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Factors that Contributed to The 'fall' of Rome

The Roman Empire underwent a decline that saw its desolation after invasion by barbarians. Historians and different theorist have tried to posit the reasons of the fall of the empire, but there is one theory that has been conclusively adopted as the reason behind the fall of Rome. Most of the projections point to decline in morals and values as well as the invasion of the barbarians as the defining moment in the fall of the Roman Empire. A look at the history of Rome and the empire tells of a combination of factors, but most of all internal factors are to blame for the fall of Rome. The internal factors in this context fall under the political, economic, and military aspects. Discussed in this paper are all these aspects that distance external forces and place them as only having a conclusive effect in the decline of Rome.

Internal factors in the fall of Rome

The Roman Empire had no defined mode of selecting an emperor once there was a gap, and this opened up a channel for bribery and corruptions to get into that position. Selection of a new emperor rested in the hands of the senate, the Praetorian Guard, the old emperor, and the army. As time progressed, the Praetorian Guard became empowered solely to select a new emperor who would later reward the guard, and the cycle continued. In 186 AD, the army strangled the new emperor and from that moment, corruption took root, and the seat would be awarded to the highest bidder (Gibbon, and Smith 112). The implication was the coming to power of incompetent emperors who furthered political instability that would later see the rising of civil revolts within the land. The partition of the empire into two by Emperor Constantine further weakened the political system that had its direct effect on the weakening of the Western Roman Empire army.

The economy, on the other hand, was affected by slow and low agricultural outputs from the Roman Empire. The decline was further punctuated by population increases that saw the per capita energy drop. Such a problem would be solved by conquering of more territories, but the situation only exacerbated the growing problems as the empire enlarged, and the costs of maintaining the different aspects needed in the governance increased (Gibbon, and Smith 560). Rome therefore began having a declining economy and became so poor that it could not maintain its army in warfare. Rome became vulnerable to external forces, as the army could no longer be victorious in war.

Inflation further rocked the Roman economy as certain emperors debased the currency, and a coin had no default value but was rather determined by the amount of silver it contained. Certain regimes also increased taxes to their liking, which caused anxiousness and distress among the inhabitants of Rome. All those factors weakened the economy, which meant that the empire could no longer effectively control the state and disintegrations started happening. People became loyal to the leaders of their liking, which contributed to a state of disarray within Rome beginning the journey toward the end of the empire.

The military in the ancient centuries was always a source of strength for the ruling class, as it helped in conquering new territories. Rome had always had a superior infantry, but by 300 AD, much of the army consisted of trained barbarians considered less effective than the superior infantry of latter years. Rome's grip over military strength reduced and this implied that winning

battles would be a hard feat for an empire struggling with military, economic, as well as political issues. The barbarian armies were also made of slaves that their masters handed over to the legions rather than the Roman citizens themselves joining the infantry. Its effect was low morale and a carefree attitude about the wellbeing of Rome as the army no longer consisted of indigenous citizens.

As the Roman military weakened, Emperor Hadrian, who took power in 117 AD, ordered the construction of thick brick walls around the Roman land, as he tried to take a defensive stand against the rising external forces. The Roman army could no longer protect such a vast area of land and neither did the brick walls help them against attacks and invasion from external tribes. The Pictish tribes were such invaders who took over certain territories within the Roman Empire.

All these internal problems weakened the Roman rule as they became vulnerable from external attacks that later brought down the empire completely. Various barbaric warlords such as Attila, Alaric, and Gaiseric attacked Rome between 400 and 500 AD and left behind massive destructions to both the economy, as well as the infrastructure. Rome could not recover from such devastations, and the widely acclaimed Roman Empire was in demise.

Why the empire lasted long

The Romans themselves believed that the success of the Roman Empire had been based on the virtue of men and the good morals of its rulers and inhabitants, which explains why the loss of morals and values is considered a contributing factor to the fall of the Roman Empire. In essence, the rulers of Rome were virtuous and also religious insinuating that the favor of the gods also helped cement their empire. Even with such acclamations, emperors in the Roman Empire were considered murderous and insane, which disputes the value of being virtuous and having good morals. In essence, the Roman Empire lasted for long thanks to its constitution that had aspects of both democracy and monarchical control (Woolf, Para 3). The Roman constitution was not too democratic or too monarchical but had a well-ordered military system, whereas the leaders were elected for their virtuous nature.

In maintaining control of conquered empires, various aspects play out in the success story of long-lasting empires, such as the Roman Empire and the Persian empire of Cyrus. The conquerors of new territories would form alliances with the defeated people and share some power and profits. Also, the emperors would bind the new territories into the cosmological vision of the empire in a way that would make their self-interests look less noble and gain support from the conquered people (Woolf, para 3). Such a move would help the emperors stamp their rule, gain support from the people, and strengthen the economic system that determined virtually all of the other aspects in the success of the Roman Empire.

Putting of the quotation marks in the word 'fall' is to point out ostensibly that the empire did not essentially fall but went through a disintegrating phase until it ceased to exist. The fall of Rome is believed to have taken place in a period of four centuries, which evidences just how strong the empire was. As much as historians would like to blame external forces that attacked Rome as the reason behind the fall of Rome, its decline had come about because of the progression in the empire's various mistakes. The rulers failed to uphold the virtues that had held Rome intact, and the empire became vulnerable to external attacks and domination by outsiders.

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