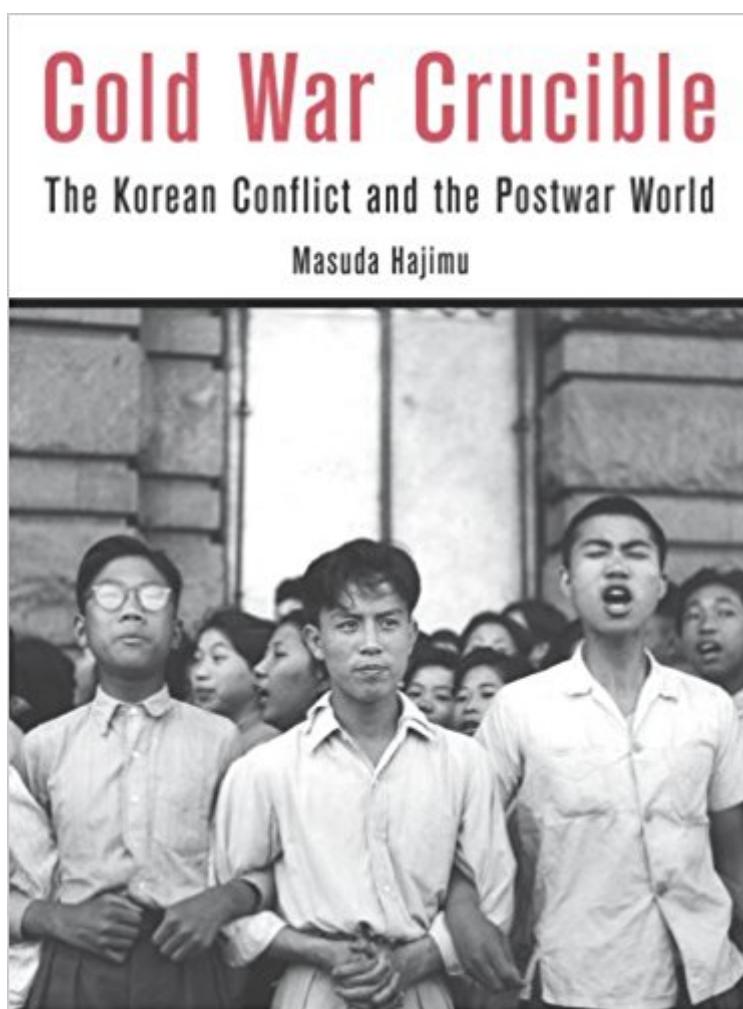


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# Cold War Crucible: The Korean Conflict And The Postwar World



## **Synopsis**

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.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Masuda has written an innovative, ambitious, and immensely valuable study. [...]. There is no doubt of Masuda's overall achievement. This is a superb work that bridges international and social

history, underpinned by highly impressive research, to make arguments of real importance for our understanding of the Cold War. --Rana Mitter, author of *Forgotten Ally: China's World War II, 1937-1945* An original and important book, which challenges established truths and significantly adds to our understanding of the early Cold War. Masuda's work is a useful corrective to histories of the Korean War that focus mainly on U.S. perspectives. Cold War history at its best! (Odd Arne Westad, author of *Restless Empire: China and the World since 1750*) Cold War Crucible builds on both the traditional approach to diplomatic history and the so-called cultural turn. Masuda unearths the roots of social change at the local level in several different societies to show how change impacted reactions to larger events and, in turn, influenced and was influenced by national political elites. An impressive book. (William Stueck, author of *Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History*) An original and important book, which challenges established truths and significantly adds to our understanding of the early Cold War. Masuda's work is a useful corrective to histories of the Korean War that focus mainly on U.S. perspectives. Cold War history at its best! (Odd Arne Westad, author of *Restless Empire: China and the World since 1750*) Cold War Crucible builds on both the traditional approach to diplomatic history and the so-called "cultural turn." Masuda unearths the roots of social change at the local level in several different societies to show how change impacted reactions to larger events and, in turn, influenced and was influenced by national political elites. An impressive book. (William Stueck, author of *Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History*) There is no doubt of Masuda's overall achievement. This is a superb work that bridges international and social history, underpinned by highly impressive research, to make arguments of real importance for our understanding of the Cold War. (Rana Mitter *Diplomatic History* 2015-09-18)

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.

It's truly a work 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.

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.

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.

It's unlike most other history books I've read in the past. It's written from a holistic aspect, which includes very specific examples from everyday people and the government as well. I highly recommend this book.

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