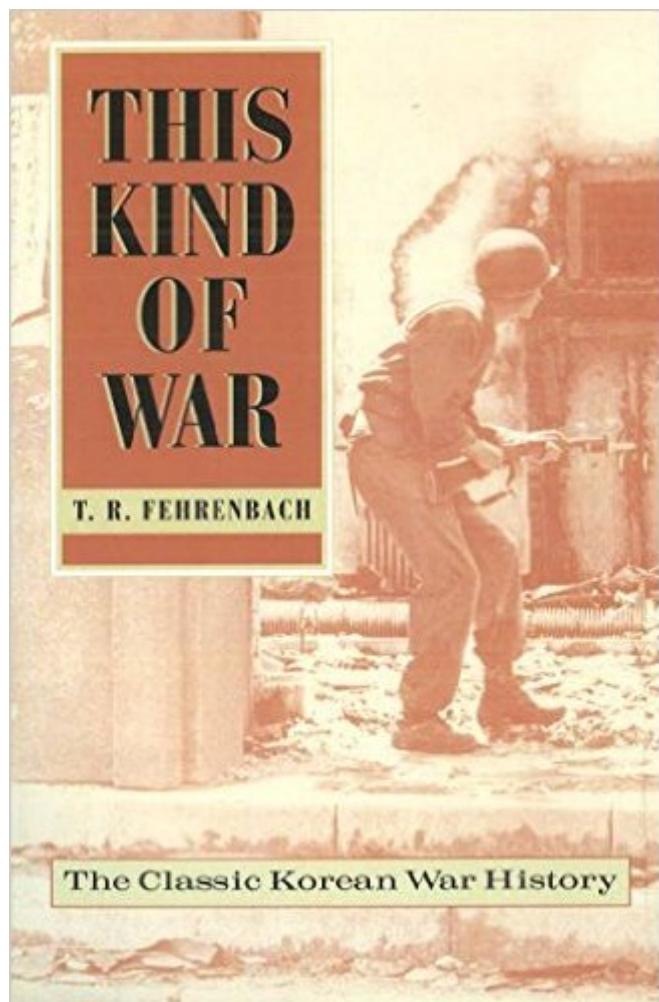


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This Kind Of War: The Classic Korean War History - Fiftieth Anniversary Edition



Synopsis

Updated with maps, photographs, and battlefield diagrams, this special fiftieth anniversary edition of the classic history of the Korean War is a dramatic and hard-hitting account of the conflict written from the perspective of those who fought it. 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 both a clear panoramic overview and a sharply drawn "you were there" account of American troops in fierce combat against the North Korean and Chinese communist invaders. As Americans and North Koreans continue to face each other across the 38th Parallel, This Kind of War commemorates the past and offers vital lessons for the future.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As a young U.S. Army company commander in Korea in 1975, my battalion commander issued me a paperback copy of "This Kind of War" with instructions to read it and discuss it with him. I carried the much referred to, tabbed, underlined and used book for 15 years, when I again returned to Korea. I was pleased, when during in processing, I was issued a hard back copy of the book, as were all officers and sergeants. In 1994, during the Normandy 50th Anniversary Commemoration in France, I presented a copy to President Clinton. Today, as a Colonel with 28 years service, I still find it a readable, honest, timeless, useable source. I think all members of congress and senior administration leaders, as well as anyone concerned about America's military, should read chapter 25. Fehrenbach's insight about America's volunteer military is timeless...his counsel is again being

verified today in Kosovo and in our peace keeping missions in Bosnia and Macedonia. Smug, psuedo-intellectual military analysts often disregard Fehrenbach's insight and conclusions. His ability to present complicated issues in a human, realistic, understandable manner circumvents any argument that his opinions are dated. History, to include our Iraq/Bosnia/Kosovo adventures, have proved his premise.

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. In contrast to those who argue that Korea was a success in that the United States accomplished its mission of re-establishing the Republic of South Korea, Fehrenbach holds the war was a stalemate resembling trench warfare on the Western Front from 1914-1918. Although stating that his evidence is compiled from many sources: official records, operations journals, memoirs, newspapers, and oral histories, the reprinted edition reviewed here contained no notes or bibliography: inexcusable for a work of history! The author is adamant in his conclusion: "A nation that does not prepare for all the forms of war should then renounce the use of war in national policy." He adds: "A people [America] that does not prepare to fight should then be morally prepared to surrender. To fail to prepare soldiers and citizens for limited, bloody ground action, and then to engage in it, is folly verging on the criminal." I've read better books, but this one deserves checking out for the author's uncanny foresight and solid analysis.

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. Eighth Army pulled itself together after its initial defeats to successfully defend South Korea, then reconstituted itself a second time after its defeat by the Chinese near the Yalu River. It would persevere to the armistice in 1953. Thousands of individual soldiers, NCO's, and officers overcame the shock of combat to become highly effective fighters, ultimately fighting far larger formations of Chinese and North Korean communists to a bloody standstill in the nation's first modern and rather unhappy experience with limited war. This book is highly recommended to the student of the military art and of the Korean War. Fehrenbach's narrative provides a vivid reminder that we live in a world of tigers.

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