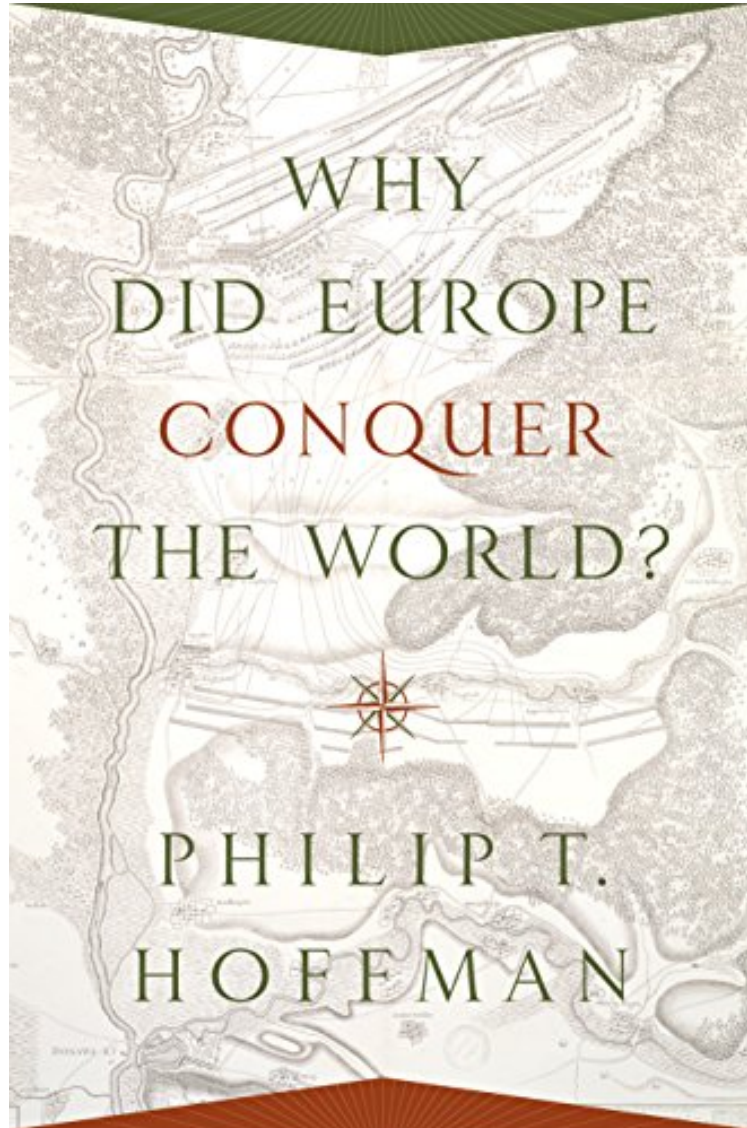


[Ebook free] Why Did Europe Conquer the World? (The Princeton Economic History of the Western World)

## Why Did Europe Conquer the World? (The Princeton Economic History of the Western World)

*Philip T. Hoffman*

*DOC | \*audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF | ePub*



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#337678 in eBooks 2015-06-30 2015-06-30 File Name: B00U58Y4EA | File size: 21.Mb

**Philip T. Hoffman : Why Did Europe Conquer the World? (The Princeton Economic History of the Western World)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Why Did Europe Conquer the World? (The Princeton Economic History of the Western World):

61 of 64 people found the following review helpful. An interesting blend of economic modeling and standard historical method gives good insight into Europe's rise. By Graham H. Seibert This is a book by an economist. As is de rigueur in their profession, it involves a number of economic equations. Mathematical expressions to explain why

actors act the way they do. Economists are inclined to confess with some honesty that the models are not perfect, but they're the best that they have. Is there question is not the models don't work, but that no model is perfect. The model in this instance is the tournament model. It is kind of like game theory. If the costs of going to war are small, and the rewards are large, leaders will go to war. They get the glory, and the peasants get the shaft. That simple rule seemed to prevail in late medieval and early modern Europe. The countries were always at war. The kings and princes benefited from war. As the author points out with an impressive array of statistics, kings and princes rarely died when they lost, however many subjects may have died, and they gained great riches and renown when they won. If you were a sovereign, war was the thing to do. His thesis is that European powers were always at war, that war brought about innovation and improvements in technology, and that because Europe was the first to innovate, especially with gunpowder, the singular most important invention of the period, they came to dominate the world. The author says that other people have had theories as to why the West came out dominant, and those theories are lacking. There is Jared Diamond's *Guns Germs and Steel* which posits that it was a matter of geography. The geography of Eurasia allowed agricultural technology to spread East-West and allowed the Eurasian peoples to develop civilization earlier. There is a trade argument. Once the Portuguese in particular learned open ocean navigation, the Europeans had advantage. They could trade easily with one another on the open Atlantic, as well as the Mediterranean. More than that, their ships carried them to the four corners of the earth. As Hoffman indicates, they were able to bring their war machines which were more effective than any of the locals they encountered. They were certainly vastly more effective than those of the Native Americans, Stone Age people who simply could not resist Pizarro, Cortez and the other conquistadores. But Europeans also dominated in Japan, India, Indonesia and other places where they touched down. Western technology simply overwhelmed the natives' ability to defend themselves. As always, as the author carefully points out, there was dissension among the tribes wherever they went, and certain of the locals found it beneficial to ally themselves with Europeans. To quote from the book, "Above all else, we want to explain improvements in the gunpowder technology and understand why the Europeans pushed it further than anyone else. We can distill what the model says on that subject into four essential conditions for advancing the gunpowder technology via learning by doing:" 1. There must be frequent war. Rulers must therefore face similar political costs of mobilizing resources and must be battling for a prize that was valuable relative to the fixed cost of establishing a fiscal system and a military apparatus. There cannot be huge differences in the size of their countries or economies or their ability to borrow, although credit can allow the ruler of a small country to fight a larger opponent." 2. Frequent war, though, is not enough, for rulers must also lavish huge sums on it. Once again, the prize must be valuable, but in addition, the rulers' political costs of summoning resources must not only be similar, but low." 3. Rulers must use the gunpowder technology heavily, and not older military technologies." 4. Rulers must face few obstacles to adopting military innovations, even from opponents. Each of the four conditions is necessary with high probability: if one of them fails to hold, the gunpowder technology will likely fail to advance." Together, however, the four conditions are sufficient. When they all hold, learning by doing will in fact improve the gunpowder technology. Greater relevant knowledge (so the model also implies) will spur innovation to an even faster pace and ensure that it does not wane as the gunpowder technology ages." The author's attempts to mathematicise history, to devise formulas to explain his thesis, are interesting. It involves parametrizing historical financial data — productivity, GDP, prices — in a way that can be compared across very different cultures and across time. This is difficult enough. He then goes into the productivity of soldiers. How do you measure their productivity? Their killing efficiency? It is a bold effort even to attempt. By doing so, however, Hoffman gives good insight into the ways in which weaponry, tactics, and even the psychology of soldiering changed through the period under study. Though the introduction and first chapter would lead one to think otherwise, Hoffman is, in the end, quite modest in the claims he makes for his models. They are useful tools, but they are only that, a tool to augment the standard techniques of historical explanation. Hoffman's publisher being Princeton, a bastion of political correctness, may have led him to leave important variables out of his equation. He discusses evolutionary anthropologists at length. These academics would attribute differences in inventiveness to cultural factors. He makes no mention whatsoever of evolutionary psychologists, who have a lot to say about the evolution of intelligence. Other authors such as Harpending and Cochran, Clark and Wade write extensively about major, recent evolution among different peoples. Evolving intelligence would appear to be a variable not to be left out of the regression. Overall, a five-star effort. Hoffman's book has a lot of explanatory power, and it introduces a useful synthesis of tools for analysis of history.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars  
By NYS Although I have to disagree with some of the arguments, this is a well written and enlightening book  
2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Interesting, if not entirely convincing. Worth your time  
By Customer The idea and model presented in the book are interesting and make you think. Still, I couldn't help but wonder if the model wasn't too much twisted and expanded to fit the history...

Between 1492 and 1914, Europeans conquered 84 percent of the globe. But why did Europe establish global dominance, when for centuries the Chinese, Japanese, Ottomans, and South Asians were far more advanced? In *Why Did Europe Conquer the World?*, Philip Hoffman demonstrates that conventional explanations — such as

geography, epidemic disease, and the Industrial Revolution—fail to provide answers. Arguing instead for the pivotal role of economic and political history, Hoffman shows that if certain variables had been different, Europe would have been eclipsed, and another power could have become master of the world. Hoffman sheds light on the two millennia of economic, political, and historical changes that set European states on a distinctive path of development, military rivalry, and war. This resulted in astonishingly rapid growth in Europe's military sector, and produced an insurmountable lead in gunpowder technology. The consequences determined which states established colonial empires or ran the slave trade, and even which economies were the first to industrialize. Debunking traditional arguments, *Why Did Europe Conquer the World?* reveals the startling reasons behind Europe's historic global supremacy.

One of Bloomberg Businessweek's Best Books of 2015, chosen by Barry Eichengreen "Brilliant."--Edward Rothstein, *Wall Street Journal* "[Why Did Europe Conquer the World?] is a very interesting addition to the flourishing history of the world genre."--Diane Coyle, *Enlightened Economist* "History and counterfactuals blend into a fluent thesis, underpinned by diverting tables of data."--Martin Vander Weyer, *Daily Telegraph* "Fascinating."--G. John Ikenberry, *Foreign Affairs* "A confident and sure-footed book."--Robert Fulford, *National Post* "Big-picture economic history at its best. Hoffman's answer: chronic military conflict that gave European leaders incentives to harness widely known gunpowder technologies more effectively than leaders in other parts of the world. Also a good reminder of what economic history brings to today's economic and political table."--Barry Eichengreen, *Bloomberg Businessweek* "A hugely ambitious book and one that no scholar analyzing transitions in global history can overlook. It is a daunting task to attempt such an endeavor, let alone succeed as Hoffman has. [How Did Europe Conquer the World?] will change interpretations of European warfare, the financing of conflicts, transitions in other regions of the world, the causes of the Industrial Revolution, and the Great Divergence--topics that are at the forefront of history, economics, and political science today. . . . Impressive and persuasive. . . . [T]his book is a classic of economic history, which should be required reading."--Jari Eloranta, *EH.net* "Impressive."--Jan De Vries, *American Historical* "A powerful argument that resonates strongly with recent work in international political economy (Herman Schwartz) and political science (Ned Lebow)."--*Survival* "In a brilliant analysis, Hoffman demonstrates the dynamic interaction between the financing of the war, the innovation in warfare technology, and the political institutions, which sparked the race toward colonization and prepared the UK for the Industrial Revolution. [An] ambitious study."--Lisa Kaaki, *Arab News* "An intriguing and compelling contribution to the riveting debate on the causes of European hegemony in the world over the last five hundred years."--Seneer Aktuuml;rk, *Insight Turkey* From the Back Cover "Phillip Hoffman's book answers a question that economic historians have neglected: Why did Europe conquer the world starting about five hundred years ago? Hoffman stresses how incentives made Europe's princes unusually bellicose and willing to promote improvements in war technology. Combining wide reading, the judicious use of data, and economic models that distinguish Hoffman's explanation from that of earlier historians, *Why Did Europe Conquer the World?* represents the very best in economic history."--Timothy Guinnane, *Yale University* "Why did Europe conquer the world? Philip Hoffman offers striking new answers to this old question. Hoffman's short answer is gunpowder or military technology. His longer answer is more unsettling: the political and geographical forces that made Europe's precocious economic development possible were inseparable from the arms race which enabled European states to win wars."--Cormac Oacute; Graacute;da, author of *Eating People is Wrong, and Other Essays on Famine, Its Past, and Its Future* "Philip Hoffman upends the traditional story of why western Europe conquered the world. His elegant econometric model shows that by fighting constant wars with each other and never allowing a single hegemon to emerge, Western polities had greater incentives and opportunities to improve their military technology than their counterparts elsewhere. Anyone wanting to understand how economic theories are changing the ways we look at the past needs to read this book."--Daniel Chiroto, *University of Washington* "Beginning with the Spanish and Portuguese in the late fifteenth century, technological military superiority appears to have been the proximate cause of Europe's ever-expanding military dominance for the next five centuries. Where did this technological superiority come from? The answer provided in this convincing and tightly argued book is interesting and as definitive as such answers get."--Sergios Skaperdas, *University of California, Irvine* About the Author Philip T. Hoffman is professor of business economics and professor of history at the California Institute of Technology.