

The Cold War in East Asia, 1945-1991

edited by Tsuyoshi Hasegawa

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Kenton Clymer

Northern Illinois University

This book came out of a series of conferences on the Cold War in Asia at the University of California, Santa Barbara from 2005 to 2007. They were sponsored by the university's Center for Cold War Studies. This book is published under the auspices of the highly respected Cold War International History Project at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC. The book consists of eleven essays on various aspects of the Cold War in Asia, plus a lengthy and informative introduction by Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, the author of the prize-winning book *Racing the Enemy*. Together they constitute a remarkable, pioneering work about the Cold War in Asia based on a remarkably broad range of mostly newly available archival materials in Russia, China, Japan, and Korea. This is first-rate international history, even though it is admittedly incomplete.

Interestingly, Korea receives more attention than any other country, with five of the essays focusing either on Korea itself or the country's relations with China, the USSR, Japan, and the United States. China's foreign policy is the focus of two essays, two chapters focus on Soviet policy, while two others focus on Japan. The United States enters in most

of the essays, but only Steven Hugh Lee's chapter on the United States and Korea, 1945-1955, devotes extended attention to American policy. Southeast Asia is mentioned only in passing, although Hasegawa addresses the region, particularly the war in Vietnam, in his introductory essay. Korea is of course important. The most turbulent war in East Asia after World War II took place there, resulting in more than one million Korean deaths. It was also the only divided country in the region (without counting China and Taiwan), and all of the major powers in the region devoted considerable attention to it. Nevertheless, one can question whether Korea is over-represented in this collection. First, then, regarding the book's treatment of the Korean issue, Chen Jian examines China's Cold War orientation, using Korea "as a Central Test Case" (81). The Cold War was already in full swing when Mao Zedong achieved his final victory in 1949. The Korean War emerged in that context and China intervened in the war because North Korea was a "revolutionary country" (83). China's "victim mentality," Chen argues, also encouraged it to support a revolutionary power that wanted to overturn a humiliating international order. This goes contrary to more traditional accounts that emphasize China's concern with its national security as General Douglas MacArthur moved northward toward the China border. Mao, Chen points out, made plans very early in the war, long before there was any threat to his security, to prepare for a military intervention.

Chen also argues further that China's decision-making meant Mao's decisions and that China's alliance with the USSR was the "cornerstone of its war efforts." Stalin, however, was less committed to the alliance, as evidenced when he pulled back from promises of air support in Korea. Still, Stalin fully supported Mao's decision to intervene in the war and Mao always consulted Stalin on negotiating strategy, never moving forward until Moscow was in full agreement. Finally, Chen concludes that despite its closeness to North Korea, the Chinese-North Korean relationship was "never harmonious." Indeed, Kim Il Sung often paid little attention to Mao and there were at least four disputes of

significance between the two revolutionary communist leaders. Chen lists five “implications” that derived from these findings, including an enhancement of Chinese devotion to revolution at home and abroad. Yet the Korean War also made it more likely, Chen argues, that the Cold War would remain cold outside of Korea as both Stalin and Truman opted for caution in a nuclear world.

Steven Hugh Lee then looks at American involvement in Korea from 1945 to 1955. Avoiding a narrow diplomatic approach, Lee looks at this period as one of American occupation and examines it through a social and economic lens, comparing it to earlier American occupations in the Philippines and Haiti, among others. He demonstrates that the Americans in Korea generally favored those Koreans who had worked with the Japanese in the past, while opposing labor unions and other more progressive forces. They assumed that the Koreans wanted an American-style modernization and liberties, while denying the legitimacy of contrary models. This was particularly the case of the Korean policy establishment, which was largely discredited because those in charge were the same people who had been connected with the former Japanese colonial regime. He argues persuasively that the United States wanted to “Koreanize” Korea and then leave. However, they wanted to “Koreanize” the country in a way that many Koreans disliked, thus paving the way for controversy and violence.

Lee’s article is tremendously interesting, but his argument that the United States was consciously intent on establishing a “hegemonic” regime that was “also intimately linked to the evolution of the long durée of American’s informal global empire” is not entirely persuasive. That the United States often elevated conservative elements, including those with colonial roots, is certain. Though whether the “good” things the Americans did were “influenced by colonial trajectory” (111) is more problematic. After 1950, he argues, Korea became an American protectorate. In this later period, Lee begins to investigate the importance of American NGOs and religious organizations, and devotes much

attention to the spread of Christianity. These are interesting and important topics, but they deserve more in-depth attention than Lee was able to devote in a chapter of a book.

Nobuo Shimotamai next looks at “Kim Il Sung’s Balancing Act between Moscow and Beijing, 1956-1972.” One of the best chapters in the book, this essay is a very well researched account of Kim’s ability to play off Moscow and Beijing against each other over a period of years. Kim emerges as a shrewd international politician, who never completely alienated either of his larger allies. He was motivated by “intense nationalism” (123) and thus could not be entirely dominated by any outside power. Exploring a number of specific cases, including the *Pueblo* incident, Shimotamai shows persuasively that Kim would often pay lip service to one side or the other, but he was just as often insincere.

In a very well written chapter, Gregg Brazinsky next examines the very different trajectories of North and South Korea from 1972 to 1987. In 1972, there was not all that much difference between the two Koreas, but over time South Korea surged well ahead of the North. Even then, there were similarities. The Cold War patrons of both Koreas reduced their support in the 1970s. Both sought stability on the peninsula and strove to rein in extremists. Both also centralized power: South Korea’s Park Chung Hee imposed martial law and sought an indefinite extension of presidential terms, while in the North, Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il simply eliminated any possible opposition to their rule. Both Koreas also had some success in playing off their supporters. Thus that pattern Shimotamai found in the case of North Korea in the period of 1956 to 1972 extended well beyond that time. The South followed a somewhat similar pattern in balancing the United States with Japan. Japan invested significant capital in Korea and supported Korea when President Jimmy Carter criticized South Korea’s human rights record. Nevertheless, significant differences emerged, as well. South Korea ultimately was able to reach out to Moscow and Beijing with some success, whereas North Korea had almost no comparable success with Washington. South Korea

dealt much more successfully with the new global capitalism and was able to obtain cheap international loans. North Korea also got some loans, but mismanaged them and did not pay them back. In the end, South Korea emerged as a thriving industrial country, its firms investing worldwide. Nothing similar happened with North Korea.

Picking up where Brazinsky left off, Sergey Radchenko examines Soviet policy toward both Koreas from 1985 to 1991. South Korea's tremendous economic advancement tempted the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev to improve its nonexistent relationship with the country. This of course ran the risk of alienating the North, with which, despite some tensions over the years, was still a fraternal socialist country of strategic interest to the Soviet Union. Needing financial assistance, the USSR turned first to Japan. Yet, Gorbachev was not willing to give up the Kuril Islands annexed in the wake of World War II, and so the proposed new relationship did not materialize. South Korea was thus a kind of substitute for Japan. Radchenko explores in depth the efforts by both Moscow and Seoul to establish a fruitful relationship. He gives Seoul considerable credit for its "nordpolitik" efforts to court the Soviet Union, which hoped to get Korean investment in the Russian Far East. Such efforts of course ran a distinct risk of rupturing the relationship with North Korea. In the end, this is about what happened. After some hesitation, for example, Gorbachev allowed Russian athletes to participate in the Seoul Olympic Games in 1988, despite failed efforts to make the games a joint North and South Korean event. Then in 1990, Gorbachev spoke informally with South Korean diplomats. Essentially, according to Radchenko, Russia needed the money. In the end, there was a serious break in relations with North Korea, which ended up remarkably hostile to the Soviet Union. Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, who had advised against any closer ties to the South, was seriously snubbed during a trip to Pyongyang and left North Korea earlier than anticipated. Kim Jong Il never replied to a letter Gorbachev sent that was intended to restart the relationship.

Overall, Radchenko is quite critical of Gorbachev for his hesitation and indecision. Sympathetic to both those who wanted a close relationship with South Korea and those who wanted the USSR to remain tied closely to North Korea, Gorbachev managed to deeply alienate the North, while not getting nearly all that he would like to have gotten from the South. Radchenko does give the Soviet leader some grudging credit for being the first Soviet leader “to go beyond bloc logic and to embrace a former foe” (313). However, it was always too little too late. Had he acted decisively at an earlier date, the results would have been much better for the Soviet Union. The contrast with China is striking. China managed to establish mutually beneficial relations with South Korea, without alienating the North. At the same time, however, Radchenko praises South Korea’s “nordpolitik” which, he concludes, “is a testament to the importance of understanding the motives and actions of regional players in the multilayered and complicated setting of the East Asian Cold War” (315).

Two of the essays focus on China’s foreign policy. Odd Arne Westad opens the book with his essay, “Struggle’s for Modernity: The Golden Years of the Sino-Soviet Alliance.” Focusing less on diplomatic issues than most of the other essays, Westad examines how Soviet development models influenced China. The Soviet Union’s approach to modernization was very influential, he concludes, although the Chinese introduced adaptations that they thought would serve their interests better. China’s army was modeled closely on the Soviet model and was used to modernize the country and educate many men, while pursuing general social betterment of the society. Adopting the Soviet education model was much less positive. Bourgeois elements were purged with disastrous results, particularly in higher education. Soviet models of urban planning were ultimately adopted, with modifications. The Chinese communists, having emerged from a peasant culture, were skeptical of cities, even hostile to them. China nevertheless adopted the Moscow urban planning model of 1935. Westad considers this partially,

though not totally, responsible for the destruction of old Beijing, including the unfortunate destruction of the walls that surrounded the capital of which only remnants remain today. China finally looked to the Soviet Union to inform it on how to deal with the country's minority populations, such as the Tibetans and Muslims. The results, he concludes, were mixed: some being positive, in that they gave minority groups more recognition and influence than they had had before, and some negative, such as forcing definition of some groups even against their will. Essentially what Westad seeks to demonstrate is that recent scholarship had focused on crisis and disagreement and has not paid sufficient attention to areas of influence and concord. "For most of the 1950s," he writes, "it is wrong to think in terms of Soviet versus Chinese in China's struggle for a socialist modernity" (56). His essay marks a persuasive beginning in this discussion.

Lorenz Lüthi examines China foreign policy in the 1960s and 1970s. Though in some ways a fairly traditional examination of foreign policy, this excellent chapter mirrors Westad in looking through the "prism of ideology and modernization," although in this case, Lüthi explores the domestic sources of China's foreign policy. Lüthi initially sees two conflicting Chinese approaches to foreign policy. The radical line rejected Nikita Khrushchev's call for peaceful coexistence, instead proposing strong, ideologically driven stances. The radical foreign policy stance emerged from the domestic radicalism of the Great Leap Forward. Among its manifestations were criticisms of such relatively moderate figures as Deng Xiaoping and Lui Shaoqi. The leader of the moderates was Zhou Enlai, who resisted a radical foreign policy even in the face of domestic radicalism. For example, he had no quarrel with China's trading partners that recognized Taiwan, and West Germany and the United Kingdom (part of the Western alliance) were large trading partners with China. In sum, economic pragmatism trumped ideological considerations, and Zhou publicly criticized the Red Guards' interference in China's economy. After the Cultural Revolution, China began to

reengage with the outside world, in part because China had economic needs that could not be met from the Socialist world and also because the outside world was now willing to engage with China. Lüthi explores these issues persuasively and concludes that by the end of the 1970s, China was no longer a revolutionary power, but a country which viewed the outside world in terms of traditional power politics calculations. China's attack on Vietnam in 1979 was an early manifestation of the transformation, he contends. All in all, this is a fine essay based on excellent sources that lays out clearly the larger directions of Chinese foreign policy over two decades.

Two essays also focus on Soviet policy. Ilya V. Gaiduk explores "the Second Front of the Soviet Cold War" and argues that it was the United States, not the Soviet Union, which first saw Asia as a Cold War theater. The Soviet Union gave little more than rhetorical support to the nationalist and independence movements in Southeast Asia, for example, turning most of Asia over to the Chinese. Stalin's attention was focused on Europe, he states, where Stalin hoped to construct a buffer of subservient states to protect Soviet security from a possible resurgent Germany. He was much less interested in, or concerned about, Asia. Stalin did take some interest in Mao's war with the Guomindang, but Gaiduk writes, "this attention was incomparably smaller than that devoted to Europe" (65). Though perhaps sympathetic, Stalin seems to have provided no direct support to revolutionary movements in Indonesia, Malaya, the Philippines, or Burma. There was a stronger, but secret connection with Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam. However, Stalin did not trust Ho and disliked his efforts to court Western countries. Part of the reason for Stalin's caution, of course, was that the USSR was in no position for some time after the devastation of World War II to assist outsiders, even if it wanted to. The end result, then, was that "during the first several years after World War II, Asia was not even the second front of Soviet confrontation with the West" (68). Asian revolutionaries who had hoped for Soviet assistance were deeply disappointed. All they got,

from time to time, was advice.

Gaiduk explores this theme in depth, with particular attention to the Calcutta international youth conference in 1948, which has sometimes been seen as the Asian counterpart to the Soviet Cominform in Europe. Yet, little evidence has surfaced to support this. The most that can be said is that the Soviet delegation (which did not include high ranking personalities) confirmed Soviet moral support for anticolonial Asian struggles then underway in several countries. Instead, the USSR mostly ceded support for the Asian revolutionary movements to China, particularly after Mao's victory in 1949. This pattern extended well beyond Stalin's time, Gaiduk writes. Asia was not however entirely written off, and Khrushchev began to take an interest in Asia, but little resulted before 1956. And even then, European issues dominated Soviet concerns. The "main burden of responsibility," Gaiduk concludes, remained "on Chinese shoulders" (76).

The other essay to focus on the USSR is Valdislav Zubov's discussion of Soviet policy toward the end of the Cold War, from 1985 to 1991. Much as in the earlier years, East Asia was a region of only secondary concern to Gorbachev. Gorbachev did, however, have some interest in Asia. He envied Japanese economic advances and would like to have attracted new investment from Japan and South Korea to help with the Soviet Union's increasingly dire economic situation. Unlike with President Ronald Reagan, Gorbachev did not pursue much personal diplomacy in East Asia. Still, he did bring new people into the government, and his "new thinking" was non-ideological. Despite Gorbachev's attraction to Japan and Korea, he moved first toward China, hoping to repair a badly damaged relationship. The Cold War was still on, and Japan, he thought, could not act fully independently of the United States. China, though it had improved its relationship with the Americans, was only conditionally connected to the United States and could therefore be more flexible. Moreover, Gorbachev had grown up when China was the USSR's best ally and it traumatized him that they

had fallen apart. On the other hand, his generation's relations with Japan had been hostile, going back to World War II. Consequently, he was open to accepting most of the conditions China demanded to normalize relations, including withdrawing forces from Afghanistan and demilitarizing Mongolia. In the end, relations were restored in 1989 for which Zubok gives credit to both sides. Gorbachev resisted the temptation to visit student protestors during the Tiananmen crisis for example, because he wanted a successful negotiation. In the end, "both sides negotiated from a position of state interests, but with the political will to settle the existing disputes" (278).

In contrast to China, Gorbachev's efforts to court Japan did not go well. He was reluctant to meet Japan's condition, viz. the cession of the Kuril Islands that the Soviet Union had acquired after World War II. In this matter, Zubok is critical of Japanese leaders, considering them too intransigent. Had Japan been more flexible, he suggests, a solution could have been reached involving more Japanese influence in the disputed areas, with a full transfer later on. In this instance, then, he takes issue with previous scholars who have laid the blame on Moscow. South Korea, in contrast, managed to work with Gorbachev to negotiate the normalization of relations, bringing considerable economic advantages to his country. Still, like other authors in this collection, Zubok is critical of Gorbachev's diplomacy, noting for example that the Soviet leader's "penchant for procrastination" and his ad hoc approach "contributed to lost opportunities" (283) in his negotiations with Japan. Nevertheless, he praises Gorbachev for his "rapprochement with China" which contributed to "Soviet (now Russian) security and international peace" (285).

Two chapters focus on Japan foreign policy. Kazuhiko Togo's fine contribution, "Japan's Foreign Policy under Détente: Relations with China and the Soviet Union, 1971-1973," discusses Japan's decision to recognize the People's Republic of China (PRC) soon after the shocking reversal of American policy under President Richard Nixon. The lack of

consultation and information about the American change (Japan was only informed about Nixon's visit to Beijing three minutes before it was publicly announced) angered the Japanese. Even so, after Nixon's visit, there was almost universal desire in Japan to go ahead with recognition. The problem was how to deal with Taiwan. Japan was very grateful to Taiwan for giving up reparations claims, and the United States was concerned that Japan's recognition of the PRC not interfere with the United States-Japan Mutual Defense Treaty. Togo discusses in considerable detail how these sensitive issues were finessed. Even today the language remains ambiguous, allowing each side to interpret the agreements in its own way.

Tsuyoshi Hasegawa investigates the response of the superpowers to the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship, 1977-1978. By the late 1970s, rearrangements in relationships among China, the USSR, the United States, and Japan were dramatic. Hasegawa explores this development, with Japan "as the analytical pivot" (214). Like Togo, Hasegawa agrees that Nixon's visit to China was a dramatic shock to Japan, and in response, Japan began to pursue a more independent foreign policy, extending diplomatic recognition to Beijing in 1972. Although recognition came quickly, it was only after serious differences over Taiwan were resolved, as Togo discussed. Japan, wanting to keep relations with China's nemesis, the Soviet Union, on an equal plane with China, hoped to improve that bilateral relationship as well. This was not easy to do because of highhanded Soviet actions. So, there was no improvement until 1976, when a number of leadership changes occurred. In Japan, Takeo Fukuda took over and sought to keep the United States engaged in Asia, while also pursuing good relations with both China and the USSR. In the end, relations with the USSR did not improve, primarily because the USSR would not compromise on the so-called "northern territories," the Kuril Islands that the USSR had absorbed following World War II. There were also problems with China, particularly China's desire to insert an "anti-hegemonic" clause in the

treaty aimed at the Soviet Union. Although Japan did not like the clause, Soviet intransigence on the Kurils, along with the American decision to normalize relations with China, caused Japan to agree to a treaty. Despite Japan's dislike of United States National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski's strong anti-Soviet posture, Japan in the end joined the United States and China in an anti-Soviet coalition. Hasegawa thinks that China was the biggest winner in this shuffling of relationships, although he also believes the United States and Japan benefited as well. The Soviet Union was the big loser. An issue could be taken with one minor point in this chapter. Hasegawa asserts that the United States "did not support China's plan for invading Vietnam" (232) in 1979 to punish Vietnam for its invasion of Cambodia. Although President Carter did express his reservations directly to Deng Xiaoping, the United States did not really object to China's actions and even shared intelligence with the Chinese on an almost daily basis. Brzezinski certainly had no qualms at all about China's action, although the Japanese considered it a "blatant display of hegemonism" (235).

In conclusion, this volume represents major accomplishments. All of the included essays are based on serious research in Asian and Russian primary sources. They deepen our understanding of the inner workings of all of the countries involved and are well written. The treatment of Korea is particularly impressive, though perhaps at the expense of somewhat less attention to China and Japan. All in all, the authors deserve our congratulations for putting together such a stimulating group of essays, and Tsuyoshi Hasegawa deserves our gratitude for putting it all together.