

[MUSIC PLAYING]

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STRAYER:**

In chapter 20, Europe collapses. By the early 20th century, Europe was at the high point of its global dominance. Its colonial officials ruled much of Asia and almost all of Africa. Its scientists had uncovered the secrets of nature. And its industrialists had created far and away the world's most productive economies. And then, quite suddenly and unexpectedly, European civilization collapsed in war, depression, and genocide as chapter 20 describes.

How can we understand this catastrophic unraveling of European civilization? Since there was no external enemy that could have challenged European power, we know that it was self-inflicted. But what was it that brought Europe to its knees? And what were the global consequences of the European collapse? The rise of world communism, the dissolution and discrediting of empire, the emergence of the United States as a global power, the advent of the nuclear age, all of this and more reflected the deep interconnectedness of the world's peoples, as events in Europe rippled around the globe in the first half of the 20th century.

But if the collapse of Europe was remarkable, so too was its revival in the second half of the 20th century. Europeans rebuilt their industrial economies and revived their democratic political systems and set aside some of their prickly rivalries. While the United States, a European offshoot, became a dominant and often a dominating presence, both in Western civilization and in the world at large. This too requires explanation.

So did the 20th century witness the end of the European moment in world history or did the Western world continue to exercise a dominant global influence as the 21st century dawned? This is a question that you may want to ponder as you read chapter 20.