

Discussion on
whether the
'barbarian invasions'
were an attempt to
destroy the ro...

[History](#), [Empires](#)



Do I believe that the Barbarians (this term encompassing any of the Germanic tribes, such as Vandals, Goths, Lombards, etc.) set out with the intent to destroy the Roman Empire? No. However, I do believe that the influence of these tribes did, in part, succeed in bringing about the end of the Western Roman Empire specifically. To support this claim, let's start by discussing why the Germanic groups, originating from northeastern Europe, even began encroaching upon Roman territory. This was a result of the Attila and his army of Huns expanding their empire, pushing the Germanic groups further and further West, with the Huns also being among the tribes to threaten the Roman empire. These events also came quite soon after Roman Emperor Diocletian divided his Empire, leading to a growing divide between the East and West portions; eventually, these Empires would grow separate, with the Eastern Roman Empire being considerably stronger economically, yet albeit considerably less "Roman", as they retained Greek culture primarily.

The Western Roman Empire, however, was weaker and fragile; movements of Huns from the northeast, Goths from the east, and Vandals from the south constantly threatened the Western Roman Empire, which attempted to appease the leaders of these German tribes by providing them payment of sorts, and allowance to settle in Roman lands, in return for operating as Roman foederati. Multiple conflicts between foederati and their "employers" occurred, namely Visigoth rebellions, and Vandal campaigns into North Africa. Yet, Roman foederati forces were seemingly the only reason Attila's army retreated from Gaul in 451. Meanwhile, all over Western Europe, Germanic tribes are settling, eventually leading to the establishment of

successor states, forged from parts and pieces of the Western Roman Empire. Western Roman society was the last bastion of true Roman culture, and this blending of various other cultures seems to dilute the “Roman-ness” of the Empire.

The Roman military, serving as a perfect example of this, was “barbarianized” by the influx of Germanic people serving. In Italy, a revolt occurred at the hands of the Germanic foederati soldier, Odoacer, and other fellow soldiers. This marked the formal end of the Western Roman Empire, and marked the decline of Roman culture in general, although their new King attempted to hold onto it for as long as he could. His reign, lasting nearly two decades, came to an end at the hands of the Ostrogothic king, and any remainder of the Western Roman Empire had ceased at that time. This led fully to the era of Germanic successor states in Europe, all vying for territory and footholds. I don't believe the intention of these “Barbarian invasions” were anything other than a vast migration of people, forced from their original settlements due to the expansion of Attila's empire and other groups migrations at various times. This just so happened at a time that the Western Roman Empire, the only vestige of Roman culture remaining, was at its weakest.

In hindsight, it's extremely easy to see just how the Western Empire was swallowed by the Germanic tribes. Regarding the Eastern Empire, they de-Romanized somewhat on their own due to separation from Rome, remaining a powerful entity, but separate from Roman culture. So, in a cultural sense, yes, the Barbarian invasions did indeed destroy the Roman Empire, but in a

literal sense, some holdouts still existed, namely the Byzantine empire and the Papacy in a form.