

In Chapter 1 of Rise and Fall of the Great Powers, Paul Kennedy sketches out an explanation of why the

## 1 | Kennedy

- Kennedy's argument is that the downfall of the Ming Dynasty was caused by the "conservatism of the Confucian bureaucracy"
  - Several key actions
    - \* Banned Seafaring
      - Loss of opportunity
    - \* Backwards thinking
      - Looked towards the past
    - \* Distrust towards merchants
      - Hurt the economy
  - Result
    - \* Lack of investment (domestic) into development, rather into land
    - \* Merchants suffered due to no backing from government (who controlled economy)
- Some of Kennedy's arguments can be supported by Mann
  - Zheng's explorations were very lucrative for Ming because it allowed them to show their presence in areas that they had little physical contact
    - \* Sri Lanka, Sumatra, etc
    - \* Banning of it and other expeditions was troubling because it meant that the Ming would fall behind in its *projection of power*
  - The banning of foreign trade encouraged piracy, eventually leading to pirate-controlled enclaves
    - \* Weakened government control
    - \* Tribute payments were still allowed, but only applied to the government
      - Used as a front for the government to trade with foreign nations
      - "A front for international commerce" (Mann, 127)
  - Introduction of fiat currency led to inflation, which in turn led to the decline of the economy