Dutch Republic DBQ

The Dutch Republic was a force to be reckoned with before the 1650s, and was a huge contributor to our society as it is today. The Dutch land inspired marvelous inventions, constructed bustling cities such as Amsterdam, and supported one of the heftiest trade companies of its time, The Dutch East India Company. However, all good things come to an end with time, with the Dutch Republic being no exception to this rule. Their fall began in 1650 and ended in 1713, but what led up to this fall of a magnificent nation? Their security, unity, and prosperity faced many great challenges, so great that it buckled under the weight.

The security of the Dutch has never been extremely strong so it is no wonder that it helped along their demise. This allowed for many problems to arise among the European nations. This is shown when the Amsterdam City Council remark that "Not only the French Monarch but other kings seem more and more to scheme how to ruin what remains of the trade and navigation of the Dutch Republic" (Doc 7). The Amsterdam City Council acknowledges that many others are after the Dutch and what they had. The Council was probably compromised of Merchants who would have the resources to procure the information needed to make this conclusion. The security in terms of war were also weak enough that an anonymous writer distributed a pamphlet, hoping that something would change. They suggested fortifications on land as well as improving the Dutch's Warship repertoire. He also proposes lower taxes on Merchants suggesting that they are a merchant and are trying to achieve some personal gain (Doc 5). They were writing to the public, and was probably trying to incur some of them to advocate this message so that someone would do the things listed. Finally, near the end of the Dutch Republic, the Republic faced the loss of many citizens. An Englishman living in the Dutch Republic shows that the War of the Spanish Succession devastated the armies of the Dutch. In his letter he talks of the cries of those who lost someone to this war and how the Dutch lost many men (Doc. 14). This means that the Dutch have little ground forces to fight with leaving the Republic undefended. It is possible that the Englishman is writing back to his home country to blame them in part, for leading the Dutch into the slaughter that was the War of the Spanish Succession.

The unity of the Dutch was also in shambles at the time that they fell, and directly affected what happened. The English Ambassador talks about how "the Dutch Republic is a shattered and divided thing" in his letter reporting back to his government, and he points out that "Holland alone must expect to bear the financial burden in a war because the other provinces are poor." (Doc 4). This means that the people of Holland were bearing extreme expenses, causing resentment between them and those who weren't. The Ambassador was sending this back to his government to inform them of the weakness of the Dutch so that the English could take advantage of it. The next piece of evidence comes from a military report to the Dutch Government. It states "Differences arose with regard to the election of a military commander to lead the troops." (Doc 9). With a divide among military forces of the Dutch, how were they supposed to defend from the likes of Louis the XIV? When they failed to do so, it put them one step closer to demise.

The final step in their devastation was the faltering of their prosperity. Up until the 1650s, the Dutch were extremely well off in the terms of money with the Dutch East India Company being extremely profitable. However, disaster struck when their sea trade started to falter as illustrated by Doc. 2 in a graph showing a linear downtrend of the Baltic Sea trade, which is where the Dutch ships reside. The purpose of this document is probably an educational chart that was made recently to educate students who are studying this exact subject. As the trade stops, the prosperity of the Dutch goes down as trade directly affects the wealth that a country has. Also, the French ambassador to the Dutch points out that "The English East India Company has grown much larger and causes the Dutch much anxiety." (Doc. 11). We know that the English East India Company made the Dutch East India Company obsolete, and since the Dutch East India Company was the Dutch's main source of money, their economy collapsed.

As shown by the previous documents, the fall of the Dutch Republic was orchestrated by the destruction of the security, unity, and prosperity. The security of the Dutch never was its strongest suit but its state in the 1650s deteriorated so much that it brought about the fall of the Dutch Republic. The unity or lack of it allowed others to use their distrust of each other to make them fall apart from the inside out. The decline of the prosperity made it so the Dutch didn't have the funds to support them in this fall. This moment in time can be compared to the Spanish fall from glory several years before this. The spanish were in a similar situation to the Dutch as they were the leading power in Europe for a time; however, the Spanish lost several wars and their security faltered, their massive anti semitism drove out and separated all of Spain, and finally their trade was taken over by competitor such as the Dutch East India Company. In conclusion the fall of the security, unity, and the prosperity all contributed to the dissolution of the Dutch Republic.