

Europe is important (I guess)

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If one were to take a snapshot of the world in the 1400s and pick out the country most likely to take over the world they would likely pick China. If one were to repeat this experiment in the 16th century they might pick Spain or Portugal for theory recent discovery of mountains of silver in the new world. Yet, one would be wrong on both accounts. If one were to take a snapshot of the world today they would find a lack of global Spanish, Portuguese, or Chinese influence. The world today is western, a product of the European Renaissance. That economies increasingly trend toward European capitalist is an unmistakable sign, that there exist wars for democracy throughout the world is another, and that European countries spearhead movements for global alliances is demonstration of the overwhelming impact of the European Renaissance. No other country would go on to leave an impact on the world today quite like Europe would; and since we study world regional geography to understand the world today we must spend considerable time on its shaping forces.

The world as we know it today began with the fall of Rome¹. A great empire with numerous cities housing city people who shaped their culture and guided their politics. With the fall of Rome came the fall of these cities and those with some

¹Technically is began approximately 13.8 billion years ago as a bunch of energy, but we'll go with Rome for today.

power to their name sequestered away in rural mansions. Europe entered a dark age without their cities and the continent was home not to one great empire but to warring shards. It is at this point where one would say, with great confidence, that China would come to rule the world as the oldest and most stable empire. What one would not expect, however, is the emergence of a class of people long oppressed in traditional power: the merchants. China, to maintain stability, had spent centuries regulating their merchant class to ensure they could not gain individual power. To traditional authorities a merchant was the most frightening enemy. They act within a country, they serve themselves, and with their skills they can buy power. For the European polities, however, these merchants would be the key to rebuilding their cities.