

We're Witnessing the Fall of the Biggest Empire in History

And it's going to be spectacular



Photo by [Piotr Chrobot](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Every empire in the history of civilisation has collapsed.

The Roman Empire, the Mongol Empire, the Ottoman Empire.

Each of them seemed unconquerable and immutable in their time.

But due to wars and internal instability, they each fell, sometimes swiftly and dramatically.

There is no reason to think our current global empire will be any different.

Entire civilisations have disappeared.

The ancient Maya outstripped their resources through intensive agriculture.

Soil depletion and deforestation wiped them out.

It's been suggested a similar fate befell Easter Island: deforestation and the stripping of resources led to famine and cannibalism on a catastrophic scale.

There is a human tendency to look at the 'natural world' around us, the world we know, and assume that's the way it's always been.

That forests have always been forest and deserts have always been deserts.

But that's not the case.

Take Iceland (below). It was once covered in trees until the Vikings stripped them all.



Photo by [Jon Flobrant](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Same with the British Isles. Far from being the idyllic rural landscape often romanticised, the rolling hills and moors which cover much of the UK are ecological dead zones caused by catastrophic deforestation (below).



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Entire regions have been turned into deserts by the historical communities who used to live there.

The Sahara, for example, was a lush green oasis 11,000 years ago. Rivers, lakes, grasslands and forests covered the region.

Antelopes roamed the rich pastures. Crocodiles swam in the rivers.

Overgrazing by domestic cattle and goats, probably coupled with 'slash and burn' management practices, turned this green Eden into the world's largest desert.

Drought. Famine. War. Political strife.

Is any of this starting to feel familiar?

The Mongol Empire was vast, covering 24 million square kilometres at its peak. But it was nothing compared to what we have today.

Historically all these empires and civilisations, as extensive as some of them were, had their geographical limits.

Not so today.

We are living in a global civilisation, an empire that spans the entire planet.

Every part of the world is inextricably linked.

Europe and the US rely on technology produced in China which in turn relies on minerals mined in Africa.

What happens in one part of the world affects every other part of the world.

Wars are no longer just a threat to a single empire but to the entire global community.

A nuclear war could wipe out not just one civilisation but Civilisation as a whole.

Harmful PFAS from food packaging, non-stick cookware, chemical plants, manufacturing processes and fabric softeners can be found in the rainwater and snow of every continent in concentrations many times the safe level.

Even the most remote locations are contaminated. PFAS have been found in Tibet and the freshly fallen snow of Antarctica.

You cannot go off-grid anywhere in the world and expect the rainwater you collect to be free from these harmful chemicals.

And they don't just affect humans. They affect all levels of the food chain, right down to the microorganisms in the soil where we grow our crops.

We can imagine how the ancient Maya would have carried on with the practices that had grown and sustained their society for thousands of years, even after it became apparent something was seriously wrong.

We might suppose they didn't understand the detriment of their farming or land management practices.

But with our wealth of scientific knowledge, our society doesn't have that excuse.

So why are we still careering headlong towards our own destruction?

A decades-old study in social influence might provide a clue.

In 1951 the Asch Conformity Studies tested groups of people together who were shown several simple lines of different lengths and asked which was longer.

It turns out everyone in the group was an actor except one, the test subject.

The test subject wasn't aware of this. They thought the entire group was made up of random test subjects.

Every one of the actors would give an obviously incorrect answer. For example, they would say Line A was longer when it was clearly shorter.

Despite the answers given by the group being so blatantly incorrect, an astonishingly high percentage of test subjects gave answers which matched whatever their group said.

Group authority is a powerful motivator. We are socially conditioned not to break ranks, but to go along with whatever everybody else is doing, even when we can see that what everybody else is doing is wrong.

It may be a survival trait which provides social cohesion but it could also be leading us to our doom.

As J. Krishnamurti said, *"It's no measure of mental health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society."*

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And if anything should be obvious by now, it's that the society in which we live is profoundly sick.

Unless we find a cure for that sickness quickly, I don't think the patient is going to make it.

One thing is for sure, though. The fall of the biggest empire in the history of the world will be nothing if not spectacular.

And unless we're very, very lucky, many of us alive today could have a front-row seat.