orthodoxy in the Japanese political discourse. The Yasukuni issue has divided Japanese progressives and conservatives for decades and continues to do so even today as the pieces by Seaton and Rose nicely illustrate. In this regard, however, the book would have profited greatly from a better contextualization of the arguments in the existing literature. John Breen started the volume with a very informative essay on the genealogy of the Yasukuni Shrine. An essay on the genealogy of arguments about Yasukuni, and how the essays in this volume fit into this, would provide much required closure.

This book was written mainly as a response to Koizumi’s years in office, which significantly contributed to the internationalization and polarization of the Yasukuni problem. Many chapters are dedicated to the analysis of his visits to the shrine. Despite the numerous articles in recent years, the volume still remains one of the few comprehensive publications in English that deal with this subject. Considering Abe Shinzō’s second term in office, his official visit, and commitment to the shrine’s cause, it is clear that Yasukuni will continue to complicate East Asia’s relations in years to come. Having an English literature that helps us understand the motivation and arguments behind this behavior is indispensable. This book is a good place to start looking for answers to these issues.

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As the Asia-Pacific emerges as the world’s most consequential region, so too has increasingly sophisticated international relations theory to explain regional politics. And few have embodied this trend as ably as Thomas Christensen, who in this latest work challenges the conventional wisdom that facing a divided enemy coalition is categorically advantageous. Focusing primarily on opposing East Asian alliance blocs during the earlier years of the Cold War (1949–1969), Christensen makes the claim that disunity, distrust, and intramural rivalry within an opposing coalition can make it more aggressive, and thus the use of coercive diplomacy against it more difficult. This is so, he argues, for two primary reasons. First, poor coordination in
the formative stages of alliances can send confusing signals to rival coalitions, undercutting the intricate balance of credible threats and assurances necessary for successful coercive diplomacy. Second, intra-alliance rivalry short of open conflict, particularly in coalitions unified by transnational revisionist ideologies, can lead to a competitive bidding process for the mantle of coalitional leadership as each member drives the other to increased belligerence. The combination of these two dynamics is argued to make the occurrence, persistence, and escalation of violent conflict more likely, and thus a divided coalition “worse than a monolith” (p. 7) from the perspective of a rival state. Using richly detailed historical cases, Christensen shows how poor coordination on both sides of the Cold War divide led to the outbreak (ch. 2) and escalation (ch. 3) of the Korean War, whereas better coordination helped bring peace by 1953 (ch. 4). He further demonstrates how the competitive ideological dynamics of the Sino-Soviet split contributed to the Berlin crisis, the Cuban missile crisis, and the outbreak (ch. 5) and escalation of the Vietnam War (ch. 6), before briefly examining the post–Cold War era (ch. 7) and concluding (ch. 8).

This book has a number of strong points, the first of which is its bold and counterintuitive claim. Conventional wisdom, a great deal of theoretical work, and simple common sense generally lead to the conclusion that a divided rival coalition is to be desired. That disunity within the enemy camp is shown to be disadvantageous is an unquestionably important contribution. Second, deep and intricately detailed case studies, the use of new archival materials, and abundant Chinese-language sources indicate that Christensen is a political scientist who takes historical research incredibly seriously—a relative rarity in the field. A final strength is its theoretical richness. With this latest work Christensen continues to push the boundaries of realist theory, including arguments relevant to signaling, regime type, perception and misperception, and historical institutionalism.

Yet the work does have its weaker points as well, among which three seem to stand out. First, while it is certainly theoretically rich, the framework Christensen develops is not clearly carried throughout the text. The theoretical arguments are tightly crammed into the first sixteen pages, are not explicitly matched to the historical cases throughout, and then are reapplied retroactively to each case in a one-page summary in the conclusion (pp. 265–266). A more systematic and explicit pattern of reference to the theoretical claims would have strengthened the work as a whole. Second, his arguments about
poor alliance coordination and unclear signaling are not entirely unproblematic. For instance, while the United States’ loose alliances with Korea and Taiwan certainly caused problems, the fact that its tight alliance with Japan did so too (as Christensen readily admits, pp. 19–20, 29, 34, 94) is somewhat puzzling. What are we to make of the fact that both poorly and well-coordinated alliances send signals that are unclear and leave one worse off? And third, it seems that Christensen’s story about the rivalrous Sino-Soviet split is one that could just as easily be about power and interests as about ideology and regime type. For example, if revolutionary regime type was a constant in the early Cold War years, why did its pernicious effects only begin in 1958? And if ideology was so central, why was China able to so quickly turn on a dime and side with the United States in 1971? The fact that the United States was relatively dominant in its coalition, and that China and the Soviet Union were relatively balanced in theirs, may explain the absence of competitive bidding in the former and its presence in the latter. And while Christensen does attempt to show where his arguments’ expectations diverge from those of a more structural realism (pp. 135, 160, 168–169, 184), the inclusion of ideology may be unnecessary for the dynamics he describes to take place.

Yet in spite of these issues, Christensen has put forth a masterful work on the problems of coercive diplomacy in early Cold War East Asia. For its provocative theoretical claims and its impressive historical analysis, *Worse Than a Monolith* should be widely read, debated, and discussed for many years to come.

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Interest in Southeast Asia among nonlocal—particularly North American and European—audiences has waxed and waned numerous times throughout centuries of contact. The most recent of these waves occurred during the great ideological conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, which cast the great powers’ battles and eyes onto the region. With the close of the Vietnam War,