

Winning at War: Seven Keys to Military Victory throughout History

By Christian P. Potholm

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What are the independent variables that determine success in war? Drawing on 40 years of studying and teaching war, political scientist Christian P. Potholm presents a 'template of Mars,' seven variables that have served as predictors of military success over time and across cultures. In *Winning at War*, Potholm explains these variables?technology, sustained ruthlessness, discipline, receptivity to innovation, protection of military capital from civilians and rulers, will, and the belief that there will always be another war?and provides case studies of their implementation, from ancient battles to today.

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Editorial Review

Review
Potholm provides case studies from ancient battles to today demonstrating the implementation of . . . seven factors for success. (*Bowdoin Campus News*)

Christian Potholm has written an imaginative, controversial book on the fundamental nature of human conflict that deserves the most serious attention from scholars as well as students of war. (Williamson Murray, professor emeritus, Ohio State University, and senior fellow at the Institute of Defense Analysis)

Brilliant. Chris Potholm's *Winning at War* provides an objective and analytical framework on understanding war for the policymaker, the war fighter, and the layman alike. He brilliantly weaves a complex subject into a very understandable tale. (Claude Berube, professor at the US Naval Academy)

Chris Potholm's seminal *Winning at War* is an innovative approach to objectively analyzing mankind's most destructive method of policy making?war. A disciplined application of the seven keys to military victory he so compellingly articulates can assist future political leaders, policy makers, and military planners avoid the sad and costly mistakes of the past. A brilliant contribution to the noble effort to help mankind avoid the dreadful pain of warfare. (Admiral Gregory G. Johnson, Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces Southern Europe, Commander in Chief, U.S. Naval Forces, Europe, 2001-2004)

In this brilliant, provocative book, Dr. Christian Potholm reveals his obsession with war?not to glorify warfare or warrior-hood?but to understand what factors have proven indispensable in leading to success on history's battlefields. This book is a must read for our military and political leaders?and for a citizenry that needs to know whether our leaders have properly prepared our nation for success in war when diplomacy fails. (William S. Cohen, Secretary of Defense, 1997-2001)

WINNING AT WAR is Maine scholar Christian Potholm's incisive and provocative treatise on the seven keys to winning wars throughout history.... This is a book about how and why states win or lose wars. From the outset, Potholm does not attempt to justify the morality of war, just as he does not glorify or endorse war; rather, he seeks to understand success in war. Potholm's presentation is clear and fascinating. He offers seven key elements as essential components for successfully waging and winning wars.... He discusses each element using historical examples, from the Romans, Mongols and Zulus to the American Civil War, the Vietnam War and the Iraqi insurgency. (*Morning Sentinel*)

Potholm's knowledge of military history, from the general staff to the handiwork of the battlefield, is impressive. . . . The reader is shown Napolean and the usual suspects as models, but Potholm also explores far-flung fields and different cultures. (*The Portland Press Herald*)

A clever and thoughtful book about how and why states win or lose wars. Author Christian P. Potholm does not attempt to justify the morality of war; he seeks to understand success in war. (*Military Officer*)

This exceptionally well-written work focuses on how to achieve victory in war when diplomacy is unable to prevent human conflict and warfare. Potholm presents an in-depth analysis of what he describes as seven key variables to military success throughout history....This is an outstanding book, its narrative clear, its research solid, and its conclusions sound. It is a fine piece of scholarship and essential reading for policy makers,

scholars, and military leaders. (*Proceedings*)

In an interesting look at the separate factors that determine success at war, Potholm has defined what he calls a “template of Mars”, which is composed of seven variables: technology; sustained ruthlessness; discipline; receptivity to innovation; protection of military capital from civilians and rulers; the centrality of superior will; and, the belief that there will always be another war. This is the framework on which one can understand war, what it takes to be successful at war and to determine whether or not the leadership has properly prepared the country for success in war when all else fails. Some of these variables are well known: technology, discipline, ruthlessness, innovation and a centrality or unity of superior will have been part and parcel of the practice of successful warfare for centuries. Two of the variables of the template, protection of military capital and the belief that there will always be another war are innovative and somewhat controversial. Potholm takes these “7 Keys to Victory” and applies them across the spectrum of military history. He illuminates each of his variables to specific events. To use just two examples: protection of capital resulting in a victory for the Athenians at the Battle of Salamis in 480BC; and the belief that there will always be another war was actually what made a Hun a Hun and contributed to their success at conquest. An interesting and stimulating read. (*The Past In Review*)

Winning at War is the product of over forty years of academic inquiry into the nature of war by Christian Potholm, a professor of government at Bowdoin College. He proposes that throughout history there have been seven keys to military victory....Potholm's work deserves our attention because of his distinguished credentials....Potholm draws his conclusions from a comprehensive survey of military history of over 2,500 years, being candid about his inclusion of non-Western examples in the analysis. (*Naval War College Review*)

From the Back Cover
"Chris Potholm's seminal Winning at War is an innovative approach to objectively analyzing mankind's most destructive method of policy making--war. A disciplined application of the seven keys to military victory he so compellingly articulates can assist future political leaders, policy makers, and military planners avoid the sad and costly mistakes of the past. A brilliant contribution to the noble effort to help mankind avoid the dreadful pain of warfare."--Admiral Gregory G. Johnson, Commander in Chief, Allied Forces Southern Europe and Commander in Chief, U.S. Naval Forces, Europe, 2001-2004

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About the Author
Christian P. Potholm, II is professor of government at Bowdoin College.

Users Review

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