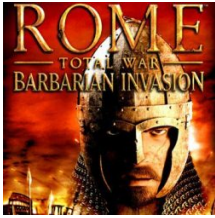


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## [Rome: Total War - Barbarian Invasion](#)

*Probably the best invasion in the world...*

By now, we have been accustomed to expect an invasion with every Total War title. This time, barbarians are those who will throw overboard all those tactics we have learned throughout the main game. **History** This expansion/invasion pack is somehow inspired from the first phase of the migration (fourth century A.D.) period. However, Barbarian Invasion barely reflects the historic truth. The game starts from the year 363 A.D., with the Roman Empire fractured in two: The Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium) and The Western Roman Empire. Both are suffering from corruption, lack of military force, and civil war. Things got even worse when the Huns came knocking at their doors. Actually, things were not all like this. The Empire broke between Honorius and Arcadius in 395, when their father, the last Roman Emperor, Theodosius I, died. Rome fell to its own weight. The income of the empire came mostly from its conquests. By 235, the imperial Crisis commenced. This was accounted for three simultaneous crises of external invasion, internal civil war and economic collapse. The worst of all was that the Romans had no budgetary system. The Empire relied on booty from conquered territories. With the ending of Roman territorial expansion, this source of revenue ended, of course. With a pattern of tax collection that drove small-scale farmers into destitution or into dependency upon elite land owners' exempt from taxation, the economy of the empire crumbled. Meanwhile, the costs of military defense and the pomp of Emperors continued. Financial needs continued to increase, but the means of meeting them steadily eroded. One of the most profound and lasting effects of the Crisis of the Third Century was the disruption of Rome's extensive internal trade network. The widespread civil unrest made it no longer safe for merchants to travel as they once had, and the financial crisis that struck made exchange very difficult. This produced profound changes that, in many ways, would echo the character of the coming Middle Ages. Large landowners, no longer able to export their crops over long distances, began producing food for subsistence and local barter. Rather than import manufactured goods, they began to manufacture many goods locally, often on their own estates, thus beginning the self-sufficient "house economy". Driven to desperation by economic necessity, many of the former city dwellers, as well as many small farmers, were forced to give up basic rights in order to receive protection from large landholders. The former became a half-free class of citizens known as coloni. They were tied to the land (they could not leave the lands of their lord without his permission) and, thanks to later Imperial reforms, their positions were made hereditary. This provided an early model for serfdom, which would form the basis of the medieval feudal society. The future viability of the Empire, by all reasonable standards, should have ended. Only through a series of tough soldier emperors and the measures of Diocletian in 284 to split the empire in half and other reforms allowed it to continue, eventually entering a new phase known as the "Tetrarchy" (the rule of the four). He divided the Empire in four prefectures: Gaul, Italy, Illyricum and Oriens. An Augustus and a Caesar (junior Emperor), Maximian and Constantius Chlorus (father of Constantine The Great) ruled the first two. Diocletian as Augustus and Galerius as Caesar ruled the other two. In 305, at the age of fifty-nine, after almost dying from a sickness, Diocletian retired (he has been the only Roman Emperor to leave the throne by will). Overall Diocletian's reforms, in particular those of the military, civil administration and Roman bureaucracy, were sound, and would help extend the life of the empire for centuries longer. However, his Tetrarchy would prove a formula for civil war, as he would see before his death. The Tetrarchy only worked when he was directly involved with it. Once he gave up the Imperial Purple to grow vegetables on the Adriatic shores, the system soon collapsed upon itself, with a new, single

strong ruler eventually emerging triumphant. The new Roman Emperor was Constantine the Great. He not only restored the Empire (with its seat of power at Constantinople), but convoked the bishops of the Christian Church to the first ecumenical (from Greek oikumene, "worldwide") conference, known as the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) where the Christianity became the official religion of the Empire. The Council of Nicaea was historically significant because it was the first effort to attain consensus in the church through an assembly representing all of Christendom. In the mean time, tribal confederations were pouring down into Europe, battering along the Roman borders. The migration included the Goths, Vandals, and Franks, among other Germanic and Slavic tribes. **Gameplay** The forced expansion of the Germanic tribes into France, England, Northern Italy, and Iberia indicates the energy and dynamism of those so-called "barbarian" peoples. Barbarian Invasion successfully simulates their movement, and some of their military abilities. This means that strategies that successfully worked in Rome will not do any good here. I might say this is a new game. Funny thing, as there are not many obvious changes in this expansion. This time, many of the factions you may choose from start as a horde, or may transform into a horde if their last settlement is conquered. The horde consists of some distinctive units (that are marked with a wheel symbol), usually ordinary, but overwhelming due to their numbers. As soon as the faction settles, its horde disbands and its units turn into the population of the settlement. Mutatis mutandis, if the faction is left with only one province, it can return to its nomadic form. The consequences of this new feature is that conquering step-by-step and fortifying as you gain new ground will prove useless against an invasion as no stronghold is inexpugnable against the siege of a horde. According to this, the wise thing is to let the hordes settle, as they will become sufficiently vulnerable for you to get on with your business. According to this state of things, the victory conditions will resume to a dozen of provinces for most of the barbaric factions. Still, the Imperial factions will have to keep around 30 provinces or so. Besides this, each faction will have to control two or more specified historically representative settlements. Another important fact is that rebellions do not end as unclaimed territory. Every time a province/city rebels, it may rejoin the faction from which was conquered, or become a stand-alone faction, powerful enough to follow its own purposes. For example, provinces opposing the Western Roman Empire join under the faction called Western Roman Empire Rebels, or Goth opposing cities rally under the banner of the Ostrogoths. You will be surprised how hard it is to maintain your conquered territories. Religion will play an important role in keeping order in your provinces. However, this does not resume to building some shrines/temples, or other peacekeeping constructions. Beyond the limes, east of the Euphrates, the Sassanid rulers of the Persian Empire (Zoroastrian) had usually tolerated their Christians. With the edicts of toleration (Edict of Milan, 313 A.D.) in the Roman Empire, Christians in Persia would now be regarded as allies of Persia's ancient enemy, and were thus persecuted. Inside the empire's borders, Christians wrecked havoc upon all the other confessions. The decrees of emperor Theodosius I forbade public observances of any but Christian rites. Theodosius I had progressively made the sacred feasts into workdays (389), had forbidden public sacrifices, closed temples, and colluded in frequent acts of local violence by Christians against major cult sites (The Serapeum, for example). The decree that went out in 391 (Christianity became state religion), stating that "no one is to go to the sanctuaries, walk through the temples", resulted in many temples throughout the Empire that could be declared "abandoned" and the universal practice immediately began of occupying these sacred sites with Christian churches. The funny thing is that, in the long run, the Empire's survival will be assured by the will of the Christian Church. Barbarian Invasion covers rather well the conflict between Christians and the two other confessions (Pagan and Zoroastrian). Public Order is greatly affected by religion, thus the official religion of a province must correspond with the faith of its citizens and with the state religion in order to prevent any uprising. In addition, the shrines/temples must represent the faith of the citizens. The first turn of the Eastern Roman Empire will be a demolish campaign as its population is Christian, and there

are pagan shrines everywhere. Otherwise, the Empire will split with devastating consequences, as a new Eastern Roman faction will rise and join the fight (aside the Huns, the Goths, the Slavs and the Persian Sassanids) for the jewel city of Constantinople. The battlefield tactics also changed, as commanding an army made up exclusively of infantry - porcupine style - in an open field is pure madness. A smart cavalry charge with two or three detachments backed up with an equivalent formation of horse archers will always deliver the bittersweet taste of death to any infantry general. The warfare of the classical age is on its knees. Huns - although it was never clearly confirmed by historians - may have won many battles because of the use of stirrups. Stirrups changed the basic tactics of mounted warfare and made cavalry more important. Braced against the stirrups, a warrior could deliver a blow with a lance that employed the full weight and momentum of horse and rider together. Nothing could stand against such impetuosity. (In addition, Cataphracts have returned, but as full-fledged warriors, firing arrows to disrupt enemy rows as they are charging. Words are not enough to describe the combat force of these knights in "shining hauberks"). The overall time to conclude the victor was reduced, as units rout faster and the melee combat is much fiercer than it was in Rome. Still, heavy mounted units may still die by the forks of peasants and many unarmored units refuse to die by arrow. Otherwise, units with a defense rating greater than 30 are extremely resilient to projectiles, which is a good thing. It is closer to our intuition to accept that when dealing with archers, cavalry is like a tank division facing a 7.62 caliber rifleman. In terms of warfare, there are two new additions: light units are able to swim and night combat is possible. There is not much of a deal with the night combat, the line of sight is not affected. Night combat only improves the value of those units able to fight at night and it is supposed to be at the advantage of a wise general - but isn't he always in advantage? As for unit abilities, except the cantabrian circle and the wedge formation, all the other are gone, as the units who empowered them, are gone. The new ones are the hedgehog (spearmen form a circle of frightful spikes) and the shield wall (very effective against any missile attack, but an irresistible fruit for any cavalry unit as this formation is vulnerable to a rear/side attacks). With all these changes, the Horse Archers (HA) exploit remains available for those players who find it irresistible. In short, an army formed exclusively by HA is unbeatable as they are fast, ranged units. Not even the whole Feng Shui in the world will bring you victory over such military forces. Luckily, the AI is not able to overuse the HA. However, the chance of losing your generals to such a military force is high when fighting Sarmatians or Huns as the backbone of their armies is the HA. Generals and their bodyguards can be recruited like any other unit. A recruited general will have the same attributes as a faction heir (can be city governor and can obtain character traits), but he cannot become a faction leader. However, it takes a long time to train them comparing to the HA-s, and the boosters they gain are, in most cases, irreplaceable as in this expansion some of them represent - besides retainers - relics, weapons (the lance that killed Jesus Christ), titles or offices. Most of them may be passed by inheritance only. In BI, roman generals have a new attribute. Loyalty represents the chance of a general to rebel or join a rebellion under the banner of a newborn faction (Roman rebels) that will contest your right to rule the Roman Empire. The factions in the game are entirely different. However, although they seem to be many, the lack in terms of differentiation between them reduces their number to an insubstantial six (roman, hunnish, nomadic, eastern, barbarian and northern African. Note: not all are playable). Somehow, I was expecting this. For some unknown reason, Creative Assembly avoids diversity concerning the differences between the factions' troops employed in their Total War games. The major differences between the Barbarian Invasion's factions are given by their geographical position, official religion, and objectives. From this point of view, there are three types of factions from which you may choose to play: settled (Romans, Sassanids, Alamanni as they may not horde if conquered), nomadic (they start as settled but, if conquered, they may form a horde) and barbarian/unsettled (they start as horde). Only the settled faction may develop an advanced building system. The rest will have to struggle with squalor and muddy roads. What

bothered me most is that the Goths are nothing more than backward barbarians. In 476 A.D., a Gothic King deposed the last Western Roman Emperor. Goths have always had a weakness for the Roman Empire as their culture was one of the richest of late antiquity Europe. In Barbarian Invasion, there will be no senate. By 292, Diocletian through his new title - "Dominus et deus" - removed any democracy facade, installing himself as a supreme overlord. Another important addition is that a conquered settlement may be sacked. This way, wandering hordes may gather enough resources to assure their existence once they settle. In addition, the sacked provinces will never entirely recover. Therefore, these provinces may be occupied later with ease. Economically and administrative, excluding the religion factor, the game did not suffer any improvements. I somehow expected to see a self-sufficient economy based mostly on latifundias (great land ownership) in the West, a flourishing trading in the East (it is hilarious to see a desert covered with packs of silk), a nomadic way of life in the North. A final note: Like in Heroes 3, the great number of battles will eventually wear the player down. The auto-resolve combat system is lacking in many ways. It is unacceptable to win a battle on the very-hard difficulty setting (ranked Heroic!) and lose it badly when auto-resolved. The agents (Spies, Diplomats, and Assassins) did not earn their place in the game. They are still more of a mess while your victory over the other factions cannot be secured through diplomatic actions as well as covert operations. Everything lies on the tip of your sword. **Video** The world has moved on, and so the military. By the 4th century the Gladius (60 cm, wrought iron, leaf shaped, used for thrusting) was abolished from the Roman army. Creative Assembly should have known that Spatha (80 cm, being constructed using a form of pattern welding employing layers of iron and steel - in effect, a composite material -, with a rounded tip, used for slashing, as the lorica hamata/hauberk became too strong to be easily pierced by hand-to-hand attacks) was by this time used also by infantry, not just cavalry. Furthermore, I doubt that Huns were using blades as their main melee weapons, while most of their military equipment was of Chinese origin. Well, most warrior bands in Barbarian Invasion hardly resemble the way they looked like in the 4th century Europe. Night clashes look very well, as burning projectiles light the landscape and the horrified faces of your enemies. Bodies floating down stream bring some grimness in your heart as their deaths reflect a failed outflanking maneuver. The Northern Europe has been covered with ancient forests. Here foot soldiers are kings as cavalry charge is ineffective and Horse Archers may not shoot past the trees of majestic sizes that fill the landscape. Furthermore, infantry troops - standing ground - may not be spotted even from ten feet away. This means patience in these areas may snatch victory from your archenemies defying overwhelming odds. **Multiplayer** Army configuration (preset armies) may be saved. This way, your ideal army will always be at your disposal - no more pencils and notebooks. Besides this feature and some new maps, the multiplayer remains the same as it was in the main title (Rome Total War): online/LAN historical or customized battles. **Conclusion** To be honest, I was expecting something more than dynamism: a step further, the courage to confront with the ill vision of how games "must" avoid reality to be worthwhile. The principle of any fiction is that distorts reality by altering the laws and phenomena on which we all approve, by augmenting or minimizing the consequences of an event, and/or by providing exceptions to verified laws. Ignoring basic laws or acting as you reinvented boiled water when dealing with somewhat historical simulations is one step closer to what we -humans - define by mediocrity and triviality. Actually, as the past taught us, C.A. was never interested in being accurate - at least with the names of the units employed in their games. A good example (not to mention names of military units or buildings, or the fact that many factions are identical) is the Battle of Catalun (Chalons), where Atilla was actually crushed by Aetius' Feoderati Army (not a single regular roman soldier took part at that battle). Moreover, Atilla was barely alone, as a large number Ostrgoths and Gepids (at least twenty thousand men) joined him. I am not yearning for realism, but at least the information accompanying the battle could have been more accurate. It is arguable that maintaining some level of accuracy does not affect the

playability of a game. Changing a name or some textures, or some visual concepts does not affect in any way the gameplay. It is, after all, OUR history, not theirs. **Appendix** Barbarian comes from the ancient Greek word barbaros, which meant a non-Greek, someone whose (first) language was not Greek. The word is imitative, the "bar-bar" representing the impression of random hubbub produced by a language that one cannot understand. Plato rejects the Greek-barbarian dichotomy as a logical absurdity on just such grounds: dividing the world into Greeks and non-Greeks tells you nothing about the second group. It is not the case that Greeks automatically despised all alien cultures. They were aware of the greater antiquity of the much more developed civilizations of Egypt, the Levant, and Mesopotamia, from whom they borrowed extensively. The Romans - and the Creative Assembly - indiscriminately regarded the various Germanic tribes, the settled Gauls, and the raiding Huns as barbarians all, referring to them as backward people. A non-pejorative, simply functional concept of "barbarian", depends upon a carefully-defined use of "civilization", denoting a settled, urban way of life that is organized on principles broader than the extended family or tribe, in which surpluses of necessities can be stored and redistributed, and division of labor produces some luxury goods (even if only for gods and kings). The barbarian is technically a social parasite on civilization, which depends on settlements as a source of slaves, surpluses, and portable luxuries: booty, loot, and plunder. In this limited sense, without cities there can be no barbarians. The culture of the nomadic tribes is not to be confused with a barbarian one. "Culture" should not simply connote "civilization": rich, deep authentic human culture exists even without civilization. The nomad subsists on the products of his flocks, and follows their needs. The nomad may barter for necessities, like metalwork, but does not depend on civilization for plunder, as the barbarian does.