

Source: [KBhHIST201RiseOfEurope1500](#)

1 | Political Fragmentation of Europe

Europe is politically fragmented, but Mr. Kennedy thinks this is mucho bueno

Causes

- Geographical — no big plains but lots of rivers
- Harsher climate makes difficult central control

Effects

- Hard to be fully unified, and hence hard to be assimilated
- Diversity encouraged inter-dependence and trade (which, #why is this a good thing necessarily?)
 - Trade included *bulk* items primarily and not luxury-focused trade of the east
 - Easy access to sea encouraged shipbuilding
 - Quick, common day trade encouraged building on an economy — credit, banks, common currency
 - Need for long-range fishing encourages the building of bigger ships, and that's good because #why?

Development of strong military technology

- Beginning around 14-1600s with the establishment of “gunpowder empires”
- Military powers begin concentrating
 - Italy's use of the crossbowmen + pikes
 - France and England gained monopoly with artillery
- **Notice!** However, that there is nevertheless a *variety* of powers that made individual control difficult — no single individual ever gained an edge
- Varied political entities caused difficulty in controlling the whole continent
- Lean army of smaller nations encouraged fighting with artillery, and not direct combat — driving technological innovation

To most European statesmen the loss of Hungary was of far greater import than the establishment of factories in the Orient, and the threat to Vienna more significant than their own challenges at Aden, Goa and Malacca; only governments bordering the Atlantic could, like the later historians, ignore this fact

Meaning... Generally weaker individual states originally caused less inter-continental fighting against the status-quo big nations ([KBhHIST201MingChina1500](#) / [KBhHIST201Ottomans1500](#))

Advantages

Fragmentation also encourage competition:

- Trading and merchants less stigmatized (unlike [KBhHIST201ChinasDecline1500](#) China's Governmental Decline in the 1500s) => making suppressing economic development difficult #why

- Encouraged small militia (*condottieri*) to compete for contracts
- Created genuine innovation
 - Experimentation with gunpowder
 - Innovation by hired army
- Self-perpetuating cycle made attack and monopolization harder
- Innovative techniques often drive other innovation (experiments with cannons => more sturdy ships)