



PROJECT MUSE®

Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic
History (review)

Peter Lowe

The Journal of Military History, Volume 67, Number 1, January 2003, pp.
289-290 (Review)

Published by Society for Military History

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/jmh.2003.0050>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/40476>

ars and individuals who already possess significant knowledge of either military history or executive decision-making will prefer works on specific military commanders, or that elaborate on the forces that have shaped military leadership in the modern era, such as Andrew Gordon's *The Rules of the Game*.

Matthew S. Muehlbauer

Temple University
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History. By William Stueck. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002. ISBN 0-691-08853-5. Maps. Photographs. Illustrations. Notes. Index. Pp. xiv, 285. \$29.95.

This volume comprises a lively and balanced reassessment of the origins, character and impact of the Korean War. William Stueck is the author of two books dealing with this broad area, apart from the work considered here. He is concerned with posing key questions, such as how Korea came to be divided in 1945; how the United States and the Soviet Union sponsored rival regimes, following the breakdown of the attempt to secure a unified state; how Syngman Rhee and Kim Il Sung endeavoured to manipulate the great powers and how the latter imposed their authority; how Stalin and Mao Zedong viewed each other and perceived the current and future states of Sino-Soviet relations; how the domestic and international dimensions of the conflict interacted; why the United Nations became involved in Korea and how members of the UN reacted to American policy, plus the ways in which the latter was modified by representations from within the UN; why the war did not escalate into a nuclear conflict or into a third world war; and why it took so long to achieve an armistice agreement. Stueck focuses primarily upon political and diplomatic developments and these are pursued with clarity and conviction. Due consideration is given to the significance of evidence that has become available from the archives of China and the former Soviet Union. Stalin's desire to involve China in the war so as to obviate the contingency of an improvement in Sino-American relations is underlined, as is Stalin's determination to prevent formal Soviet participation in the Korean struggle. The author portrays Harry Truman in a reasonably positive light, thus resisting the current trend towards a more critical analysis of the Truman administration. In an interesting succinct comparison between Truman and Mao, Stueck observes that the former was flexible and prepared to entertain proposals from America's allies; far from being seduced by military romanticism (as happened to Mao), Truman dismissed the principal American advocate of such an approach in April 1951. Mao was excessively pre-occupied with establishing China's new international presence and ignored advice from his comrades which ran contrary to his own inclinations. Stueck explains the importance of the Korean conflict for the development of the

Cold War and for the continuing legacy of instability in East Asia. The value of the text is enhanced by the reproduction of admirable photographs. This book may be recommended to anyone wishing to obtain an up-to-date synthesis of the major disputes and controversies involved in the Korean war.

Peter Lowe

University of Manchester
Manchester, England

The United States Army and the Korean War. CD-ROM. Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute, 2000. PIN 076812-000. Available through the Naval Institute web site www.usni.org or by calling 800-233-8764. \$24.95 plus s&h. Free to veterans groups and Korean War commemorative organizations.

This CD-ROM, which comes in a four-disc set, is an excellent and convenient source for those doing historical research on the Korean War, America's "forgotten war." Disc one contains the three major military histories of the first year of the Korean War written by the Army Department of Military History. The authors had access to official Army records, most of them served in Korea, and they interviewed participants extensively. The books are *Policy and Direction: The First Year*, by James F. Schnabel; *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, by Roy Appleman; and *Ebb and Flow*, by Billy C. Mossman. Appleman does a good job of covering the United Nations' strong defense in 1950 of the Pusan Perimeter, the breakout and attack into North Korea to the Yalu River, and the entry of the Chinese and the mauling of Eighth Army. Mossman covers combat operations until July 1951.

Disc two contains the book *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, by Walter G. Hermes; *The Medics War*, by Albert Cowdrey; and five monographs covering different aspects of the war. Hermes covers the last two years of the war and the diplomacy carried on by both sides. Cowdrey effectively treats the changes in medical support since World War II. Not only had drugs improved, but the helicopter became the workhorse in evacuating the wounded. In addition, Cowdrey discusses development of MASH units to get the medical aid stations as close as possible to the front lines. The five monographs are *Combat Support in Korea*, *Combat Actions in Korea*, *KMAG in Peace and War*, *Black Soldier-White Army*, and *U.S. Army Mobilization and Logistics in the Korean War: A Research Approach*.

Discs three and four cover all three years of the war by way of photographs and posters. *Pictorial Korea*, by Miller, Owen, and Tackley includes most of the famous photographs that people remember about the war, many by Al Chang. One of the military questions inherent in any book on the Korean War is, "Why after Inchon did MacArthur keep X Corps separate from Eighth Army?" General Matthew Ridgway in his book, *The Korean War*, makes this point very clear. He states that the Joint Chiefs of Staff questioned MacArthur's decision after the Chinese entered and suggested he "close the gap" between them and establish a continuous line. This question