping into the third rank of world powers thanks to socialism and the pathos-laden Heathite Conservative response to it. In that doleful decade, Britain experienced the OPEC oil price trebling; IRA violence and internment in Northern Ireland; a miners' strike that led to power cuts and a three-day week, stagflation, price and income caps; and trade union militancy that threatened the primacy of Parliament. The worst (because longest-lasting) of that decade's developments came when Britain turned her back on the Commonwealth and joined the EEC in 1973. Only a country in the grip of severe depression, self-doubt, and historical amnesia could have done such a thing.

When the United States recognizes that it no longer matters in the world as it once did, that key allies are distancing themselves and flirting with China, that the global organizations erected by Bretton Woods and Dumbarton Oaks no longer guarantee her primacy, and that there is little she can do about it, then depression will hit America. It will leave her confused, morose, and liable to turn in on herself politically. It will be an ugly time.

In the 1980s, Britain embraced the fifth and final stage of the Cycle—**Acceptance**. This was almost entirely down to one person, Margaret Thatcher. The Falklands War seemed to arrest the lamentable drift and surrender since Suez, and the spectacular victory in the Cold War, in part due to her close alliance with Ronald Reagan, finally provided closure after the loss of Empire. Although she could never again be top-dog power, Britain's replacement by her close ally was palatable because the Special Relationship had been shown to work well for both countries and also for the wider world in ridding the world of Soviet Communism.

For modern America, however, acceptance of decline cannot have any sense of closure because the successor-state is totalitarian. Every precept of National Socialist China is entirely antithetical to American values. Britain's successor-state shared her language, common law, liberal principles, free market, and outlook. The United States can take no such comfort when peering into her post-imperial future. So, America's final Acceptance stage is fraught with far greater dangers than the other four put together. The Free World really will have met its "time when the locusts feed."

Is all this inevitable? Not if the United States can grasp the leadership of the West once more instead of wallowing in self-destructive and profoundly decadent obsessions with its own faults, real and imagined. The United States ought to heed the words of Winston Churchill during the Munich Debate of October 5th, 1938.

The people, he said, should be told that "we have sustained a defeat without a war, the

consequences of which will travel far with us along our road; they should know that we have passed an awful milestone in our history ... And do not suppose that this is the end. This is only the beginning of the reckoning. This is only the first sip, the first foretaste of a bitter cup which will be proffered to us year by year unless by a supreme recovery of moral health and martial vigour, we arise again and take our stand for freedom as in the olden time.”

President Biden has already made it clear that he does not understand those words or appreciate their present importance. **For now, Americans remain preoccupied with navel-gazing about Critical Race Theory and endlessly revisiting slavery 158 years after its abolition.** Hopefully sometime before China takes Taiwan, Putin takes Ukraine, and Iran develops the Bomb, the United States will reject Acceptance of her eclipse and embrace her own supreme recovery of moral health and martial vigour.

Comments:

Whites Says:

(1) One of the few areas where the US still retains technological superiority over China is in the area of integrated circuits of which Taiwan is a major producer. Should China conquer Taiwan, *all this technology – developed painstakingly over decades, and something that China is still trailing behind in – will fall into China’s lap like a ripe fruit before a hungry monkey.* China will waste little time in assimilating this technology and for the US it goes downhill from here, triggering a domino effect, as it were.

(2) The fall of Taiwan (Ukraine is relatively inconsequential) will send an unmistakable signal to whatever few allies the US has, whether white or non-white, that the US cannot be counted on to defend them any more from external threats and they’re better off aligning with someone else – whether Russia or China or anybody else – **that can walk the talk.** *This loss of power and leverage will soon translate into loss of business opportunities.*

(3) US national prestige – or whatever passes for it – *will soon become notional prestige.*

(4) And please disabuse yourself of the delusion that the US is destined to become a “white nation”, whatever that means. No longer, that boat has sailed. Another delusion is that the US can survive in majestic isolation. Not now, not ever.

(5) And finally- *should China win, she’ll take no prisoners. Nothing less than complete humiliation and destruction of the United States, socially, technologically, internationally, economically will result over the next few decades.* Our children and grandchildren will be around to witness the resulting anomie and utter insignificance.

Apparently small things can have huge unintended consequences. The fall of Taiwan will certainly be to the US what the “fall of the Berlin wall” was to the USSR.

HorseBuggy Says:

History taught us that when an empire is in decline the elites of that empire found a group to blame on the decline.

The group being targeted now for shame and destruction is the straight white person.

All the elites and media are all saying the same things. A religious white straight male is the root of all problems.

Most kids are being taught this in school so they will not know any better.

The democrat and republican party is really one, even if Trump is president. He didn't drain the swamp all he did is fortify it.

There is nothing you can do, so live within your means and avoid as many crazy people as you can.

The system will collapse and maybe the new one will be better.

China will in fact rule the world within a few years. They already do in a way.

History will talk about an America that was occupied with trans studies while China focused on science. An America that was obsessed with pronouns while China was building weapons technologies that make everyone's defenses as powerful as a napkin.