# The Fall of the Meritocracy

From Glenn Reynolds in The USA Today, Trump and the crisis of the meritocracy

> *Well, now they've heard it, and they've also heard that a lot of Americans resent the meritocrats' insulation from what's happening elsewhere, especially as America's unfortunate record over the past couple of decades, whether in economics, in politics, or in foreign policy, doesn't suggest that the "meritocracy" is overflowing with, you know, actual merit.*
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> *In the United States, the result has been Trump. In Britain, the result was Brexit. In both cases, the allegedly elite — who are supposed to be cool, considered, and above the vulgar passions of the masses — went more or less crazy. From conspiracy theories (it was the Russians!) to bizarre escape fantasies (A Brexit voteredo! A military coup to oust Trump!) the cognitive elite suddenly didn't seem especially elite, or for that matter particularly cognitive.*
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> *The rage of our privileged class is thus about loss of status. But that doesn't mean that it isn't dangerous. Nations have blown up over less: As Fernandez observes, "Suicidal factionalism has torn apart famous nations before, Rome's Crisis of the Third Century being the most famous example. . . . If Trump is overthrown by the Deep State in a year, he's unlikely to be the last. If neither faction will suffer itself to be governed by the other, whoever succeeds Trump can expect his term to be short. America could have its ownperiod of the 26 presidents. That will be good news for the Barbarians, waiting at the edge of the Baltics, in the South China Sea, and on Europe's borders, ready to move in. Rome's Third Century crisis did not end well. The new normal was not a return to the Golden Age, but the end of it."*

*Strong nations can fail when their leadership class, or a part of it, succumbs to pettiness, and places its narrow factional interests above those of the nation. Americans have often assumed that we are immune to such things. Perhaps earlier Americas, with a more disciplined, more patriotic ruling class, were. But today's America is not. Beware.*