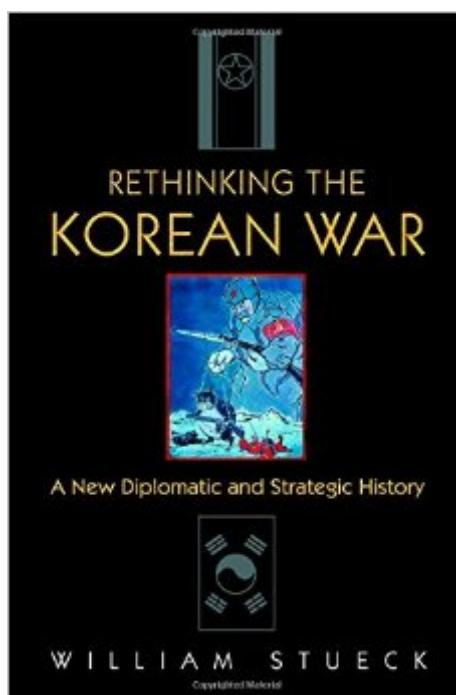


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Rethinking The Korean War: A New Diplomatic And Strategic History



Synopsis

Fought on what to Westerners was a remote peninsula in northeast Asia, the Korean War was a defining moment of the Cold War. It militarized a conflict that previously had been largely political and economic. And it solidified a series of divisions--of Korea into North and South, of Germany and Europe into East and West, and of China into the mainland and Taiwan--which were to persist for at least two generations. Two of these divisions continue to the present, marking two of the most dangerous political hotspots in the post-Cold War world. The Korean War grew out of the Cold War, it exacerbated the Cold War, and its impact transcended the Cold War. William Stueck presents a fresh analysis of the Korean War's major diplomatic and strategic issues. Drawing on a cache of newly available information from archives in the United States, China, and the former Soviet Union, he provides an interpretive synthesis for scholars and general readers alike. Beginning with the decision to divide Korea in 1945, he analyzes first the origins and then the course of the conflict. He takes into account the balance between the international and internal factors that led to the war and examines the difficulty in containing and eventually ending the fighting. This discussion covers the progression toward Chinese intervention as well as factors that both prolonged the war and prevented it from expanding beyond Korea. Stueck goes on to address the impact of the war on Korean-American relations and evaluates the performance and durability of an American political culture confronting a challenge from authoritarianism abroad. Stueck's crisp yet in-depth analysis combines insightful treatment of past events with a suggestive appraisal of their significance for present and future.

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Customer Reviews

This was an extremely insightful look at the strategic and diplomatic calculus that led to the US involvement in Korea. The US sent the Soviets and Chicomos signals that they were not including Korea in the Pacific defensive perimeter. This included a withdrawal of US troops from the peninsula in 1949, as well as a speech made by Dean Acheson on US security concerns in the Pacific rim, in which he failed to even mention Korea or Taiwan. Kim Il Sung received the green light for an invasion from Stalin, and the Chicomos were reluctant allies. The author packs a tremendous amount of detail and analysis in this work, which is divided into three parts. Stueck ties the origins of the Cold War with events in Korea and examines why we see this as the Korean War, and not the Korean Civil War, through the lens of the Truman Doctrine and Syngman Rhee's relationship with Congress and the president. In the second part, Stueck examines the reasons for Chinese intervention, which seem obvious in hindsight. US success after Inchon changed the military and political goals, leading UN forces to reach beyond the culminating point of attack. He also does a good job in analyzing how and, more importantly, why the US worked so hard to keep this a limited war, in the context of increasing military commitments to Europe. Stueck describes how the Chinese, after pushing the UN south of the 38th parallel, went beyond the culminating point of victory, and how this led to the armistice talks. Finally, Stueck describes the relationship between Korea and the US from 1945 to the present. This work stays at the 20,000 ft level and does not descend into operational narrative. It clearly lays out the diplomatic and strategic considerations of both sides, and provides a clear view of the birth of the Cold War and future nuclear policy.

Anyone who has more than 3 books about the Korean War should have this one.

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