

# A TITLE! A TITLE!

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Paul Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* <sup>proposes</sup> ~~presents a theory in which~~ <sup>proposing</sup> ~~he proposed that~~ Europe's model of small nation-states helped encourage competition and diversification that prevents governmental overextension and domination; <sup>which</sup> ~~that~~, according to Kennedy, <sup>this</sup> leads to eventual downfall. <sup>though</sup> ~~In~~ proving his overall thesis, Kennedy ~~made a claim~~ addressing the reasons <sup>behind</sup> why China closed its maritime trade after the 1433 expedition of Zheng He: <sup>ON</sup> ~~claiming~~ that a conservative following of Confucian principles and effective governmental obstinance in Ming China's part lead to their eventual downfall in trade. In an attempt to justify his arguments, Kennedy cited a lack of "reconsideration" in rebuilding trade and naval forces even when, according to his work, circumstances became clear to do so; he alleges that, instead of economic or domestic incentives, the Ming government refused to reopen due to its "conservative Confucian" nature. <sup>in this work</sup> ~~In Kennedy's claim arguing that the conservative Confucian views caused Ming's closing of maritime trade;~~ <sup>Kennedy</sup> he presents a faulty argument that ignores both the ineffectiveness of unnecessarily reopening maritime trade and the discord in the <sup>WC</sup> ~~infighting-plagued~~ Ming government; through his <sup>claim</sup> ~~argument~~, Kennedy also misinterpreted <sup>it</sup> Confucian philosophy central to his argument for it; instead of an ideological ban on trade, <sup>is</sup> actually favors market circulation and advises governments <sup>against</sup> ~~not to encourage~~ price racketeering.

<sup>A critical weakness</sup> ~~One main flaw in Kennedy's argument of the conservative Confucian cause of the closing of maritime trade lies in the work's lack of consideration to longer-term effects of reopening~~

the Ming's

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of

maritime trade ~~under the Ming's situation~~. In his argument, Kennedy claims that stopping  
maritime activity "does not appear to have been reconsidered when the disadvantages ...  
became clear: ... the Chinese coastline and even cities ... were being attacked by Japanese  
pirates" — implying that there must be an alterer motive in not resuming maritime activity  
even in a situation that, hints Kennedy, is in dire need of redecision. Center to ~~the~~ this  
claim, however, is the notion that while there be no reason not to reopen trade, Ming China  
failed to do so. Unsurprisingly, this is untrue: after some political struggle, China in fact *did*  
attempt ~~an~~ reopening of trade that, contrary to what Kennedy hints in his argument, did  
not ~~rapidly~~ resolve the economic ~~situation~~ in Ming china ~~in both short and long term~~. As  
Kennedy mentioned, the closing of trade and subsequent deflation lead to rapid merchant  
attacks on coastal China — especially in the coastal, trade-dependent region of Fujian. Yet,  
contrary to what Kennedy presented, the Ming government indeed "reversed course [on  
trade]", invalidating Kennedy's initial argument. Kennedy failed to recognize the actual  
broader implications of simple trade reopening that, indeed, actually lead to why China's  
economy ultimately imploded. The Ming government reopened trade "not only because  
it recognized its inability to stop smuggling, or because it had begun to appreciate how  
much Fujian's populace depended on trade. ~~Beijing~~ had come to realize that the nation  
desperately needed the merchants' most important good: silver." Silver, due to its relative  
stability, was a major asset at the time to the Ming government due to the disastrous  
hyperinflation/deflation cycles caused by repeated issuing of novel coins by each Emperor.  
Although this initial reopening of a silver-based economy proved to be reasonably successful  
in the short run, the Spanish discovery of the Potosí mine would actually ignite the broader  
economic downfall that Kennedy appears to associate with a simple ban on trade: "In 1642,  
so much silver has been produced that its value is falling even as the mines slacken ... Like  
the Spanish king, the Ming emperor backs his military ventures with Spanish silver, ~~which~~  
~~his subjects must use to pay their taxes~~. When the value of silver falls, the government  
runs out of money." Contrary to Kennedy's claims, the Ming economy did not fail due to a

leading, ultimately, to his argument rooted in conservative Confucianism

longer term

crisis

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Kennedy is saying all that cuz he thinks they shouldn't have closed in the first place.

[China]

[...]

supposed lack of “reconsideration” on trade; it did reconsider trading quite extensively, and instead imploded centuries later due to a worldwide deflation caused by an influx of Spanish silver.

Through his argument, Kennedy did — in fact — acknowledge one reason that he claimed is a “plausible” ~~reason~~ for a closing of trade: the Mongols. Kennedy claims that maintaining “a large navy was an expensive luxury.” But, immediately following that claim, Kennedy follows up with a seemingly contradicting statement calling the Ming government to “reconsider” their anti-maritime decision due to the Japanese attacks aforementioned. Through ~~this~~ <sup>these claims</sup>, Kennedy not only blindsided his own argument, but created another flaw in ~~his argu-~~ <sup>it</sup> ~~ment~~ by ignoring the longstanding political struggle for which the Mongolian attacks are, in fact, a scapegoat. <sup>of</sup> Zheng He’s voyages “had become a target in political infighting — one bureaucratic faction championing them, ... [and] another trying to take down the first by decrying their expense.” With two bureaucratic factions championing opposing causes — sacrificing Zheng He as a means to an end — it is not surprising that one of the two would take an obvious and understandable cause of the Mongols as an argument against the expeditions through “decrying” the expense. The cancellation of the voyages by Yongle’s son is, simply, a show of strength to the other “faction”: power consolidation masqueraded as sensible economic policy. The Mongol attacks, cited by those opposing Zheng He’s voyages as economic luxuriation, were in fact a perennial problem: the Ming was given Mandate after overturning “the Mongol-lead Yuan”, was — as Kennedy correctly noted — attacked (CITENEDED) by Mongol invasions through its rule, and indeed was <sup>finally</sup> ~~later~~ overturned by the Manchus “who had taken north ... [since] during Song times”. Attacks of China from the ~~north~~ <sup>no Kennedy.</sup> were constant and rampant, making it less than evident that an elevation would cause China to destroy such a large naval investment. Although there may exist many theories hypothesizing the reason why the naval forces are destroyed — infighting chief among which — the attacks from the North are more common than Kennedy claimed it to be: not periodic and acute enough to warrant the destruction of such vast naval forces and an subsequent

“reconsideration” afterwards as Kennedy had claimed.

Center to Kennedy’s argument is his claim that the “sheer conservatism” in Ming’s Confucian government brought the downfall to expeditions of Zheng He — a claim that both egregiously misinterpreted the Confucian viewpoint on trade and paints an unfair caricature of the Ming government. “In [the Ming’s] ‘Restoration’ atmosphere,” claims Kennedy, “the all-important officialdom was concerned to preserve and recapture the past, not to create a brighter future.” In this argument, Kennedy hints that a preservation of the “past” ~~which ever model of the past that may be~~ would necessarily bring not only a full, unmitigated dismissal of present technologies, but also a unexplainable dismissal of any possibility of improvement. If, per Kennedy’s claims, the “sheer ... Confucian bureaucracy ... [was] a key element in China’s retreat” from all trade activities, then the conservative past that Kennedy claims China is ~~emulating~~ <sup>attempting to emulate</sup> would need a stance greatly antagonistic to trade to warrant a full “destruction of all sea-going vessels” (CITENEDED) and dramatic shutdown. However, the views of the Confucian scholars in the 81 AD Han Salt and Iron Debate disagree: “the purpose of merchants is circulation and the purpose of artisans is making tools. These matters should not become a major concern of the government.” Through his claim, Kennedy candidly misinterpreted the Confucian viewpoint: ~~Instead~~ of a complete shutdown of trade, Confucian scholars claim that a well-ran government should not be *concerned* with controlling trade themselves — natural trade (i.e. creation and circulation), not monopolies and limits, should be encouraged. The Confucian view against merchants is not one that forbids their existence, but a view where “quick traders and unscrupulous officials [that] buy when goods are cheap to make high profits” — in other words, arbitraging and racketeering — is discouraged. Through the Salt and Iron debates, Confucian scholars are trying to convince a struggling Han dynasty from imposing a strict trade limitation. The traditional Confucian views that Kennedy claim Ming China is desperately attempting to emulate in fact ~~does not correlate with~~ <sup>is opposite to</sup> the Ming government’s action of limitation, rendering Kennedy’s claims invalid.

{ In Kennedy's claim ~~that traditional Confucian views brought the Ming government to stop all maritime trade~~, the author presents a problematic claim that not only ignores both the ineffectiveness of trade opening and the discord in the Ming leadership but also misinterpreted Confucian philosophy central to his argument. } Kennedy, through his faulty and somewhat forced argumentation, <sup>over</sup> ~~applies a simplification~~ <sup>as</sup> to the rich and nuanced Ming governmental system that simply is not warranted. Although this calls for a reevaluation of his comparative analysis between European and Oriental cultures in terms of competition, Kennedy's primary arguments surrounding Europe in itself remains valid. [b/c what?]

↺ i don't think you need this