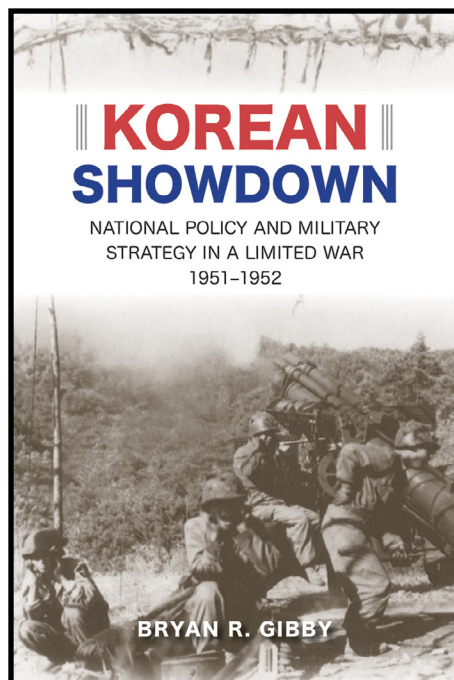


The French decision to ask U.S. forces to leave by mid-1967 was as much about the American imposition on the French people as it was about fundamental political differences between the two nations. As the authors note, Charles de Gaulle believed “that the U.S. would not sacrifice American cities to save French cities” (489). He was unhappy with President John F. Kennedy’s handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis, personally disliked President Lyndon B. Johnson and loathed his movement into Vietnam, and refused to accept America’s insistence that France not possess a nuclear arsenal to defend itself. When de Gaulle asked America to leave, the U.S. military had already stationed 70,000 soldiers and their families in France. Additionally, the military stored nearly one million tons of supplies and equipment throughout the nation. The removal of personnel and equipment was “the largest peacetime exercise of transportation by land, sea, and air the U.S. military had ever undertaken” (493). Yet the U.S. military did not diminish its mission in Europe when its forces left France. Understanding the complexity of U.S. commitments to Western Europe throughout the first decades of the Cold War necessitates understanding how and why the military deployed to France and why it ultimately left.

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KOREAN SHOWDOWN: NATIONAL POLICY AND MILITARY STRATEGY IN A LIMITED WAR, 1951–1952

BY BRYAN R. GIBBY

University of Alabama Press, 2021
Pp. xx, 388. \$54.95

REVIEW BY TOM HANSON

Korean Showdown sheds welcome light on a little-understood aspect of the United States’ involvement in the Korean War. Specifically, author Bryan Gibby argues that American military policy underwent a radical evolution from July 1951 to December 1952 (6–7). After the humiliation of the 1950 summer retreats from Osan to Pusan, the euphoria following the Incheon landing, and the sudden collapse of the North Korean state that fall, the reality of warfare against Communist China led the officials of President Harry S. Truman’s administration to slowly accept that a traditional military triumph could no longer be obtained at an acceptable cost. A general apprehension regarding escalation drove this change, as there was universal agreement set in Washington, D.C., that the Chinese effort in Korea was orchestrated in Moscow by Soviet dictator Josef Stalin. As Gibby describes it, Truman administration officials feared that escalating the conflict horizontally into China or vertically through the introduction of atomic weapons might trigger a Soviet offensive into Western

Europe (11); thus, traditional metrics of national strategy no longer applied. This thought evolution took some time; it was not until late 1952 that a general consensus both in Washington, D.C., and the Far East accepted that “the generally unimpeded use of [all] conventional military weaponry in all dimensions” would be counterproductive (282). By then, with an impending change of presidential administrations, the Truman administration believed that further ground and air operations of the type employed thus far “were doomed to fail by virtue of the [previously adopted] American policy and strategy of limited war settled by negotiation” (287).

Korean Showdown is neither the latest single-volume treatment of the war in its totality nor a narrative of the “stalemate” phase. Rather, it is a detailed study of the interplay between politics (domestic as well as international) and military operations in classic Clausewitzian fashion. To illustrate this, Gibby uses the five principal agenda items first laid out by Lt. Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway to induce the Communists to negotiate a settlement in the summer of 1951. These issues were (1) an agreed-upon agenda for talks, (2) agreement on the necessity to establish a demilitarized zone to separate the two Korean states, (3) negotiation of both a quick cease-fire and a durable armistice agreement, (4) the full exchange of prisoners by each side, and (5) an agreement to support an international conference to craft a lasting settlement of the Korean problem (48). Acceptance of the need for an armistice symbolized a major change in the strategic outlook of American leaders. However, it was accompanied by a desire to wring every possible military benefit from the conflict.

Surprisingly, the repatriation of prisoners became the greatest obstacle to concluding an early armistice, and it was the Americans who raised it. The issue arose as a result of the Truman administration’s reversal of its support for the involuntary repatriation of prisoners after World War II. Badly shaken by accusations in the media and in Congress for forcibly repatriating anti-Communist Russians and Poles, Truman now “felt strongly [that] the United States has a moral obligation not to return POWs [prisoners of war] [to North Korea and China] who faced an uncertain future in the home territories” (154). Unfortunately for the United Nations Command (UNC) negotiators in Korea, definitive guidance came only in February 1952. Before that, Truman had sought to

maintain a dynamic and flexible strategy in Korea regarding all of the agenda items, whose downstream effects distracted the American armistice negotiators who led the UNC negotiation team at Panmunjom:

[We] never knew when a new directive would emanate from Washington to alter our basic objective of obtaining an honorable and stable armistice agreement. . . . It seemed to us that the United States Government did not know exactly what its political objectives in Korea were or should be. As a result, the United Nations Command delegation was constantly looking over its shoulder, fearing a new directive from afar which would require action inconsistent with that currently being taken (130).

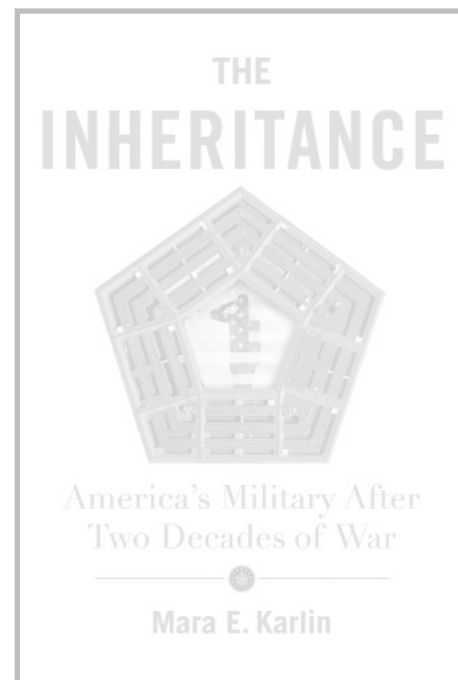
Gibby notes that the rigid stance against forcible repatriation protracted the armistice negotiations, which could have ended the war as early as May 1952. Though not explicit in Gibby's narrative, this issue at this point marked a paradigm shift in Truman's understanding of the utility of military force. Disillusioned that he could not bring the war to a satisfying military conclusion in a repeat of 1945, Truman nevertheless felt the Communists "needed to pay a military and political penalty" for their recalcitrance and duplicity (155). Allowing enemy prisoners to vote with their feet helped impose that penalty.

Gibby also provides a perceptive analysis of the various ground and air strategies the UNC used to compel the Communists to agree to an armistice. He draws parallels between the Allies' early experiences with the Combined Bomber Offensive during World War II and the evolution of the Far East Air Force's Operation STRANGLE and the Railway Interdiction Program. Although the latter two produced spectacular destruction across North Korea, they could not by themselves force the Communists to a cease-fire. Gibby argues that the air campaign's success provided the necessary impetus for Mao and Marshal Peng Dehuai to institute a series of reforms to posture the Chinese army in Korea for attritional war. As a result, cadres began inculcating a doctrine of *lingqiao niupitang* ("eating sticky candy bit by bit") to the members of the *Chinese People's Volunteer Forces*. In place of maneuver to surround and isolate UNC formations, "[t]actical objectives were redefined to stress the capture and use of terrain and prepared positions to

inflict maximum casualties on the enemy over battles of annihilation of large units" (102–3). Together with more capable air forces and better-trained and equipped artillery, air defense, engineering, and logistics systems, "Chinese flexibility in their various operational approaches to counter American firepower and maneuver formed the basis for prolonged and successful negotiations"—much to the dismay of the UNC and U.S. leadership (176).

A variety of readers will find much to value in Gibby's work. The easy flow of the narrative belies the exhaustive primary and secondary sources underlying it. In fact, Gibby's coverage here (225–41, among others) of the success of the U.S. advisory effort with the South Korean army sets the stage for a comparative study of less successful results in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. The book should be carefully read by policymakers and their advisors, civilian and military, as well as the wider academic community. Gibby's analysis of the interdependence of battlefield and political developments reinforces the curricula of the various senior service colleges and the services' flag officer education programs. Army officers especially will find instructive Gibby's account of Generals James Van Fleet's and Mark Clark's attempts to convince President-elect Dwight D. Eisenhower to let them fight the war they wanted to fight instead of the one they had to end. Gibby's discussion of the many flaws of Clark's planned campaign for 1953, Operation Plan 8–52, offers a textbook case of military officers failing to provide not just "best" but proper professional recommendations to elected officials. Just as important, the author's detailed coverage of the Chinese Communists' ability to mitigate or nullify American technological superiority should give pause to policymakers favoring a more confrontational policy in the South China Sea.

Dr. Tom Hanson, a retired Army colonel, earned his PhD in history in 2006 and has taught on the faculties of the U.S. Military Academy, George Mason University, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, the U.S. Army Command and General Staff School, and the U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies.



THE INHERITANCE: AMERICA'S MILITARY AFTER TWO DECADES OF WAR

BY MARA E. KARLIN

Brookings Institution Press, 2022
Pp. xvi, 304. \$37

REVIEW BY MICHAEL BONURA

Mara E. Karlin's *The Inheritance: America's Military After Two Decades of War* seeks to uncover the legacies of the post-11 September 2001 wars on the U.S. military and then to make some recommendations on how to address the negative aspects of those legacies. Karlin conducted nearly one hundred interviews with generals and admirals and a few civilian senior leaders in the Department of Defense to inform her analysis of those legacies. She also heavily leveraged her career as a civilian senior leader serving five secretaries of defense and is currently serving as an assistant secretary of defense. This is not a traditional historical analysis but an assessment of the war on terror on the national security establishment, including the military. It is focused on understanding how that establishment prosecuted the war and what its legacy on that establishment is to the present. This analysis of the legacies of the longest war in American military history would be important in its own right, but the fact that neither the Department of Defense, the Joint Staff, or any of the