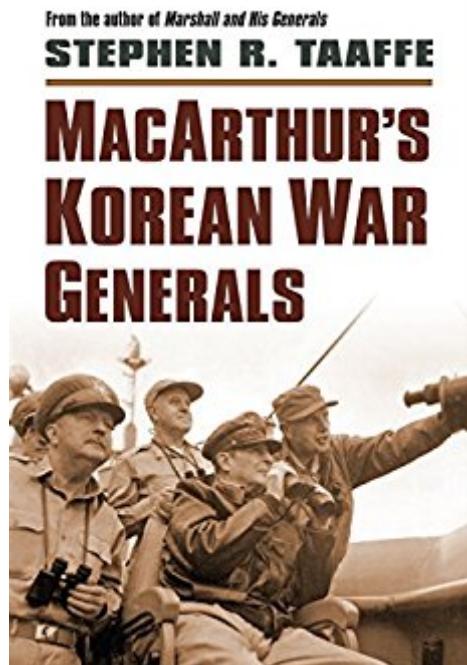


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MacArthur's Korean War Generals (Modern War Studies (Hardcover))



Synopsis

Wedged chronologically between World War II and Vietnam, the Korean War which began with North Korea's invasion of South Korea in June of 1950 possessed neither the virtuous triumphalism of the former nor the tragic pathos of the latter. Most Americans supported defending South Korea, but there was considerable controversy during the war as to the best means to do so and the question was at least as exasperating for American army officers as it was for the general public. A longtime historian of American military leadership in the crucible of war, Stephen R. Taaffe takes a close critical look at how the highest ranking field commanders of the Eighth Army acquitted themselves in the first, decisive year in Korea. Because an army is no better than its leadership, his analysis opens a new perspective on the army's performance in Korea, and on the conduct of the war itself. In that first year, the Eighth Army's leadership ran the gamut from impressive to lackluster a surprising unevenness since so many of the high-ranking officers had been battle-tested in World War II. Taaffe attributes these leadership difficulties to the army's woefully unprepared state at the war's start, army personnel policies, and General Douglas MacArthur's corrosive habit of manipulating his subordinates and pitting them against each other. He explores the personalities at play, their pre-war experiences, the manner of their selection, their accomplishments and failures, and, of course, their individual relationships with each other and MacArthur. By explaining who these field, corps, and division commanders were, Taaffe exposes the army's institutional and organizational problems that contributed to its up-and-down fortunes in Korea in 1950-1951. Providing a better understanding of MacArthur's controversial generalship, Taaffe's book offers new and invaluable insight into the army's life-and-death struggle in America's least understood conflict.

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Customer Reviews

âœLeadership in the Crucibleâ• Stephen Taaffe, MacArthurâ™s Korean War Generals (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2016). This is an outstanding contribution to war literature in general and the history of the Korean War in particular. Taaffeâ™s evaluations of the 21 generals who fought in the first phases of that war as commanders of the Eight Army and its various corps and divisions are balanced, judicious and fair as he carefully weights the contributions of such men as David Barr, Hobart Hap Gay, John Coulter, Lawrence Dutch Keiser, Robert Shorty Soule, William Kean, Frank Shrimp Milburn along with the better known Walton Walker, Matthew Ridgeway and James Van Fleet. For example, his assessment of General Ned Almond criticizes Almond for his penny packet, extremely diffuse X Corps lunge into north east Korea in late 1951 (under General MacArthur), but finds him a superb commander who did more than his share to save UN forces in the central Korean fighting during 1951 (under General Ridgeway). The author mixes finely granular and illuminating material about each general together with the various geo-strategic parameters under which they operated. Having taught a course on the Korean War for 30 years and perused hundreds of articles and books, I thought that with the exception of a North Korean military and strategic account of the war and a thorough examination of the Soviet military achieves of the period (Where is Henry Glantz when we really need him?), much about that war has already been examined. But MacArthurâ™s Generals turns out to be both a pleasant surprise - smoothly and perspicaciously written and providing many judicious insights - a most valuable addition to the war literature. Highly recommended. Christian Potholm Alva Stanwood Alexander Professor of Government Bowdoin College

Great companion to Marshall and his generals. Time for a Vietnam volume

Knowledgeable, thoughtful and full of insights.

The book was too repetitive. The reader hears the same stories of the same Generals in reflections of the past and in the actuality of the time being discussed. It became boring.

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