

Cold War Crucible: The Korean Conflict and the Postwar World

Hajimu Masuda

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Hajimu Masuda : Cold War Crucible: The Korean Conflict and the Postwar World before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Cold War Crucible: The Korean Conflict and the Postwar World:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Highly recommend for those who are concerning the everydayness of the Cold WarBy Fang-Tze HsuIt's truly a wok firmly underpinned with the intensive archival research. Sharing the ground-up approach to the study of the subject of the Cold War, Masuda transforms the general Cold War geopolitics by probing not only the societies of pivotal players of the Korean War such as Korea, U.S., and PRC, but also the peripheral actors such as Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Britain. By avoiding depicting the social atmosphere from a top-down perspective, a series of seemingly unrelated incidents that took place within bureaucratic systems and everyday settings are revealed to demonstrate several similar patterns of sentimental forces that influenced political

decisions and thus the actual existence of the Cold War. Masuda analyzed how the Cold War is “a gigantic social construction of an imagined reality” reconfigured as desired by a collective creativity expressed in the form of a political action, which mitigated the accelerating social conflicts and war anxieties inherited from World War II (Masuda 286). Masuda anchors the investigation around the Korean War and unfolds a ground-up constructedness of the Cold War world, which is contributed to by vivid wartime memory and a corresponding urge for stabilization. What Cold War Crucible reminds us of is the necessity of changing the way of asking questions about the Cold War, in order to find the intimate connections between “reality” and its historical construction. This may be taken as a plea for a more nuanced evaluation of the creation of the Cold War world and its meaning on a daily basis – a plea for, on one side, a serious examination of those indigenous forces that were spreading rumors with their context-specific personal agendas; on the other side, further research into what assembled a form of postwar governmentality that favored a conservative tendency in the materialization of the Cold War world. Overall, it opens up a new terrain to reconsider the everydayness of the Cold War and lights up those experiences ignored by previous discussions' about the Cold War.² of 2 people found the following review helpful. This book is so beautifully written that when I finished reading it By Customer This book is so beautifully written that when I finished reading it, I felt sad as if coming to the end of a good novel. Based on an impressively broad range of thorough research, this is an academic page-turner that brings the social history of the Cold War vividly to life. It is the cutting edge stuff of the Cold War history field and worth reading for both the elegance in its style and rigor of its argument. It serves well as reading material for undergraduate courses as well. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A great read for both academics and history lovers. By white elephant Read this. You won't regret it. This is a cutting-edge work in international history and it is such an interesting, fun read. It breaks so many conventional boundaries, including those of social and diplomatic histories, propaganda and public sentiment, democratic and authoritarian regimes, WWII and the cold war. On the one hand, it makes me wonder why on earth historians had neglected the link between social and domestic struggle and the cold war before, but on the other, the width of research in this book set a totally new standard, posing a challenge to other historians to compete.

What was the Cold War? A simple definition might be: a 20th century international confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States, which involved, first, Europe, and then Asia, Africa, and Latin America, eventually dividing the world into two camps. The key players in this global conflict are generally identified as a number of high-ranking policymakers, including Harry S. Truman, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin. We know this story. However, the full story is not so simple. It is time to change our ways of thinking about the Cold War. Masuda Hajimu's Cold War Crucible is an inquiry into this peculiar nature of the Cold War. It examines not only centers of policymaking, but seeming aftereffects of Cold War politics during the Korean War: Suppression of counterrevolutionaries in China, the White Terror in Taiwan, the Red Purge in Japan, and McCarthyism in the United States. Such purges were not merely end results of the Cold War, Masuda argues, but forces that brought the Cold War into being, as ordinary people throughout the world strove to silence disagreements and restore social order in the chaotic post-WWII era under the mantle of an imagined global confrontation. Revealing social functions and popular participation, Cold War Crucible highlights ordinary people's roles in making and maintaining the "reality" of the Cold War, raising the question of what the Cold War really was.

Masuda Hajimu has written a refreshing, provocative and extremely important book that has contributed not only to our understanding of the Korean War, not even just the Cold War, but the past as a subject of scholarly enquiry. By pushing beyond conventional boundaries, and integrating grass root narratives from many different countries, Masuda has made a big splash in crowded waters, and I congratulate him on this impressive feat. (Sergey Radchenko, H-Diplo Roundtable) This is a wonderful book that will certainly be widely quoted and incorporated into a large set of literatures on the Cold War. It manages to do all the things that truly successful academic works must: be enough of its time to be understood and appreciated, be enough ahead of scholarly trends to be far reaching and edgy, be well written and accessible, be based on solid research that will stand the test of time, and perhaps most importantly be on a topic that is large enough and relevant enough that different sub-audiences of scholars will care to read it. In all these respects, Masuda Hajimu hits one right out of the park. [...]. No other scholar would have even attempted such a wide ranging monograph backed up with such a range of primary sources. The attention that the book will undoubtedly receive is entirely merited, and its arguments will set the standard for quite sometime to come. (Julia C. Strauss, H-Diplo Roundtable) By far the best book to appear on this war--or both of these wars--in many years. [...]. I have not read another book that so effectively and effortlessly moves from the global to the local and back again. [...]. This book combines a sophisticated method of constructed and imagined "realities" --not with a postmodern sensibility that there are no truths, but with an eagle eye for the best scholarship and documentation on the Korean War, and really on the entire decade after the second world war ended. (Bruce Cumings, s in American History) Cold War Crucible is a tour de force of transnational research and analysis that manages to restore, in all its difficult complexity, the significance of ordinary human agency in some of the United States' and the world's grimmest and most politically

punishing historical events. (Kevin Y. Kim, *The Journal of American History*) In this impressively researched and elegantly written comparative work, Masuda describes the emergence of the Korean War--which helped construct Cold War political practice--not as an accepted political fact but as a process of local translation, as governments, politicians, activists, and ordinary people negotiated the volatile social dynamics of postwar and postcolonial societies. [...]. Masuda positions his work against elite-driven and nation-based political histories of the Cold War and extends his political history into the realm of social and cultural history, a welcome approach that de-emphasizes US and Soviet concerns and reconnects the period to longer histories of colonialism and decolonization in East Asia. (Jessie Kindig, *American Quarterly*) *Cold War Crucible* is extraordinarily well researched, drawing on an impressive array of archival materials in many languages. Masuda skillfully weaves into his narrative diplomatic and government records as well as the letters of ordinary citizens addressed to US presidents and local Chinese Communist Party offices. Masuda conducted research in dozens of archives in multiple countries, including the United States, Japan, the People's Republic of China, the United Kingdom, India, Singapore, Taiwan, and elsewhere. This is a most impressive achievement. [...]. *Cold War Crucible* is a refreshingly innovative and thought-provoking study of a period about which so much has already been written. (James F. Person, *The Journal of Asian Studies*)

The end of World War II did not mean the arrival of peace. The major powers faced social upheaval at home, while anticolonial wars erupted around the world. American-Soviet relations grew chilly, but the meaning of the rivalry remained disputable. *Cold War Crucible* reveals the Korean War as the catalyst for a new postwar order. The conflict led people to believe in the Cold War as a dangerous reality, a belief that would define the fears of two generations. In the international arena, North Korea's aggression was widely interpreted as the beginning of World War III. At the domestic level, the conflict generated a wartime logic that created dividing lines between "us" and "them," precipitating waves of social purges to stifle dissent. The United States allowed McCarthyism to take root; Britain launched anti-labor initiatives; Japan conducted its Red Purge; and China cracked down on counterrevolutionaries. These attempts to restore domestic tranquility were not a product of the Cold War, Masuda Hajimu shows, but driving forces in creating a mindset for it. Alarmed by the idea of enemies from within and faced with the notion of a bipolar conflict that could quickly go from chilly to nuclear, ordinary people and policymakers created a fantasy of a Cold War world in which global and domestic order was paramount. In discovering how policymaking and popular opinion combined to establish and propagate the new postwar reality, *Cold War Crucible* offers a history that reorients our understanding of what the Cold War really was.

About the Author Masuda Hajimu is Assistant Professor of History at the National University of Singapore.