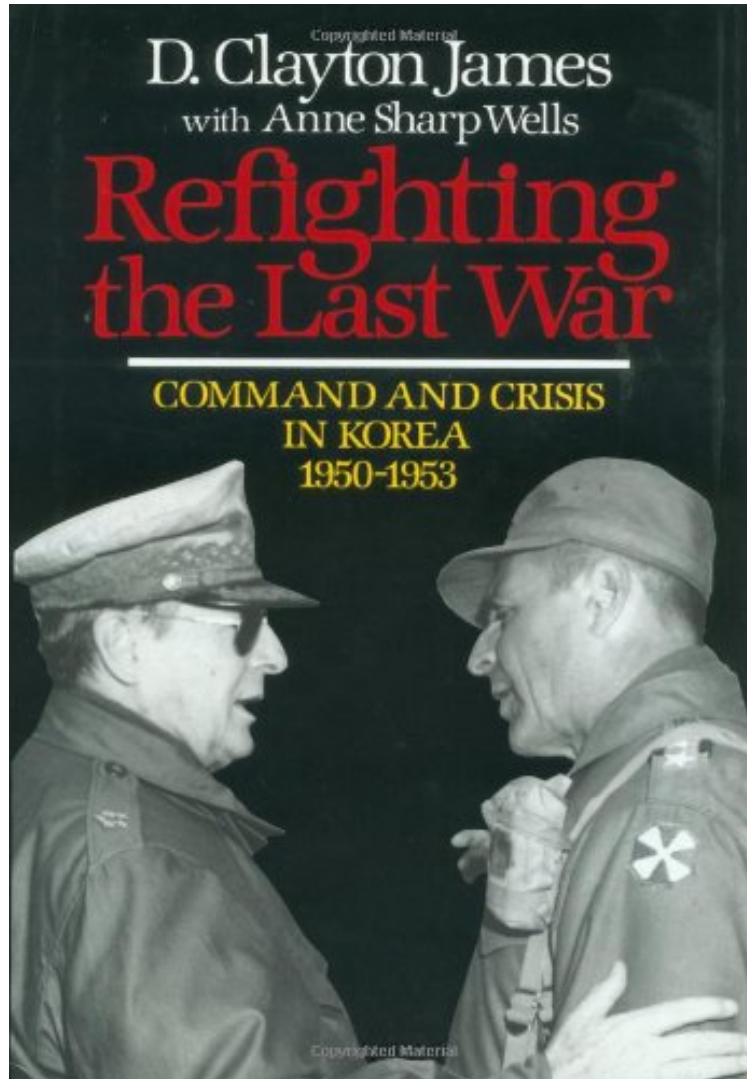


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Refighting the Last War: Command and Crisis in Korea 1950-1953

D. Clayton James

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#980005 in Books 1992-11-02Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.54 x 1.02 x 6.341, #File Name: 0029160014290 pages | File size: 46.Mb

D. Clayton James : Refighting the Last War: Command and Crisis in Korea 1950-1953 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Refighting the Last War: Command and Crisis in Korea 1950-1953:

0 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Book without JacketBy E. H. VeenstraI choose this rating because the book is okay, but I was expecting it to arrive complete with dust jacket which was missing, petty!2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Though Provoking, Insightful and Informative Work on Leadership in the Korean War!By Gilberto VillahermosaIn "Refighting the Last War" historian Clayton James, biographer of General Douglas MacArthur, reexamines the leadership of five key commanders in the Korean War:- President Harry

Truman;- General Douglas MacArthur;- General Matthew Ridgway;- General Mark W. Clark;- Admiral C. Turner Joy. The author then examines six critical issues confronting these leaders in the Korean War:- Sending American troops to fight in Korea;- MacArthur's Obsession with Inchon (vice a breakout from the Pusan Perimeter by General Walton Walker's Eighth Army);- the Liberation of North Korea;- the Chinese Intervention;- Victory vs. settling for an Armistice as the strategic goal;- fighting a Total or Limited War in Korea. One would expect James, sympathetic to Douglas MacArthur, to skew this book in the General's favor. To his credit, the author does not, although he does marshal impressive evidence to support the assertion that MacArthur was indeed carrying out Harry Truman and the Joint's Chief's objectives in Korea. James clearly shows that MacArthur was out of touch with the Joint Chief's and the situation in Korea and bears a heavy responsibility for the significant reverses suffered by the unprepared American forces there. It is clear that American forces were needed in South Korea if that country were to be rescued from North Korean domination. James, however, argues that a breakout from the Pusan Perimeter by Eighth Army could have achieved the same effects as the landing at Inchon without most of the drawbacks. He goes on to question the wisdom of the liberation of North Korea as a strategic objective and shows that most of the senior commanders in the war believed the American and United Nation forces should have pursued victory rather than an armistice to end the war. Finally, he discusses the inability of the United States in the 1950s to pursue a total war in Asia against Communist China and perhaps even the Soviet Union. True, this book suffers from some drawbacks, most importantly the lack of Chinese or Soviet sources to provide a greater strategic perspective on the war. Still, James has utilized the sources available admirably and produced a thought provoking, insightful, and informative work that will cause the reader to reconsider the issue of strategic leadership in the Korean War. 2 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Please, truth in advertising By Bryan Gibby "Refighting the Last War" is an interesting title, because it conjures up all the things that soldiers never want to be guilty of, looking back and doing things the "old way." I picked up this book expecting a lively criticism of how we may have missed the boat in the Cold War's first hot spot. My disappointment was compounded by my naivete. It is immediately apparent to the reader that the author is not attempting a fresh interpretation, but rather a recap of what has already been discussed, debated, and decided (sometimes erroneously as will be pointed out later). From the beginning it is clear that Korea is not fought like any war previous: the fact that the Sec State led us into conflict, the fact that Congress did not declare war, the President did not call up reserve forces or nationalize the economy for war mobilization, to say nothing of the air and naval restrictions imposed from the beginning of the conflict. Maybe MacArthur thought HE was refighting the last war, but that is a conclusion the reader will come to independent of the author's arguments. Most telling to me is that although the book is post-Soviet Union, there is no attempt to access archival material that many other authors have, and who have published some startling conclusions, that perhaps our interpretation of the war in the 50's was in fact correct. The author claims that there was a "gentleman's agreement" between the USSR, US, and PRC to limit the war, and that Stalin and Mao monitored US congressional hearings to take their cues on American strategy. No joke. Where is the evidence? No foot notes, no citations of archival material, no logical followup. The reader is expected to accept the statement and the implications that maybe the Reds weren't so awful after all. There are occasional flashes of interest, particularly in discussing the issues surrounding the less known personalities such as Admiral Joy, and Generals Van Fleet and Clark. But if anything, all these individuals chaffed at not being able to "refight the last war", that is to wage war as they saw fit. There are many statements and assertions that just don't do justice to the reader looking for a deeper story from Korea. There is a lot better scholarship and interpretation out there.

This book examines the Korean War, the paradigm of America's conflicts with communism. He argues that, like so many wars, the Korean War was fought broadly along the lines of the war before, World War II. It shows, however, that the consequences of this error were limited by the State Department. The book examines the roles, leadership, personalities and prejudices of five key commanders - President Harry S. Truman, General Douglas MacArthur, General Matthew B. Ridgway, General Mark W. Clark and Admiral C. Turner Joy. It goes on to look at the crucial issues that confronted them during the conflict: Truman's decision to commit US forces to war without congressional approval; MacArthur's pressure for an assault on Inchon; and the decision to open truce negotiations. The book analyzes the ground-level results and long-term consequences of command decisions, and explores the course the war might have taken had certain crucial decisions been taken differently.

From Publishers Weekly James (The Year of MacArthur), writing with freelancer Sharp, discusses the five principal American commanders of the Korean War (President Truman, Generals MacArthur, Matthew Ridgway and Mark Clark, and Admiral C. Turner Joy) and six crucial command decisions they made during the three-year conflict. According to this Virginia Military Institute history teacher, those decisions were: sending U.S. troops to fight in Korea; initiating the amphibious landing at Inchon; launching the counterattack in North Korea; settling for an armistice rather than total victory; and imposing tactical restrictions on ground, sea and air operations. What sets this book apart from other histories of the Korean War is the original thesis that both sides, without a word of formal agreement, set up an intricate system of limitations specifically designed to avert a general war. James argues that the kind of

devastating American conquest that was possible in the post-WW II era would have guaranteed the eruption of another and more terrible global war. This is a fresh look at the "strange and ugly war" which, according to James's cogent analysis, was unique in its self-imposed limitations. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal James (military history, Virginia Military Inst., and author of the three-volume *Years of MacArthur*, LJ 4/1/85) has reinterpreted America's first limited war. He analyzes the roles, leadership abilities, personalities, and prejudices of five American commanders--Truman, MacArthur, Ridgway, Mark Clark, and C. Turner Joy--and then looks at six crucial decisions confronting them. Among the topics discussed are Truman's decision to go to war without the consent of Congress; MacArthur's preoccupation with Inchon and the Yalu; and Joy's two-year stint negotiating with the Communists. James argues that the Korean War is the key to understanding American decision making in all subsequent conflicts and concludes that each new war is fought using the lessons of the last war. This is hardly a new or startling conclusion. Graduates of the Army War College and specialists in civilian-military relationships in a democracy will find this work of interest, but it is too specialized for the general reader. For large collections of military history.- Stanley Itkin, Hillside P.L., New Hyde Park, N.Y. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.