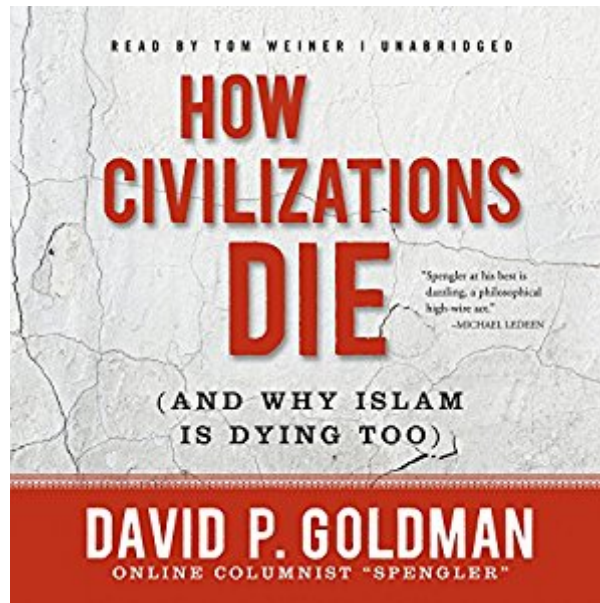


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# How Civilizations Die (and Why Islam Is Dying Too)



## Synopsis

Past and present civilizations failed and fail for many reasons, but the number-one predictor of a civilization's survival is its sense of religion-or lack thereof. So argues First Things columnist David Goldman in *How Civilizations Die (and Why Islam Is Dying Too)*. The strength of a civilization's religion affects its purpose, its fertility rate, and ultimately, its fate, says Goldman-who then argues that, contrary to popular belief, Islamic countries are in the last throes of death while Christian America is in a position to flourish. Goldman goes on to say that America must embrace our exceptionalism and stop trying to save Muslim countries that are determined to destroy themselves. Original, stunning, and provocative, *How Civilizations Die* shows the power of religion to save-or doom-a society and why, if we stick to our principles, we will emerge as leader of another American century.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

David P. Goldman, aka Asia Times Online's 'Spengler' columnist, is the single most insightful writer in America today. Goldman's new book 'How Civilizations Die' is an absolute gem as he dispenses with conventional wisdom and gives the reader unique geopolitical insight in a cultural and historical tour de force. Goldman may as well be the originator of the phrase "Demographics is Destiny" because he has argued for years (and in this book) that demographics can go a long way into explaining nations' economic and cultural rise and fall. But then what explains demographics? In the introductory part of the book, Goldman explores why people in the developed world choose to have

children and why they don't. His answer seems to be that having children is often an act of religious faith, or at least an article of faith in the future. Those developed societies (read: Europe) that fail to reproduce at replacement rate have lost faith. Not surprisingly, only two developed countries, Jewish Israel, and Judeo-Christian America, currently have birth rates above the 2.1 replacement rate. The next part of Goldman's book takes the reader deep in the heart of Islam and explores how and why Islam is literally convulsing before our eyes despite its religious facade. Who knew that the world had never before seen a drop in birthrates as it sees in Iran today? Who knew that Turkey too faces a demographic crisis in the near future and that native Kurds might soon outnumber native Turks in Turkey? The reader will be shocked as Goldman goes through the numbers and explains the cultural and economic consequences of an Islamic world on the brink. The second part of the book titled 'Theopolitics' takes the reader through history and examines cultures that failed: Prehistoric Greek civilization, Hellenistic civilizations and ancient Rome. Goldman then explains why Islam is soon to be the fourth failed civilization. The focus then shifts to Europe as Goldman explains how a once great continent no longer has a desire to live. This leads into a discussion of my favorite part of the book, a chapter titled 'How Christianity Failed in Europe.' I had always wondered how it was possible that the formerly most powerful nations, who fought for centuries under the nominal faith of Christendom could be so lacking in faith today. As Goldman explains, while the European nations were nominally Christian, they really practiced a form of paganism in that they worshipped themselves. And this was their downfall. In an awesome intellectual journey, Goldman takes the reader through the first Thirty Years' War in Europe (1618-1648) and discusses how that war eventually led to the modern nation state, the death of Christianity in Europe, and eventually the horrors of the second thirty year war in Europe (1914-1945). The final part of the book explains why America is different and how modern Judeo-based Christianity has survived only in America. By examining America's religious roots Goldman contrasts living America with dying Europe and shows why America will thrive, but also why its uniqueness cannot necessarily be transferred to other nations. This of course has foreign policy consequences for us today as we seek to export American democracy (can't be done, Goldman argues). Goldman concludes by offering his foreign policy advice based on 'The Morality of Self Interest' which should be required reading for our policymakers. Goldman is quite literally a polymath. The former head of Fixed Income Research (ie. smartest guy at the firm) at Bank of America, Goldman is a master of not only geopolitics and history, but also of high finance and macroeconomics. The breadth of his knowledge is breathtaking and combined with the writer's fine sense of humor makes for a gem of a book. I cannot recommend this book highly enough - simply an intellectual tour de force!

This book argues that, contrary to the prevailing view concerning the fertility of Muslim women and the consequent expansion of Islam, Islam is in a crisis. What causes the crisis is a fall, in Islamic societies, in the birthrate almost as dramatic as the one which got under way in non-Islamic ones a generation or two earlier. The difference is that the wealthy West can afford to support the vast numbers of the elderly; most Islamic countries, being much poorer, can not. The outcome is likely to be serious disturbances, perhaps revolution and war. Qui bono? The only two developed countries that do have children: the U.S and Israel. Is the author right? Time will tell. Meanwhile, he has written an exceptionally interesting book.

David P. Goldman is a brilliant and incredibly insightful man, so it would be nearly impossible for this book to not be worthwhile. That said, I'm about 2/3 of the way through, and it's not everything I had hoped for. In it, Goldman hits many of the themes common to his Spengler column - demography, philosophy, theology - and he is as incisive as ever when discussing them. Civilizations die from a lack of will to live; Islam is unable to cope with modernity, and its birthrates have plummeted as a result; Europe was never able to shake its pagan blood and soil self-worship and, having finally exhausted itself of the mass casualties of total war, has elected to ride its wealth into relatively comfortable oblivion; and so on. These are compelling ideas that to me ring true, I just wish Goldman were more expansive about them. He is pretty thorough in showing the demographic decline of Islam and Europe, almost to the point of repetition, but I found myself wanting more in the areas of philosophy, theology, and sociology. Tell me more about Europe's pagan consciousness and how it exploded in the 30 Years War. Explain to me what it was about the Grecian and Roman mindsets that led to their own demographic declines. I suppose it would help to read Franz Rosenzweig, who seems to justifiably be Goldman's guiding light, but sadly my early 20th century literary German is a little rusty.

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