# Reconstructing the Cold War: The Early Years, 1945-1958

*Ted Hopf*
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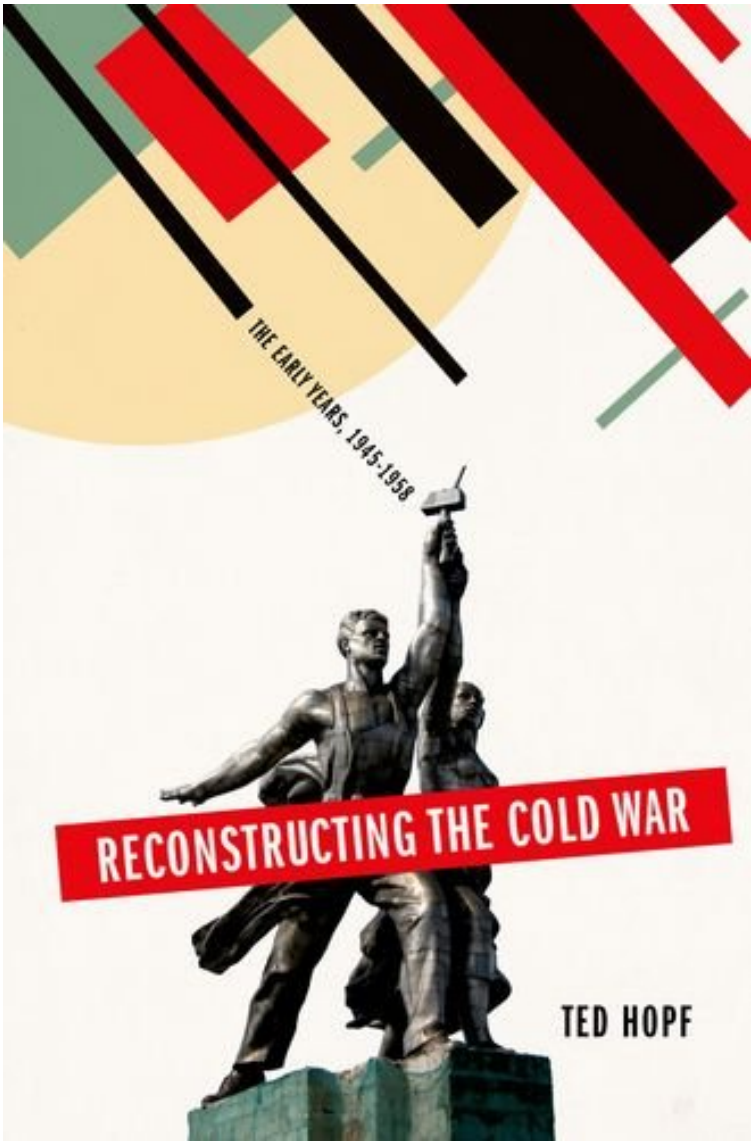




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**Ted Hopf : Reconstructing the Cold War: The Early Years, 1945-1958** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Reconstructing the Cold War: The Early Years, 1945-1958:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. An outstanding bookBy Jarrod HayesHopf has written an outstanding, award winning book (it just received the Robert L. Jervis and Paul W. Schroeder Best Book Award). The first chapter is an amazing piece of work, and worth buying the book for alone. With a clarity rare in academic texts Hopf explains the contributions of constructivism (and his approach, societal constructivism) vis-vis the other theories

of international relations. I assign it to my graduate students as an IR theory primer. The rest of the book is no less impressive, examining the Cold War through his societal constructivist lens and making a compelling case for understanding it in social rather than material terms. If you know how overwhelming materialist analysis of the Cold War has been, you know the importance of Hopf's work. Must read for every IR scholar, but written to be accessible to non-specialists as well.0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Impressive workBy Andrew FilipourI can only imagine the amount of time and work Professor Hopf had to put into this work. The amount of document/ primary source analysis and translating must have been taxing. Even with limited personal knowledge of the Stalinist era/ and the USSR, Hopf provides plenty of background information.2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. The First Constructivist Account of the Cold WarBy ADWThis is an important work of original scholarship. It draws on the author's own archival research as well as the most recent work by Russian and Western scholars working on the Cold War. It should be of interest to historians because of the new insights it brings to familiar episodes and the uncovering of less familiar ones. Scholars and students of International Relations will welcome the work as the first application of "societal constructivism" as a theoretical framework for understanding the origins and course of the Cold War. There are many excellent insights and real gems of historical discovery and explication here: the treatment of the Doctor's Plot, the reaction in the Writers' Union to the Thaw and the continuing changes in temperature; the analysis of Beria - so far from a closet liberal, yet responsive to the societal sentiments that surfaced with the death of Stalin. The discussion of all of these issues will engage historians of the Soviet Union and the Cold War while political scientists will appreciate the author's attention to research design and theoretical innovation.

General answers are hard to imagine for the many puzzling questions that are raised by Soviet relations with the world in the early years of the Cold War. Why was Moscow more frightened by the Marshall Plan than the Truman Doctrine? Why would the Soviet Union abandon its closest socialist ally, Yugoslavia, just when the Cold War was getting under way? How could Khrushchev's de-Stalinized domestic and foreign policies at first cause a warming of relations with China, and then lead to the loss of its most important strategic ally? What can explain Stalin's failure to ally with the leaders of the decolonizing world against imperialism and Khrushchev's enthusiastic embrace of these leaders as anti-imperialist at a time of the first detente of the Cold War? It would seem that only idiosyncratic explanations could be offered for these seemingly incoherent policy outcomes. Or, at best, they could be explained by the personalities of Stalin and Khrushchev as leaders. The latter, although plausible, is incorrect. In fact, the most Stalinist of Soviet leaders, the secret police chief and sociopath, Lavrentii Beria, was the most enthusiastic proponent of de-Stalinized foreign and domestic policies after Stalin's death in March 1953.Ted Hopf argues, instead, that it was Soviet identity that explains these anomalies. During Stalin's rule, a discourse of danger prevailed in Soviet society, where any deviations from the idealized version of the New Soviet Man, were understood as threatening the very survival of the Soviet project itself. But the discourse of danger did not go unchallenged. Even under the rule of Stalin, Soviet society understood a socialist Soviet Union as a more secure, diverse, and socially democratic place. This discourse of difference, with its broader conception of what the socialist project meant, and who could contribute to it, was empowered after Stalin's death, first by Beria, then by Malenkov, and then by Khrushchev, and the rest of the post-Stalin Soviet leadership. This discourse of difference allowed for the de-Stalinization of Eastern Europe, with the consequent revolts in Poland and Hungary, a rapprochement with Tito's Yugoslavia, and an initial warming of relations with China. But it also sowed the seeds of the split with China, as the latter moved in the very Stalinist direction at home just rejected by Moscow. And, contrary to conventional and scholarly wisdom, a moderation of authoritarianism at home, a product of the discourse of difference, did not lead to a moderation of Soviet foreign policy abroad. Instead, it led to the opening of an entirely new, and bloody, front in the decolonizing world. In sum, this book argues for paying attention to how societies understand themselves, even in the most repressive of regimes. Who knows, their ideas about national identity, might come to power sometime, as was the case in Iran in 1979, and throughout the Arab world today.

"Ted Hopf uses a sophisticated and nuanced societal constructivist approach to illuminate Soviet understandings and motivations in the years of the Cold War. By combining discursive analysis with a serious investigation of institutions, he demonstrates that the Stalinist state discourse of capitalist danger to state socialism, which dominated in official views until Stalin's death in 1953, was replaced by an alternative discourse of difference that allowed for greater variety and tolerance within the socialist camp. Taking identities as fundamental to foreign policy, Hopf illustrates their profound effects on the choices made by the Soviet leaders. From his unique perspective, he is able to go beyond conventional neorealist accounts and lay out an original new approach to understanding the origins of the Cold War. This is a work that breaks through the impasses of old-style Sovietology and enlivens our debates and understanding."--Rondald Grigor Suny, author of The Soviet Experiment "A uniquely audacious book that marshaled findings of Soviet political, social, and even cultural history to demonstrate the power of a Constructivist theory in the analysis of the Cold War. The effort of an international relations theorist to break interdisciplinary partitions and get to the nitty-gritty of domestic scenery must be applauded."--Vladislav Zubok, author of A Failed Empire: The Soviet

Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev "In today's environment of overwhelming academic output, Hopf stands out as a scholar whose research one is always inspired to read and reflect upon. This book is no exception. It is a must-read for its combination of IR theory and history, precisely because history is not used simply for quick theoretical points. Instead, Hopf devises a theoretical framework for understanding the history of Soviet foreign policy." --Journal of Cold War StudiesFrom the Author2013 Robert Jervis-Paul Schroeder Award Winner for Best Book on International Relations Theory and HistoryAbout the AuthorTed Hopf is a Professor of Political Science at the National University of Singapore. He is the author or editor of five books, including Social Construction of International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999 (Cornell 2002), which won the 2003 Marshall D. Shulman Award, presented by the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies for the best book published that year on the international politics of the former Soviet Union and Central Europe. Hopf received his B.A. from Princeton University in 1983 and Ph.D. from Columbia University in 1989. He was a Fulbright Professor in the autumn of 2001 at the European University at St. Petersburg. His research has been supported by the Ford Foundation, the Olin and Davis Centers at Harvard University, and The Mershon Center at Ohio State University.