

## FLYING HIGH

A Review Essay by

JOHN D. SHERWOOD

### **The Icarus Syndrome: The Role of Air Power Theory in the Evolution and Fate of the U.S. Air Force**

by Carl H. Builder

New Brunswick: Transaction Press, 1998.

299 pp. \$44.95

[ISBN: 1-56000-141-0]

### **America's Pursuit of Precision Bombing, 1910-1945**

by Stephen L. McFarland

Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997.

312 pp. \$19.95

[ISBN: 1-56098-784-7]

### **Over Lord: General Pete Quesada and the Triumph of Tactical Air Power in World War II**

by Thomas Alexander Hughes

New York: Free Press, 1995.

380 pp. \$27.00

[ISBN: 0-02915-351-4]

### **To Hanoi and Back: The U.S. Air Force and North Vietnam, 1966-1973**

by Wayne Thompson

Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000.

360 pp. \$31.95

[ISBN: 1-56098-877-0]

### **Tail of the Storm**

by Alan Cockrell

Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995.

231 pp. \$24.95

[ISBN: 0-81730-772-9]

In 1990, the Air University commissioned Carl Builder, an analyst with RAND, to study the institutional Air Force culture. The president, Lieutenant General Charles Boyd, and the commandant of the Air Command and Staff College, Brigadier General Phillip Ford, believed that careerism amongst occupational specialties had eroded the military professionalism of their service. In particular, both officers decried stovepiping, by which specialists looked to their own profession rather than the operational

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U.S. Air Force History Office

chain of command and allowed their loyalties to follow their professional needs rather than the operational mission. Boyd and Ford surmised that careerism was linked to the confusion over the Air Force mission. Builder concurred, and *The Icarus Syndrome: The Role of Air Power Theory in the Evolution and Fate of the U.S. Air Force* resulted from his study.

Builder argues that the cause of careerist malaise is service abandonment of an overarching theory of airpower in the early 1960s. The Vietnam War shattered the myth inspired by Strategic Air Command (SAC) that bombers could win wars by striking deep at the heart of an enemy, and no follow-on theory has replaced that concept, leaving the Air Force without a clear sense of purpose. Builder's solution is for the service to develop a new theory of airpower that encompasses all Air Force missions and activities.

Historians and other realists may shudder at the notion that every service problem can be solved by theory alone. Still, Builder's analysis of airpower theory and its role in shaping service culture is sharp and insightful. His discussion of how the all-sufficiency of strategic bombing came to shape the service and then how the myth was dismantled also correlates with much of the new history being written.

*America's Pursuit of Precision Bombing, 1910-1945* by Stephen McFarland, for example, examines the thinking on precision bombing in World War II through the lens of the Norden bombsight and arrives at many of the same conclusions about strategic bombing as Builder. The

Norden Mark XV bombsight, first tested in 1931, promised to provide the Army Air Corps with a means of destroying precision targets such as canal locks, oil refineries, bridges, rail terminals, and power plants. Air Corps leaders grasped its significance immediately and made it the centerpiece of planning. The Norden, they reasoned, would allow them to realize the goals originally established by airpower theorists in the 1920s and 1930s. Even before the technology existed to prove their ideas, these theorists had long argued that the Army Air Corps could paralyze a nation's ability to wage war by striking industrial choke points. The marriage of the bombsight with the B-17 and B-29 pushed bombing technology forward and gave life to ideas percolating in the minds of airpower advocates since World War I.

World War II, however, would prove both the theorists and Air Corps leaders wrong. While tests of the bombsight in perfect weather and at low altitudes assured planners that American bombers could achieve a circle error probable of 150 feet, in war conditions only 32 percent of Eighth Air Force sight-aimed bombs fell within 1,000 feet of targets. Not only did the Norden not hit the proverbial pickle barrel, but it rarely hit the broad side of a barn, or for that matter the farm itself. General Curtis LeMay, commander of 305<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group, attempted to compensate by salvo bombing "on the leader." Following this technique bombers flew in tight formations at high altitude and salvoed their entire bomb load on the command of the lead bombardier. Salvo bombing improved performance marginally by allowing the best bombardiers to drop

Global Hawk  
unmanned aerial  
vehicle.



U.S. Navy/Jennifer A. Smith

the bombs of a formation and creating larger patterns over a target. Nevertheless, according to the postwar *Strategic Bombing Survey*, only a few bombs hit small targets while “the rest spilled over on adjacent plants, or built up areas, or in open fields.” In the case of the air campaign against Japan, high winds and poor weather rendered the Norden completely useless and the Army Air Forces turned instead to low level night fire bombing of cities—the antithesis of precision bombing.

Despite the utter failure of precision bombing in both Europe and Japan, the myth of strategic bombing as a war winning weapon endured. According to Builder, “the theory was accepted as validated beyond question because of the atomic bomb.” Airpower leaders held to the theory tenaciously because it helped justify their plans for a postwar Air Force independent of Army control. These bureaucratic imperatives caused airpower leaders to plan to fight the next war with weapons and techniques proven largely ineffective in World War II. Tragically, these same imperatives also convinced them to ignore the technique which saved American lives and helped this country prevail in World War II: close air support with tactical fighters.

No book does better at analyzing this forgotten aspect of airpower in World War II than *Over Lord: General Pete Quesada and the Triumph of Tactical Airpower in World War II* by Thomas Alexander Hughes. Through an examination of the generalship of Pete Quesada, the iconoclastic young officer who ran 9<sup>th</sup> Tactical Air Command, Hughes demonstrates how tactical airpower proved crucial in two tests of American arms,

Operation Cobra and the Battle of the Bulge. In Cobra, the breakout from Normandy, Quesada’s tactical fighters provided column cover for the armored breakthrough led by Major General J. Lawton Collins, beginning on July 26, 1944. With new radios capable of communicating directly with tanks, units of 405<sup>th</sup> and 368<sup>th</sup> Groups ranged over the battlefield, blazing away at German resistance points. During the last week of July, these fighter pilots claimed the destruction of 384 tanks, 2,200 motor transports, and a hundred artillery pieces. Impressed, General Omar Bradley stated that without airpower, “we would not have broken out of the beachhead like we did.”

Quesada’s fighters proved equally successful in a defensive role during the German Ardennes Offensive in December 1944. On Christmas, the biggest day of the campaign for airpower, fighters destroyed 500 vehicles and 50 gun positions and attacked 32 towns and strongpoints. Quesada’s major innovation during this battle was the use of napalm against troop concentrations hidden in the forest. Brigadier General Anthony McAuliffe, commanding general of the besieged town of Bastogne, wrote that napalm attacks in his area “were a tremendous boost to morale and were a vital contribution to the defense of Bastogne.”

The Air Force turned its back on Quesada and his achievements despite the obvious success of tactical airpower. The *Strategic Bombing Survey* instead appropriated his achievements to buttress the contributions of strategic

airpower. Furthermore, Tactical Air Command (TAC), established in 1948 as a coequal to Strategic Air Command, was downgraded and stripped of most of its planes just months after its inception. Quesada retired in 1951 at the age of 47, believing that his continued service as the TAC commander would make him “a conspirator in an ugly mistake.”

The Korean War did not change matters dramatically. Tactical airpower did not break the stalemate which began in March 1951 but, then again, neither did strategic bombing. Yet the bombing theory remained intact after Korea because, as Builder states, it “was the wrong war, in the wrong place, at the wrong time.” SAC advocates blamed political restrictions against striking targets in China and the Soviet Union for the failure of airpower in Korea. Airpower theory, they argued, could not be held accountable in conflicts of less than all-out war. It would take another brush fire war in huts and villages of a different Asian country to finally shatter strategic bombing theory and release the Air Force from the domination of Strategic Air Command.

*To Hanoi and Back: The U.S. Air Force and North Vietnam, 1966–1973* by Wayne Thompson focuses on the watershed event which led to the institutional crisis Builder addresses. In contrast to Builder, Thompson, an official Air Force historian, does not see the Vietnam War as a complete disaster for the Air Force. Rather, he considers the second half of the war (1968–72) a “rebirth or rebound” for American airpower. New technology and doctrines developed during this period helped “transform the Air Force from an almost total focus on potential nuclear warfare with the Soviet Union into a more varied and flexible force wielding increasingly more sophisticated conventional weapons.”

Thompson, in particular, focuses on the second revolution in precision bombing. The laser guided bomb (LGB) finally gave the Air Force the precision its theorists had dreamed about in the 1920s and 1930s. In the later stages of Vietnam, this capability was used to destroy bridges that had seemed invulnerable. However, it was not in interdiction that precision munitions had their most profound impact but in close air support. Over half of all LGBs used in 1972 were against targets in South Vietnam and Laos, especially artillery and tanks. More ironic, one of the most successful close air support weapons was not the fast-moving jet fighter but the slow, high-flying B-52. Using a greatly improved version of ground based radar technology

first pioneered by Quesada for blind fighter bombing in World War II, ground based controllers were able to direct B-52 strikes within yards of friendly positions.

Thompson is less sanguine about the impact of the B-52 in the only strategic bombing campaign of the war, the 1972 Linebacker II air raids, claiming that President Richard Nixon utilized these weapons primarily to terrorize the North Vietnamese government into submission. Nixon didn't care what the bombers hit so long as they struck targets near Hanoi and did not kill too many innocent civilians. While Thompson points out that the "buffs" scored some big hits in a raid against a surface-to-air missile storage facility at Phuc Yen, and that missile launches did decrease dramatically as the campaign progressed, poor weather made bomb damage assessment difficult. "The critical requirement of Linebacker II was to drop bombs near Hanoi." In this endeavor, the B-52s succeeded. Whether it was this terror campaign or other factors that led the North Vietnamese to agree on a peace settlement will not be known until greater access is granted to the North's archives. What remains clear is that the Air Force as an institution did not walk away from the war convinced that strategic bombing was the end all, be all. Rather, the high B-52 loss rate during Linebacker II convinced most leaders that the age of the big bomber was coming to a close. Thereafter the fighter and the LGB would emerge as the principle weapons of American airpower. Quesada was finally vindicated.

The ascendancy of the fighter did not progress without problems. Fighter pilots in many ways imitated their SAC forefathers in giving preference to their own for command positions and trying to instill a *fast mover* culture throughout the air service. In 1991, an underground paper

satirizing this situation entitled "TAC-umsizing the Air Force: The Emerging Vision of the Future" made the rounds in the Pentagon. It poked fun at the "emergence of the manly man" fighter jock and criticized General Merrill McPeak, Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force, for flavoring his reforms with too much machismo. The authors emphasized that one in five Air Force people would never see a flight line as a routine part of their work and that the service was more than a flying club. It was a variety of communities: ballistic and cruise missiles, space systems (surveillance, communications, and navigation), airlift, search and rescue, special operations, and support elements ranging from accounting to air traffic control. Some of these communities, far from being marginal to Air Force operations, were in fact in the forefront.

Builder reminds that even during Desert Storm, the war that theoretically demonstrated the efficacy of the fighter beyond a doubt, what allies envied in U.S. forces was not superb planes and precision guided munitions so much as intelligence, surveillance, communications, and navigation capabilities. More importantly, the model for the future is probably not the Gulf War, but regional conflicts such as Somalia and the Balkans. In these conflicts, and even more in disaster relief, the Air Force ability to provide infrastructure (transport, communications, surveillance, rescue, and humanitarian assistance) may be more significant than firepower.

A new book which captures the essence of the *other* Air Force is *Tail of the Storm* by Alan Cockrell, a memoir about the author's experiences flying C-141 Starlifters with the Mississippi Air National Guard. Cockrell started out as an A-7 fighter pilot but left the Air Force shortly

after Vietnam. "I had the right stuff or else I wouldn't have been there. What I didn't have was the right heart." Instead, he moved to Mississippi to pursue a civilian career as a petroleum geologist and continued to satisfy his love of flying as a transport pilot with the Air Guard.

Like Antoine de Saint Exupery and other pilot literati, Cockrell writes about flying C-141s with a panache unexpected from what fighter pilots sneeringly refer to as "a trash hauler." He does wonderfully at discussing the intricacies of flying a 334,000-pound beast across the ocean and back for weeks on end. He also probes into the unique culture of the heavy lift Air Force—defined more by patience, thoughtfulness, and stoicism during seemingly endless sojourns than bold seat-of-the-pants flying. Cockrell derived great satisfaction from flying a transoceanic mission in a C-141 despite in-flight mechanical or electrical failures, not to mention the dangers imposed by tiny cracks on the wings of these aging birds. He also took great pleasure in the company of those he flew with—officers and enlisted men making great sacrifices in their personal and work lives to serve their country.

For Builder, transport pilots like Cockrell as well as the people who manage space systems, surveillance systems, and a range of other support activities are becoming the heart and soul of the Air Force. The sharp end of the spear is still the fighter plane (although unmanned cruise missiles may soon supplant it), but the shaft is getting longer. To retain the personnel who comprise this shaft, Builder argues that a new mission is required which encompasses all the activities of the force, not simply fighters and bombers. He proposes "The mission of the Air Force is the military control of the aerospace continuum in support of the national interests." The Air Force, in turn, has accepted his suggestion with a few vocabulary changes: "The mission of the U.S. Air Force is to defend the United States and protect its interests through aerospace power."

Whether the new mission statement will solve the institutional problems first identified in the early 1990s remains to be seen. A quick review of the 2020 vision statement (<http://www.af.mil/vision/vision.pdf>) indicates that great strides are being taken by the senior leadership to build an organization that encompasses all facets of American aerospace power. The histories reviewed, however, suggest that it takes more than revised mission and vision statements to transform such

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on the Joint Doctrine Web site

[http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/jfq\\_pubs/index.htm](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/jfq_pubs/index.htm)

a vast and complex culture. It takes the dynamism of war, or multiple wars, to overthrow a dominant subculture in any service. The problem with the Air Force, even more than the other services, is a historical tendency to allow a single technology to shape the institutional culture and vice versa. Careerism is merely a symptom of the disease, not the cancer itself. To contain this proclivity, McFarland, Thompson, and Hughes suggest that policymakers must monitor the relationship between technology and culture. If it appears the traditions, ideas, and values of the service are too intertwined with a single technology, leaders should ensure that other technologies and their operators can flourish. This might be achieved by providing more financial resources to the other subcultures and their instruments or by creating incentives for personnel to enter and stay in those fields. What should be emphasized throughout any mandated change is that reform is not about breaking rice bowls but about seeing the future as unpredictable and ensuring that the Air Force can handle whatever challenge confronts it.

The histories reviewed, all somehow critical of the Air Force culture, together form an excellent reading list for learning how the service got to its present state. Each author does well at examining his chosen subject and associated issues. Any criticism pertains to style, not substance. Builder's book contains more direct quotations than prose and makes repetitive reading. McFarland gets so technical in his descriptions of bombsight technology that only a physics major can follow portions. By contrast, Hughes and Cockrell write more like novelists than historians, and their works are pure pleasure to read. Thompson's book, an official history sponsored by the Air Force, falls in the middle. It contains long technical descriptions of air campaigns which will challenge the lay reader, but it also rewards the patient with interesting anecdotal material on some of the highly unusual and iconoclastic officers who fought in America's longest war. Furthermore, the book stands as the definitive single-volume history of the air war in Vietnam.

Interestingly, only one work on this list, *Over Lord*, can be found on the Air Force Chief of Staff's reading list for officers. As the list gets revised, the Cockrell book should be considered for the basic level, the Thompson volume for the intermediate, and the Builder and McFarland volumes for the advanced. **JFQ**

## FROM THE SEA

A Book Review by

JEFFREY G. BARLOW

### The Sea War in Korea

by Malcolm W. Cagle and Frank A. Manson  
Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2000.  
555 pp. \$39.95  
[ISBN 1-55750-216-1]

Originally published in 1957, *The Sea War in Korea* has been out of print for years. Its authors, Malcolm ("Chris") Cagle and Frank Manson, were naval officers. Both were involved in writing *The War In Korea* in 1952, an account of the Navy during first six months of the conflict that was published as a companion volume to the popular Battle Report series dealing with World War II. Later they set out to detail the role of the Navy

focused primarily on the elements of higher-level military decisionmaking and can make dry reading. *The Sea War in Korea*, however, is leavened by the personal accounts of dozens who took part in the fighting, including senior naval officers. The liberal use of interviews brings greater readability to the subject, though one should not infer that the book is merely made up of popular recollections. Cagle and Manson were sent to Japan early in the war by Admiral Forrest Sherman, Chief of Naval Operations, to serve on the staff of Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy. While collecting material for the prospective Battle Report volume, they also flew out to the aircraft carriers of Task Force 77 and rode cruisers and destroyers on the gunline that provided fire support for U.N. forces on the ground. And Sherman's backing gave them access to official documents on the highest classification levels.

The volume opens with a substantial chapter that provides useful context.

*USS Buck, USS Wisconsin, and USS Saint Paul off Korea, February 1952.*



Naval Historical Center

during the entire three years of the Korean conflict.

This book is one of only two encompassing the totality of the naval effort in Korea, the other being the official history by James A. Field, Jr., *History of United States Naval Operations Korea*. Each has its own strengths. Field, a noted historian at Swarthmore College, produced a work solidly grounded in official sources. Yet like many government histories, it is

After detailing the diplomatic background to the conflict, the authors discuss the evolution of American military strategy in the early postwar period. They conclude with an examination of the military background of the war, which is the most dated part of the text since a great deal more is known today about the roles of the Soviet Union and China in North Korea's decision to invade, thanks largely to the diligent foreign archival research of historians such as Katherine Weathersby and Chen Jian.

Cagle and Manson devote a third of the book to the first six months of the war, up through the evacuation of Lieutenant General Edward Almond and

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X Corps from Hungnam. That allows space to narrate myriad combat and supporting naval activities during the final two and a half years. By contrast, Field's official history devotes three-quarters of its space to the first six months. *The Sea War in Korea* contains substantial accounts on the period 1951 to July 1953, including Seventh Fleet mine sweeping efforts, Task Force 77 interdiction bombing and close air support strikes, and Task Force 95 blockading and gunfire support operations. Although the authors rely on official documentation for the factual skeleton, their use of personal anecdotes brings the text to life. One example is an extensive analysis of the Navy-Air Force bombing attack on the Suiho dam complex in June 1952. They weave together the recollections of Lieutenant Commander Nello Andrews, Task Force 95 staff intelligence officer; Vice Admiral J.J. ("Jocko") Clark, Seventh Fleet Commander; Commander A.L. Dowling, the strike leader; and Commander Neil MacKinnon, VA-195 Commanding Officer to describe the attack from its inception to successful conclusion.

Veterans of this early Cold War conflict deserve to have their sacrifices recounted. Cagle and Manson performed a valuable service with this solid historical account of the Navy role in the Korean War, and it is good to have it in print again. **JFQ**

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## COLD WAR CRUSADE

A Book Review by  
NIGEL DE LEE

### The Korean War: The West Confronts Communism

by Michael P. Hickey  
Woodstock, New York: The Overlook Press, 2000.  
412 pp. \$35.00  
[ISBN: 1-58567-035-9]

Michael Hickey has exercised great diligence in collecting both facts and accounts concerning one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most understudied conflicts, calling on personal recollection as well as

untrained and poorly prepared soldiers and their untried leaders coped with the unexpected contingency of a full-scale attack by a well-trained, disciplined, and motivated enemy. The most telling illustration is found in chapter 4, "Bilko Goes to War." Sergeant Bilko was of course the shady leader of a platoon of laughable characters in the early television sitcom that lampooned postwar military life. Vernal though they were, Bilko and his men were cunning enough to maneuver out of serious trouble. Bilko serves as Hickey's metaphor for the mentality that plagued shabbily equipped and undermanned garrisons after World War II, a mindset that proved wholly unsuited for the Korea contingency. The description of the fate of this force in the opening battles is compelling and troubling.

As for America's allies, there is an extensive description of the Commonwealth Division, not surprising given that



Chinese officials at Panmunjom, 1952.

original research. And though *The Korean War: The West Confronts Communism* has as many flaws as strengths, it contains much useful information and addresses crucial issues of both historical and current importance.

The author is best at describing battles and engagements on the tactical level. The most striking is his account of the psychopathology of military failure—the earliest days of the Korean War when

the author is a veteran of the British force that fought in the theater. There are already a number of good histories on such units, so it is curious that the author does not alert the reader to works produced by the Army Historical Branch, nor does he reference important sources in archives such as the Royal Artillery Institution in Woolwich.

Coverage of the forces of other participating nations suffer from neglect compared to the British and Commonwealth contingents. After the opening battles, there is some description of the U.S. Army and Marine Corps, particularly more spectacular or tragic events. There is far less information about South

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Korean forces, other allied contingents, or the North Korean army.

Still other chapters deal with the higher levels of war. They cover political activities in the United Nations. Most useful is the discussion of the divergences of opinion concerning the nature of the Korean conflict and policy towards the People's Republic of China that arose among the United States, Great Britain, France, and other allied governments.

On the operational level, chapter 3, "Assault and Battery," describes some of the questions that arose in the early stages of what quickly became a coalition war. There is a worthwhile consideration of the issues that had to be resolved in managing U.N. combat operations, though the author's claim that Korea was "the baptism of fire for the young United Nations organization and the pattern, however flawed, for its subsequent coalition wars and peacekeeping operations" is highly debatable. Korea was the only real U.N. war. Nor does there seem to be much resemblance to the consensual and more traditional of its peacekeeping operations since.

The policy fractures within the U.S. administration, where the separation of powers seemed to guarantee fragmentation of action, are also examined. Much is made of the well known conflicts between Washington and General Douglas MacArthur and his court in the Far East. Familiar arguments concerning the general's infamous behavior. MacArthur is compared to Caesar, although his state of mind at times seemed closer to Coriolanus.

The author ventures into less familiar territory in describing the high political and civil-military aspects of the war on the communist side. This account omits the Chinese command structure,

particularly in ignoring the reasons why Peng Te-huai eventually succeeded Lin Piao as commander of the People's Volunteers. These events have been studied and explained clearly by a number of scholars, amongst them Alexander George, whose work *The Chinese Communist Army in Action, the Korean War and Its Aftermath* is cited in the text. John Gittings also dealt with these matters in *The Role of the Chinese Army*; but Hickey apparently believes Gittings has a Marxist bent, so perhaps doubts his credibility. He could have consulted the works of William Whitson, on the other hand, which provide chapter and verse on Chinese command relationships.

Some of the author's comments are also difficult to reconcile. For example, the United States is commended for its readiness to expend lives and resources in defense of democratic principles, but liberal democracy is also blamed for a lack of prudent preparation before the outbreak of war and for subverting discipline during its course. Nor does the author fully reconcile his views on the U.S. relationship with a troubled and autocratic South Korean regime.

In the final analysis, Hickey prompts but does not answer the questions raised when democracies and near-democracies are unexpectedly thrown together in partnership, fighting for a good cause but with imperfect instruments. That the United States did not resolve the dilemma was reinforced by its experiences in Vietnam. Whether the United States or the United Nations is any better prepared to deal with such issues today is debatable.

JFQ

## BROTHERS IN ARMS

A Book Review by

JIYUL KIM

### The Korean War: Volume One

by The Korean Institute of Military History  
Lincoln, Nebraska: University of  
Nebraska Press, 2000.  
930 pp. \$29.95  
[ISBN:0-8032-7794-6]

A noticeable gap in Korean War studies is the near absence of a Korean perspective, either north or south, available in English. The North Korean story is the most obscure. *The Origins of the Korean War*, by Bruce Cummings, uses extensive Korean sources to provide insight on the outbreak of the conflict. Although one may not subscribe to his larger thesis on American culpability, Cummings's work remains the most comprehensive account of what happened between August 15, 1945 and June 25, 1950. Remarkably, the South Korean role in the war is also largely unknown to many Westerners. As Allan Millett wrote in the introduction to *The Korean War: Volume One*, "when the army of the Republic of Korea enters the story, it is almost always as a South Korean division fleeing to the rear in panic."

Indigenous accounts of the Korean War by Koreans are available. There has been a long-term, large-scale effort by the Ministry of National Defense to collect oral histories and documents. These have resulted in extensive studies. From the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, South Korea issued a monumental official history of twenty-two volumes. It remains the most detailed tactical and operational history of the war, with accounts accompanied by a profusion of operational maps of every engagement. It is unfortunate that there are no plans to translate these volumes into English as even the Korean version remains difficult to find.

New academic studies incorporate evidence from Moscow and Beijing that was unknown until the 1990s. These works include the acclaimed two-volume 1996 work by Myung-lim Park, *Hanguk j njaeng' I palbalkwa giwon (Origins and Development of the Korean War)*. Unlike Cummings, Park takes much of the traditional evidence along with the new

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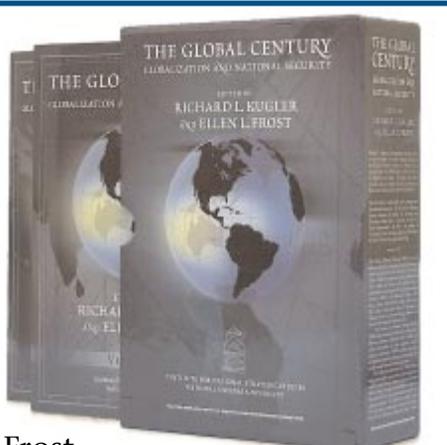
## The Global Century

### Globalization and National Security

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archival material and concludes that socialism was not an inevitable force in the South which led to the Korean War when it was obstructed by the U.S. military government. Park's work will soon appear in an English language translation.

Over the years, numerous Koreans have published recollections. Only General Sun Yup Paik's *From Pusan to Panmunjom*, a memoir published in 1992, has appeared in English. Recently, retired Brigadier General Lee Chi-op, a member of the first group of officers commissioned into the newly formed ROK army in 1946 and a key figure in the first days of the war, published his candid account, *Call Me "Speedy Lee": Memoirs of a Korean War Soldier*, which provides first-hand details on the formation of the Korean army and the war. Millett has begun to lend his authority to this endeavor with "The Forgotten Army in the Misunderstood War: The *Hanguk Gun* in the Korean War, 1946–53," available in *The Korean War 1950–53: A 50 Year Retrospective*, edited by Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey. Millett is also working on a history of the war.

Publication of *The Korean War: Volume One*, the first of a three-volume official history written by the former Korea Institute of Military History, now known as the Institute for Military History Compilation, is the first work in English that comprehensively treats the entire war from a Korean perspective. Millett joined the project early on, lending his experienced eye. This series is an exact offset of the institute's translation of the original Korean language three-volume study published from 1995 to 1997. Save for Millett's introduction, the University of Nebraska version is essentially a duplicate.

*The Korean War: Volume One* covers the origins of the war and the details of operations until the intervention of the Chinese in October–November 1950. The background begins in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when the peninsula became the pawn in a power struggle between Japan, China, and Russia. Japan intrigued to dominate the country and the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars were both fought with the annexation of Korea in mind. The book moves on to the Japanese defeat in World War II and the subsequent squabble over the occupation and administration of the peninsula by the United States and the Soviet Union that led to permanent division. The linear portrayal of historical events for nearly a hundred years and the centrality of Japan is a notable feature,



South Koreans  
in Pohang,  
October 1950.

though polemical language like the "treacherous Japanese colonial regime" detracts from objectivity. Ironically this work glosses over the crucial and decisive role played by Koreans who had served in the Japanese military in its discussion of the beginnings of the ROK military. Although it implies continuity and therefore historical legitimacy from armed anti-Japanese fighters in Manchuria to the ROK army, the truth is that most of those fighters went North, whereas the South Korean officer corps is, in part, the product of Japanese training.

It is apparent that these and other issues remain sensitive despite the depoliticization of the 1990s. Although the existence of prewar right and left wing factions is discussed, the assassination of the leading leftist leader, Kim Ku, which assured dominance of domestic politics by Syngman Rhee, is not mentioned, while similar conflict and purging in the North (of Cho Man Sik) is included. Accounts rarely mention the depth of problems South Korean forces faced on the battlefield, and there is a distinct bias toward highlighting the good and ignoring the bad, leaving the impression that anything that might challenge the legitimacy of the ROK military, due to poor performance or behavior (for example the alleged mass execution of so-called leftists and communist sympathizers as the army marched north), has been either softened or left out. One of the most significant events before the war was the purge in 1949–50

after a series of leftist uprisings racked the country. These events remain controversial because, as is wont to happen in purges, it was likely used to remove political opponents who may have been innocent. It is also probable that such a large purge on the eve of the war affected readiness and morale.

Yet this study does demonstrate, with the help of newly accessible Soviet and Chinese documents, the premeditation that went into Kim Il-sung's invasion of the South. This area has been covered in several other English works in far greater detail (for example, the 1993 *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao and the Korean War*, by Sergei N. Goncharov, John W. Lewis, and Xue Litai, and William W. Stueck's 1995 *The Korean War: An International History*).

This study undertakes diplomatic, strategic, operational, and tactical analyses of the war in addition to details of the tactical action. For the most part, they are adequate, but operational examination of the opening days of the war falls short. For example, there is no detailed discussion of the collapse of 7<sup>th</sup> Division along the Oijongbu corridor that exposed the flanks of 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Divisions, thus forcing their premature retreat.

The true operational significance of 6<sup>th</sup> Division actions on the Ch'unch'on front is also inadequately examined. This a mystery. The division's operations were heroic, and one can make a strong

case that by spoiling the North Korean enveloping movement towards Seoul, the defensive success there bought time for the disintegrating front to consolidate, and the subsequent delaying actions allowed the entry of U.S. forces. It was possibly the most important success of ROK forces in the opening days of the war.

This volume falls short on scholarship. Most obvious is inadequate documentation. There is no discussion of the location of sources cited nor their relative value. The titles of Korean language sources are translated, giving the erroneous impression they were published in English. The lack of an index makes it difficult to conduct topical searches. Maps are hard to read and sometimes confusing, and the few illustrations are largely unhelpful. The text itself, however, is surprisingly well written, which makes this an important work for the serious student, complementing American accounts with stories of the bravery and resourcefulness of Korean soldiers and leaders.

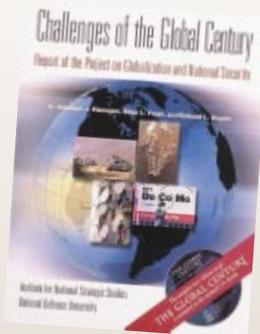
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## COVERT ACTION IN KOREA

A Book Review by

RICHARD W. STEWART

### In the Devil's Shadow: UN Special Operations During the Korean War

by Michael E. Haas

Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2000.

243 pp. \$29.95

[ISBN 1-55750-344-3]

There are always problems in writing anything substantive about covert action. *In the Devil's Shadow: UN Special Operations During the Korean War* by Michael Haas tries to offer a comprehensive study of a still secret campaign and comes as close as the evidence probably permits. The cloak of secrecy, real or imagined, clouds what happened, why it happened, when it happened, and who made it happen. This cloak can also prevent even a careful historian from filtering out dubious tales of derring-do. The problem is more pronounced in writing about Korea because there was no organization for special operations within the Armed Forces in 1950. What structure existed in 1945 was disbanded immediately after World War II, and the institutional memory was soon gone. Without an established organization, much of the record was either simply not kept or subsequently lost, as often happens when ad hoc bodies disappear.

That the author succeeds at all is a testimony to his persistence in getting the most out of available evidence. He has put together a lively and readable book that helps fill one of the largest voids in the history of the Korean War. Haas attempts to tell each aspect of the story of special operations conducted by the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Where the account is found wanting, it is often from lack of data rather than lack of effort or failure in interpretation.

As Haas warns at the outset, "Attempting to capture the history of United Nations special operations during the Korean War is an exercise in humility, in some respects the historian's worst nightmare." In trying to impose some order on a "kaleidoscope

of uncoordinated activity," he thus forewarns the reader to be prepared for a story which includes many unknowns and unknowables. What was the fate of the hundreds of brave Korean agents parachuted into the North, never to be heard from again? (This same practice was repeated with blind drops of agents into North Vietnam in the 1960s.) What was the interplay between South Korean and U.S. participants? Why did the fledgling CIA wage such a bitter struggle with the equally parochial special operations structure of Far East Command (FECOM) at the cost of its entire wartime effort? Haas does his best to address such questions.

*In the Devil's Shadow* should be read if for no other reason than for its account of the bureaucratic backbiting—and its operational consequences. FECOM and CIA squabbled over resources, priorities, control, and personnel as agents died and missions were aborted. Was it just bureaucratic turf-fighting of the worst kind or would a unified structure really have helped prosecute the secret war? If there is a central lesson in covert action, it is that muddled organizations and infighting lead to failure. And failure generally means loss of life.

As for the actual missions conducted by the U.N. forces, little of value was accomplished. Agent operations were unmitigated disasters—all infiltrators were captured by the North or seemingly were double agents to begin with. Even comparatively successful raids launched from islands off North Korea by the U.N. Partisan Infantry, Korea, were little more than operational pinpricks along the coast. Their impact was small, but their human cost to the North Korean refugees who made up the bulk of their numbers was great. Their tragic fate cannot be retold too often. Exiled from their own country and reduced to small bands of off-shore raiders, they were finally absorbed into an unfriendly South Korean military establishment.

Haas takes due care in recounting an often murky aspect of the Korean War. Given the challenge, *In the Devil's Shadow* is a careful and straightforward account that includes memorable acts of personal heroism and disgraceful scenes of bureaucratic warfare. Both are stories that need to be told.

JFQ

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