

Masuda Hajimu

Cold War Crucible: The Korean Conflict and the Postwar World (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015). 400 pp. \$39.95 (cloth).

Masuda Hajimu's *Cold War Crucible* greatly enriches understanding of the Cold War. By examining the local manifestations of the Cold War in several societies on both sides of the Cold War, including the United States, Japan, the People's Republic of China (PRC), Britain, Taiwan and the Philippines, Masuda makes an important contribution to the expanding literature on the cultural history of the Cold War beyond the United States and Western Europe. The author seeks to explain the social construction of the Cold War—how millions of ordinary people all over the world came to believe in the Cold War as the defining reality of the postwar world, rather than one understanding among many. In the early postwar period, it was not inevitable or obvious that the global, bipolar confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union would come to define the postwar world order. Masuda argues that the outbreak of the Korean War was the decisive turning point, the crucible in which the “reality” of the Cold War was forged. Only in June 1950 did the cold war (lower case), became the Cold War—a hegemonic discourse, the unassailable truth about the postwar world.

This leads Masuda to at least three main conclusions. First, all societies around the world did not experience the Cold War in the same way. The experience of the Cold War depended on local social and political contexts that predated the Cold War and were rooted in wartime and postwar experiences quite independent of the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. The reality of the Cold War was felt much more immediately in those societies in Western Europe, the United States, and East Asia that were most directly and fiercely involved in the fighting during the Second World War and where fear of a third world war was most intense. In other societies, where the context of colonialism and decolonization was more important, competing discourses of international politics remained vital longer and hence the reality of the Cold War was accepted more slowly.

Second, and most provocative, is a conclusion about local and individual agency in the cultural history of the Cold War. The heart of Masuda's work is a study of how local actors appropriated Cold War rhetoric in their own local social and cultural struggles. According to the author, “the actual divides of the Cold War existed not necessarily between Eastern and Western camps but within each society” (p. 8). Ordinary people were, therefore, not passive recipients of a Cold War that the international structure imposed upon them.

Nor were they merely victims of Cold War propaganda, even in authoritarian states like the PRC. They were often also “perpetrators” who actively participated in the creation of Cold War conflict at home. They were active agents who used, even welcomed, the Cold War for their own purposes. Cold War culture, then, cannot be understood simply as an outcome or impact of geopolitics because observers also need to understand how local people created and perpetuated it to serve their own needs.

Third, Masuda concludes that the new Cold War reality produced broadly similar social outcomes in all the societies he examines. The Cold War supported a “conservative backlash” in each that suppressed dissent in an effort to resolve local conflicts resulting from momentous social changes that the Great Depression and World War II had provoked. In the United States, grassroots conservatives used Cold War rhetoric to resist the postwar upheaval in racial and gender roles and created the social context for McCarthyism. In Britain, the Cold War and the desire to return to “normal” life after the devastation of the war supported a crackdown on labor activism. In Japan, the reverse course and Red Purge were the result not simply of occupation authorities making new geopolitical calculations but of a popular desire to restore social order and roll back the most radical of occupation reforms. In the PRC, popular nationalist sentiment and the widespread desire for social stability after years of war often supported the Korean War-era purge of internal enemies. Across the strait in Taiwan, the Nationalist Party used the Cold War to combat intense social divisions resulting from decolonization and “recolonization.” In the Philippines, a campaign against “un-Filipino” activities targeted not only Communist insurgents, but challenges to the social elite and accepted gender roles.

Any work the breadth of Masuda’s invites questions about the selection of case studies, as well as the amount of detail the author has devoted to each. More interesting questions that arise from Masuda’s work regard the way the Cold War worked to resolve local conflict. For all that it challenges existing understanding of Cold War culture, Masuda’s story ends with a fairly familiar hegemonic Cold War discourse that subsumed all alternatives and suppressed social dissent and cultural deviance. Masuda claims that the Cold War “resolved” postwar social divisions, “bringing order and harmony at home” and “operated to tranquilize chaotic postwar situations worldwide, through putting an end to a multitude of social conflicts and culture wars at home” (pp. 283–84). But was the suppression of dissent really so complete? In the case of Japan, for example, how do the 1960 protests against the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty fit into this argument? Did the establishment, or the majority, always succeed in creating a Cold War reality that supported their positions or did

leftists and progressives also make the Cold War? In Masuda's account, they seem to contribute to the creation of the Cold War only passively as a consequence of the elite marginalizing and repressing them. In Japan, progressives in the American occupation gave up the drive for reform and engaged in self-censorship to preserve their careers. In Taiwan, Masuda reports, most people chose to acquiesce silently in the White Terror and "participated by absence" (p. 268). Did progressives ever *actively* create the Cold War by appropriating it in support of social and cultural change?

Perhaps the apparent passivity of leftists and progressives stems from the cases Masuda chose and they fared better in those societies where the reality of the Cold War was less immediate. Or perhaps Masuda's conclusions are specific to the period immediately after the Korean War. Indeed, in this context, Jeremi Suri's earlier work *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* is instructive. His study deals with similar issues at a later date when a new generation, disillusioned with the dominant discourse, challenged the accepted reality of the Cold War. Perhaps the triumph of the Cold War discourse that emerged from the Korean War crucible was less overwhelming and the reality of the Cold War even more malleable and fluid than Masuda's treatment suggests. In the end, these questions speak to the importance of Masuda's work in provoking and guiding future inquiry and engaging with it will reward all readers.

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