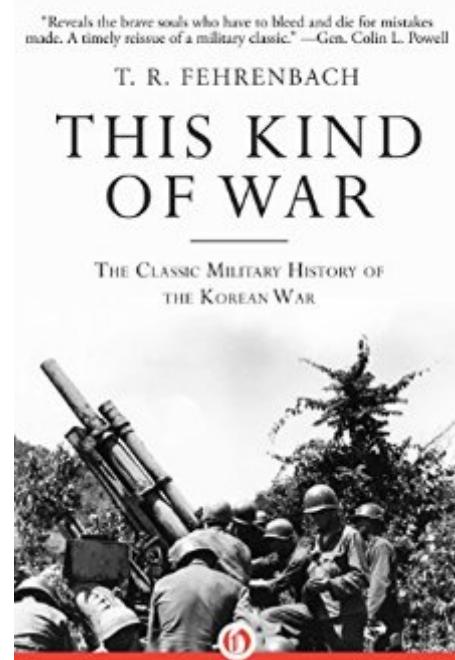


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This Kind Of War: The Classic Military History Of The Korean War



Synopsis

This Kind of War is the most comprehensive single-volume history of the Korean-American conflict that began in 1950 and is still affecting United States foreign policy. Fifty years later, not only does this enlightening account give details of the tactics, infantrymen, and equipment, it also chronicles the story of military and political unpreparedness that led to a profligate loss of American lives in Korea. T. R. Fehrenbach, an officer in the conflict, provides us with accounts of the combat situation that could only have been written by an eyewitness in the thick of the action. But what truly sets this book apart from other military memoirs is the piercing analysis of the global political maneuverings behind the brutal ground warfare that marked this bloody period of history, one that has been all but forgotten. Hailed as a must for all soldiers and former soldiers • by an .com reviewer, This Kind of War restores the Korean War to its rightful place in American history "as a touchstone for US foreign engagement and a lesson for politicians ready to shed American blood on faraway soil.

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Customer Reviews

Unpreparedness is a major theme in American military history. In his popular and unsympathetic view of America's involvement in Korea, T.R. Fehrenbach argues that the American armed forces were psychologically unprepared for the type of limited war that took place in Korea ("this kind of

war"). The author questions whether the citizen-soldier and the society from which it breeds were willing to fight and die for an intangible foreign policy in Asia. Originally published two years before a full American commitment in Vietnam (1963), the author warns that this type of conflict will become the rule rather than the exception and America had better train a professional force both physically and mentally to deal with such future conflicts. Fehrenbach's reporting contains many lessons learned and leadership analysis which appeals more to current active duty military personnel. Fehrenbach's book is considered a classic, and is listed on many of the professional military reading lists. Fehrenbach's strengths lie in his combat narrative, particularly at the small unit level, however, when the author attempts to place the conflict in its overall political perspective, he falls short. Many paragraphs contain merely two or three sentences, that for this reviewer, made this book a chore to read in places. In this regard, Fehrenbach trails behind other authors on the subject such as Roy Appleman, and a recently published series edited by Allan R. Millett. Having himself commanded units at platoon, company, and battalion level in Korea, Fehrenbach is direct and pulls no punches.

T.R. Fehrenbach's "This Kind of War" is the classic military history of the Korean War. Fehrenbach addresses the strategic and operational aspects of the conflict, but much of his focus is on the tactical experience of U.S. units. His book is a searing indictment of the U.S. military and of the United States for having failed to maintain combat-ready forces less than five years removed from the end of the Second World War. The U.S. Army and Marine Corps elements thrust into sudden conflict in June 1950 following the communist invasion of the Republic of Korea had to relearn, the hard way, all the old and hard lessons of warfare. Young soldiers who had been coddled by peacetime occupation duty in Japan found the battlefield to be a merciless place of death for those who were unprepared. In Fehrenbach's words "They were learning, in the hardest school there was, that it is a soldier's lot to suffer and that his destiny may be to die." Fehrenbach's prose is blunt and straightforward; the narrative sketches the ancient truths of combat and their modern realities and pulls no punches with respect to the shortcomings of both the military and the political leadership. Aging General Douglas MacArthur ran great risks during the Battle of the Pusan Perimeter in August 1950 to husband forces for the spectacular September counterstroke at Inchon that turned the tide of combat, only to underestimate the risk of Chinese intervention and suffer an humiliating defeat inside North Korea in November. In parallel manner, the Truman Administration made the hard political decision to intervene in June 1950, then failed to think through the likely implications of going north to the Chinese border in October 1950. Fehrenbach dispenses credit where due. The U.S.

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