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This Kind Of War: The Classic Korean War History



Synopsis

This Kind of War is a monumental study of the conflict that began in June 1950. Successive generations of U.S. military officers have considered this book an indispensable part of their education. T. R. Fehrenbach's narrative brings to life the harrowing and bloody battles that were fought up and down the Korean Peninsula. Partly drawn from official records, operations journals, and histories, it is based largely on the compelling personal narratives of the small-unit commanders and their troops. Unlike any other work on the Korean War, it provides a clear, panoramic view; sharp insight into the successes and failures of U.S. forces; and a riveting account of fierce clashes between U.N. troops and the North Korean and Chinese communist invaders. The lessons that Colonel Fehrenbach identifies still resonate. Severe peacetime budget cuts after World War II left the U.S. military a shadow of its former self. The terrible lesson of Korea was that to send into action troops trained for nothing but "serving a hitch" in some quiet billet was an almost criminal act. Throwing these ill-trained and poorly equipped troops into the heat of battle resulted in the war's early routs. The United States was simply unprepared for war. As we enter a new century with Americans and North Koreans continuing to face each other across the 38th parallel, we would do well to remember the price we paid during the Korean War.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Absolutely phenomenal treatise on the Korean War, with clear points of view and perspective from the participants. I decided to re-read this book 30 yrs after serving as a platoon leader on the DMZ (and being "highly encouraged" to read it by our BN CDR). Amazingly enough, the points Fehrenbach made about Korea are still very applicable today. I believe he would be proud of the US

military and our ability to foreign wars far from home. Our military was not ready following the WWII drawdown, but was ready for the past 17-years of multiple conflicts. I also believe he would quickly recognize the difficulty in "limited war" and difficulty in convincing our civilian population to support the wars. Does either phrase "limited war" or "support the troops, not the war" make sense at any relevant level? Given the past years of near constant conflict, NKorea realizes our people can't stomach the grinding war that would be required to fight in Korea. As such, they currently have the initiative. Again, this book is well worth the read, especially for those who wish to gain insight to the situation in Korea. [I spent two years as a Platoon Leader, Weapons Platoon Leader and Rifle Company XO from 1987-1989. I loved the people and the experiences there, and learned quite a bit.]

This not so much a history of the Korean war as it is a critique of the social and political errors and problems that beset the conduct of the war and led to its inconclusive end. The battles are usually described from the viewpoint of small units, more to give a picture of what it was like for the soldiers than to analyze the overall conduct of the fight. Many pages are devoted to the philosophy of war in general, the social psychology of the military at the time, and America's lack of preparedness for a limited war. While the author makes many valid points, the book was not quite what I had expected. I will admit, however, that this book, written in the early sixties, correctly assessed the inherent problems of the American military and political leadership that were later repeated in Viet Nam. The Kindle version of the book had many typos and punctuation errors that sometimes rendered sentences totally unclear. Also, the author chose to use a different transliteration of Korean place names, making many of them unrecognizable to anyone familiar with the war. The famous Chosin Reservoir was given a name so different I'm not sure it was even mentioned. This is a good book for explaining why the Korean War was so chaotic and inconclusive, but it is not a typical military history.

This author delves into some of the details by using anecdotes of a few companies' experiences in the war. While these accounts are well written and give an idea of what the combat was like, one does not feel the exhilaration or fear that one might feel reading a story authored by the soldier himself. In spite of not making the reader 'feel as though he were there', this book does a good job of describing the feeling of desperation and frustration that a commander or soldier would feel in a war in which the United States had to refrain from using its full arsenal - not just in terms of technology, but in strategy. One might feel the futility of fighting an enemy whose factories are not

allowed to be destroyed because such action would have resulted in full-fledged war with China and possibly the USSR. The author describes the new 'tactics' with which the US and UN forces had to fight. Instead of all-out, large scale action, UN forces had to hold back and especially during peace negotiation, had to hold the line against Chinese and North Korean forces. Fehrenbach also details some of the UN forces' actions and those of the Republic of Korea; which is great for me as an American totally ignorant of the fact that the UN had committed forces to this war. The losses by the South Koreans' military were far greater than those of the Americans and that was not taught in my history class. This account also goes into the treatment of prisoners of war by the North Koreans and Chinese and the American strategy for treating and containing their POWs. Overall, it is a good book and I recommend it, especially to Americans unfamiliar with the war and why it was fought.

This was one of the early works written regarding the Korean War. It was well researched and easy to read. As a Kindle edition it suffers a little for a need of editing, although that is not a real serious issue. The author does indulge in a bit of philosophizing, which in one sense gives a perspective on the background and conduct of the war. However it also has the effect of slowing down the narration of the battles which are occurring.

I cannot say enough good things about this book, which sheds light on much more than the mere facts of the Korean "Conflict". AFAIK the chapter Proud Legions, which can be read as a stand-alone essay (and should be) is still required reading for candidates for promotion to general. I fear far too few in the Pentagon, in the WH and on the Hill read it, much less the full book.

This is an excellent account of the Korean War - a thorough history of the events, easily readable. You'll have a very good overview of this tragic conflict and all the events, the changes in the flow of action, as the action swept up and down the peninsula...My only reservation is the author's political-philosophical commentary - regarding overall US policy, and his preferences and opinions. Here he gets away from fact and evidence...but these parts are readily identifiable. To his credit, he manages to keep the actual events rather separate from his own editorial commentary. Good read, and very good account of the war itself.

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