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Introduction by Yafeng Xia, Long Island University

Thomas Christensen has written an important book in which he examines several key episodes during the Cold War in Asia, including the Korean War, the Taiwan Strait crises of 1954–55 and 1958, and the Vietnam War. In *Worse than a Monolith*, Christensen uses these Cold War flashpoints to test and refine existing theories of alliance politics and coercive diplomacy, arguing that a state's use of coercive forms of diplomacy, including containment and deterrence, is hampered when one's adversaries are divided. Christensen finds ample fodder for this argument by focusing *Worse than a Monolith* on looking at America's efforts to contain the "revisionist" communist alliance during the Cold War in Asia. Disagreements between Moscow and Beijing often caused the two to try to outdo each other in supporting revolutions such as the one in Vietnam, and from the perspective of America's policy makers, this made the communist alliance "worse than a monolith." Christensen's thesis is intriguing. I am interested to know whether during the Cold War, leaders on one side or the other expressed the view internally that they were bedeviled by their adversary's inability to control its "troops."

In the first chapter, Christensen lays out his theoretical framework. The second and third chapters describe how poor coordination in both the Communist and Free worlds created misperceptions on both sides, particularly during the Korean War. The fourth chapter delves into the middle 1950s when the Sino-Soviet alliance was relatively harmonious and demonstrates how this state of affairs worked to America's advantage. The fifth and sixth chapters describe how the Sino-Soviet rivalry made containing the communist threat more difficult for the United States. The seventh chapter examines the post-Cold War period and looks at how alliances have continued to impact the Sino-American relationship after the two countries began moving toward greater rapprochement. Finally, the last chapter describes the applicability of Christensen's thesis to other scenarios.

The book received high marks from each of our four distinguished reviewers. Chen Jian praises *Worse than a Monolith* for "presenting novel and thought-provoking interpretations about the ... implications of alliance politics during the Cold War and beyond," and proposes that scholars reevaluate previous claims "made about certain important features of the Cold War" in light of "Christensen's ... path-breaking contribution to the study of alliance politics and coercive diplomacy." Gregg Brazinsky similarly praises Christensen for offering "an elegant example of how the discipline of history and political science could be bridged," and for digging beneath the assumption of complete bipolarity during the Cold War. Michael Sheng hails Christensen for seamlessly weaving the fields of history and international relations together. Qiang Zhai writes that *Worse than a Monolith* recasts "our understanding of the history of the Cold War in Asia" and forces "us to rethink aspects of Washington's approaches toward the Sino-Soviet alliance." He concludes that the book "is thorough in its research, clear in its presentation, rich in its insight, and thought-provoking in its interpretations."

The reviewers raised several concerns regarding Christensen's arguments and generalizations, implying that he did not give adequate weight to domestic

political/ideological factors and the contingent role of national leadership. Chen Jian, for example, writes that Christensen should have placed more emphasis on domestic politics and mobilization “in shaping foreign policy in the discussion of Beijing’s management of 1958 Taiwan Strait crisis.” Brazinsky suggests that Christensen did not give enough credit to Nixon and Kissinger in opening up China while also overly emphasizing the importance of the Sino-Soviet border clashes in 1969 for transforming U.S. policy toward China. More broadly, both Chen and Brazinsky suggest that the foundation of the Communist alliance was very weak due to the ideologies and the personalities of the leaders, and question whether the Sino-Soviet alliance was a good example from which to draw general conclusions about all alliances.

Brazinsky also raises the issue as to whether the Sino-Soviet split was “close to a godsend for revolutionaries” as Christensen argues or “a setback and not an advantage for the Vietnamese Communists” as Odd Arne Westad writes in *The Global Cold War*. Qiang Zhai likewise notes that Ho Chi Minh “was saddened and disturbed by the emergence of the Sino-Soviet rift.” Zhai adds that China’s rivalry with the U.S. and India played a more prominent role in shaping aspects of Beijing’s policy toward Southeast Asia than its competition with the Soviet Union for influence in the region, while Michael Sheng stresses that intramural rivalry, mutual mistrust in Beijing and Moscow, and Mao’s eagerness to claim an independent stance from the Soviet Union became sources of conflict even in the middle 1950s when the Sino-Soviet alliance was in its honeymoon phase.

In his response, Christensen accepts these criticisms in general, but also stresses that he never attempted to make a mono-causal argument for any of his cases. Christensen believes that one book should try only to do so much, and he consciously chose not to introduce certain issues in *Worse than a Monolith* because he had discussed them at some length in his previous book, *Useful Adversaries*.

Participants:

Thomas J. Christensen is William P. Boswell Professor of World Politics of Peace and War and Director of the China and the World Program at Princeton University. From 2006-2008 he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs with responsibility for relations with China, Taiwan, and Mongolia. His research and teaching focus on China’s foreign relations, the international relations of East Asia, and international security. Before arriving at Princeton in 2003, he taught at Cornell University and MIT. He received his B.A. in History from Haverford College, M.A. in International Relations from the University of Pennsylvania, and Ph.D. in Political Science from Columbia University. In addition to the book reviewed here, his publications include *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-58* (Princeton University Press, 1996). He is currently working on projects related to foreign policy decision-making in Beijing, China’s nuclear modernization, and the meaning of China’s rise for international stability.

Yafeng Xia is an associate professor of East Asian and Diplomatic history at Long Island University in New York. He is a 2011/2012 residential fellow at the Woodrow Wilson

International Center for Scholars in Washington D.C. He is the author of *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks during the Cold War, 1949-72* (2006). He has published widely on Chinese foreign relations during the Cold War. He is currently at work on a monograph on the early history of the PRC's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, tentatively titled *Revolutionary Diplomacy and Institution Building: New China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1949-1958*.

Gregg Brazinsky is an Associate Professor of History and International Affairs at the George Washington University. He is the author of *Nation Building in South Korea: Koreans, Americans and the Making of a Democracy* (UNC Press, 2007). He is finishing a book manuscript to be entitled "The Eagle Against the Dragon: Sino-American Competition in the Third World during the Cold War."

Chen Jian is Michael J. Zak Professor of History for US-China Relations at Cornell University. He is also Zijiang Visiting Professor at East China Normal University, Distinguished Research Professor at the University of Hong Kong, and Senior Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center. He held the Philippe Roman Chair in History and International Affairs at the London School of Economics (2008-09). Among his many publications are *China's Road the Korean War* (1994), *Chinese Communist Foreign Policy and the Cold War in Asia* (co-editor, 1996), *The China Challenge in the 21st Century: Implications for US Foreign Policy* (1998), and *Mao's China and the Cold War* (2001). He is now completing a diplomatic and political biography of Zhou Enlai.

Michael Sheng is the author of *Battling Western Imperialism: Mao, Stalin, and the United States*, (Princeton, 1997), and many articles published in *China Quarterly*, *China Journal*, *Modern China*, *Diplomatic History*, etc. The most recent ones include "Mao and China's Relations with the Superpowers in the 1950s: The Taiwan Strait Crises revisited," *Modern China*, October 2008, pp. 477-507; "Mao Zedong and the Three-Anti Campaign: November 1951-April 1952," *Twentieth Century China*, Fall 2006, pp. 21-45; and "Mao, Tibet, and the Korean War," *The Journal of Cold War Studies*, Summer 2006, pp. 15-33. He is currently the Chair of History Department at the University of Akron.

Qiang Zhai is professor of history at Auburn University Montgomery. He received his doctoral degree from Ohio University. His primary field of interest is the history of the Cold War in Asia. He is the author of *The Dragon, the Lion, and the Eagle: Chinese-British-American Relations, 1949-1958* (Kent State University Press, 1994), *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (University of North Carolina Press, 2000). He is currently working on a study of Sino-French normalization and adjustments in Mao's foreign policy.

Roughly fifteen years ago, I arrived in Ithaca New York to begin a Ph.D. program in history at Cornell University. When I discussed my interest in the Cold War in Asia with my new mentors they all told me that the person I really needed to talk to was not on the fourth floor of McGraw Hall where history faculty had their offices but down in the basement--the sunless refuge of much of Cornell's Government Department. I was initially somewhat surprised by their suggestion. I had taken a course in IR theory while studying at another institution and found some of the theories intriguing. But I was generally disappointed by the lack of depth and rigor with which political scientists sometimes applied these theories to historical case studies.

The person my new mentors were encouraging me to talk to was none other than Thomas J. Christensen, then a new addition to the Cornell faculty who had just finished his first book, *Useful Adversaries*.¹ I read the book as part of a directed study that I did with Christensen and one of my committee members. With *Useful Adversaries*, Christensen provided an elegant example of how the disciplines of history and political science could be bridged. It offered an arresting thesis and critiqued IR theory in a way that was easily comprehensible to a non-specialist. At the same time, its arguments were based on serious archival research that included many recently declassified materials from both the United States and the People's Republic of China. This did not mean that the book did not leave me without a few questions. In comparison to other political scientists, Christensen seemed to be sacrificing breadth for depth. He was quite convincing in his discussion of Sino-American relations but I wondered whether his theoretical discussion about domestic mobilization had applications beyond Sino-American relations as Christensen seemed to imply that it did.

I bring this up because Christensen's most recent book, *Worse than a Monolith*, uses a combination of theory and research that is notably similar to his first book. As he did in his previous book, Christensen provides us with an intriguing and provocative thesis in *Monolith*. His basic argument is in many ways a counterintuitive one. He contends that when states use coercive forms of diplomacy such as containment and deterrence, divisions among their adversaries make it more difficult to carry out their policies. As he did in his first book, Christensen demonstrates his thesis primarily by looking at the Cold War in East Asia. During their early years in the late 1940s through the mid-1950s, he argues, both the Communist and Free World alliances in Asia were in their formative stages and suffered from a lack of cohesion and resolve. As a result, they often sent mixed signals to their adversaries, making coercive diplomacy more difficult and creating conditions for crises and wars. Similarly, from the late 1950s onward the Sino-Soviet split made containing the global expansion of communism more difficult because it served as a catalyst for Chinese and Russian support for revolutionaries, especially in Southeast Asia.

¹ Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

After the first chapter, in which he lays out this theoretical framework, Christensen develops this thesis in six very substantive chapters that analyze American, Chinese and Soviet decision-making in great depth. The second and third chapters focus on the Korean War, examining in particular the way that poor coordination in both camps contributed to the outbreak and escalation of the conflict. The fourth chapter examines the mid-1950s, which Christensen argues was a relatively harmonious period within the communist camp. But good relations between Beijing and Moscow did not necessarily spell trouble for the United States. In fact, Christensen demonstrates, it was easier for Washington to contain the Sino-Soviet alliance during this period of relative equanimity between Beijing and Moscow. In the fifth and sixth chapters, *Worse than a Monolith* discusses the Sino-Soviet split and why divisions between Beijing and Moscow made containment more difficult for the United States. The seventh chapter strays somewhat from the major themes of the book and discusses the continuing impact of alliances on Sino-American relations after the two countries began moving toward greater rapprochement.

There are few places in these chapters where Christensen does not rigorously and systematically test his thesis. Through detailed readings of the secondary literature and primary sources gathered mostly from the United States and China, he offers a detailed analysis of decision-making within both the Free World and Communist alliances. In some places he uses carefully constructed counterfactuals in order to dismiss possible competing explanations and demonstrate how his theoretical framework would still have applied if different policy choices had been made. And by tracing the changes that occurred within the alliances, Christensen is generally able to make the case that, at least for the alliances that he describes, the level of cohesiveness often did have precisely the counterintuitive effects that he predicted.

While Christensen's theoretical framework enables him to offer some highly intriguing new interpretations of Chinese and American policy, there are also some limitations to this framework. As an historian, the issue that I most often have with even very good work done by IR scholars, is its tendency to sacrifice historical texture for the sake of deriving broad theoretical explanations of state (or in this case, alliance) behavior. Although Christensen's work makes a very useful distinction between normal and revisionist alliances, it mainly analyzes alliances in terms of their relative degree of cohesion, which is Christensen's "independent variable." But I wonder whether cohesion or the lack thereof always means the same thing and whether determining the cohesiveness of an alliance is always a relatively straightforward process, as Christensen seems to suggest. Many historians of the Cold War, perhaps most notably John Lewis Gaddis, have pointed out that because of its democratic culture the United States interacted with its allies and governed its empire quite differently than did the Soviet Union.² I wonder whether given the relatively greater amount of trust that existed within the Free World alliance from the outset cohesion within the Free World can be measured in the same way in the Communist Bloc.

² He makes this point most explicitly in John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1996), 189-220.

There are also places where Christensen's focus on alliance cohesion and its impact on deterrence occludes some dimensions of his case studies that deserve greater attention. One place where I feel Christensen should have posed a counterfactual but did not is in his treatment of American involvement in Indochina. *Monolith's* main argument here is that through catalyzing communist aggression in East Asia, Sino-Soviet rivalry made containment and deterrence for the United States more difficult. Christensen's analysis here certainly corresponds to the reality on the ground. But an important question to ask is whether Sino-Soviet rivalry *necessarily* made coercive deterrence more difficult or whether there were other contributing factors. Much Cold War historiography points to the fact that the United States should have been able to benefit from the frictions that existed within the communist camp at the time but it did not because of the blinkered worldview of American policy makers, which represented communism as a monolithic threat despite the differences in ideas and interests that existed between Beijing, Moscow, and Hanoi.

An understanding of the misguided worldviews of American officials is deeply relevant to understanding U.S. containment policy in Vietnam. In later years many key figures involved in decision-making at the time bemoaned their own lack of foresight and vision. Perhaps Robert S. McNamara did so most famously in his autobiography where he blamed both himself and his colleagues for being mired in an outlook that "took no account of the centuries old hostility between China and Vietnam ... or of the setbacks to China's political power caused by the recent events in India."³ McNamara's statement of course begs the question of what would have happened if more pragmatic and farsighted policy makers had prevailed in Washington during the mid 1960s. What if the United States had been more determined to exploit the Sino-Soviet split at an earlier juncture? Would Sino-Soviet disagreements still have made it more difficult for the United States to contain communism in Southeast Asia? The answer to these questions is not clear from Christensen's analysis.

Along similar lines, when Christensen gets to the late 1960s he writes that "the transformation of Sino-Soviet rivalry into Sino-Soviet conflict had hugely positive benefit for the United States' position within the Cold War (208)." Although Christensen credits Nixon and Kissinger for their skilled diplomacy in convincing Beijing to allow a continued U.S. presence in the Pacific region, his overall interpretation gives too much credit for Sino-American rapprochement to changes in the PRC's relation to the Soviet Union and not enough to changes in the American approach toward China. It is important to remember that Kissinger and Nixon possessed a particular determination to base American foreign policy on realpolitik rather than ideology. Nixon's reputation as a steadfast Cold Warrior also made it possible for him to approach China with a measure of credibility in the domestic context that other politicians might not have had. Again, I wonder whether the Sino-Soviet conflict would have created the same "hugely positive" benefits for Washington if officials with the will and sagacity to exploit it did not occupy the White House. The point

³ Robert S. McNamara, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 1995), 218-219.

here is that the difference between a failed and successful deterrence policy seems to hinge as much if not more on the skills of the diplomats who implement it as it does on the level of alliance cohesion on the other side. I would have been more persuaded by Christensen's thesis if he had given more attention to the relative importance of these two variables.

Another more minor area where Christensen could have benefited from a more expansive consideration of historical issues is his analysis of the impact of the Sino-Soviet split on world revolutionary movements. He argues that the split was close to a godsend for revolutionaries, especially in Vietnam. *Worse than a Monolith* explains that because of the split the "Soviets and Chinese competed in supporting communist revolution in Southeast Asia and elsewhere, and the big winners of the competition were Third World revolutionary movements, including those led by Ho Chi Minh and Fidel Castro (24)." When he talks about the actual benefits of the Sino-Soviet split, however, Christensen primarily refers to growing Chinese and Soviet military support for North Vietnam, the NLF and the Pathet Lao. He does not really look at this question from the perspective of how the leadership of these revolutionary movements saw the advantages and disadvantages of the Sino-Soviet split.

Odd Arne Westad's highly respected work, *The Global Cold War* (which Christensen does not cite in his bibliography) is interesting in this regard because it reaches precisely the opposite conclusion about the impact of the split on Third World revolutionaries. Westad writes that "The Sino-Soviet Split was ... a setback and not an advantage for the Vietnamese Communists." He adds that the Vietnamese "worked assiduously to stem the tide of dissolution in the world Communist movement" and tried to get Ho Chi Minh to mediate the conflict in person. Although Westad admittedly does not cite any evidence on this point, his book also claims that conversations that occurred between North Vietnam, North Korea and Mongolia show that all three of these smaller Asian states viewed the Sino-Soviet split as troubling.⁴ My point here is not that Christensen is completely wrong. He does show quite persuasively how Sino-Soviet competition benefited the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong on the specific issue of military armaments. But if Westad is right, then Christensen's broader claim about the overall impact of the split on revolutionaries needs to be qualified somewhat.

Despite these limited instances where I believe Christensen should have been a bit more cautious about some of his generalizations, the book adds greatly to our understanding of the role played by alliances during the Cold War. He shows that when it comes to understanding how some of the major confrontations of the Cold War developed, analyzing the divisions that existed within alliances can be as, if not more, useful than simply looking at East-West conflict. In this sense, *Worse than a Monolith* contributes to a long ongoing trend in the field of international history that breaks down the idea that the Cold War was characterized completely by a bipolar world order. With its deep research and keen analysis, the book should unquestionably become required reading for the next generation

⁴ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Time* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 183.

of scholars studying the Cold War in Asia.

Thomas Christensen has written an important book presenting novel and thought-provoking interpretations about the complex meanings and implications of alliance politics during the Cold War and beyond. The discussion and analysis in the book, with the support of extensive and reliable research in empirical cases, address issues of important scholarly significance and critical contemporary relevance. His “worse than a monolith” thesis calls scholars’ attention to the need for reexamining how alliance dynamics (and that of revisionist alliances in particular) functions in general and during the early Cold War period in particular; how coercive diplomacy, composed of credible threats and assurances, as a means short of war in crisis management is most effectively performed; and how lessons drawn from studies of historical and empirical cases can be adequately applied to enlightening strategies and policies for coping with similar situations in the contemporary world.

Christensen’s central thesis deals with “two forms of dangerous dynamics among enemy alliances: poor coordination and, in the case of revisionist alliances, the catalyzing effect of ideology and the pursuit of prestige on aggression toward enemies.” (2) In the bulk of the book, he examines a series of historical cases in East Asia during the early Cold War to explore and test his theoretical findings. His study stimulates me to reflect on my own work, as it will with others who have worked on the subject from varying perspectives to reflect on their work as well, I believe. In reading the book, I cannot help but test his ideas against my own study about the Cold War involving East Asia and China. In light of Christensen’s novel theoretical approach, I will revisit some of the contentions that I and other scholars have made about certain important feature of the Cold War. I present them as the foundation for further comments on Christensen’s findings.

In retrospect, the Cold War era was a very dangerous time in the development of international relations. For the first time in human history, the human race possessed the means of self-destruction. The price of victory might overwhelm the “benefit” of it, making “victory” in deadly and all-out wars meaningless (thus the notion of “Mutual Assured Destruction”). Yet this was not the only reason why the Cold War was such a dangerous time.

The Cold War era, and the early Cold War in particular, was exceedingly dangerous also because the confrontations between hostile alliances were characterized by the life-and-death competition between communism and liberal capitalism as two mutually exclusive paths heading toward modernity. What was involved in the competition was not only the shifting balance of power between the two sides but also, and more fundamentally, the very legitimacy of the political institutions, social systems, economic structures, or even way of everyday life of each side. The ultimate goal of the two sides was more than the

defeat of the other, it was the collapse of the foundation of the other's legitimate right to exist.¹

Of the two alliance systems, as Christensen points out, the alliance of communist countries was a revisionist one. Yet there were certain unique features of this revisionism. In particular, more than challenging the status quo and trying to overturn the balance of power associated with it, the communist countries aimed at negating and destroying the codes and norms serving as the legitimate foundation of the existing international order. This was a challenge that the dominant status quo powers had rarely encountered in modern times.

In addition, the composition and structure of the alliance formed by communist countries were complex—more complex if compared with most other more “normal” alliances (including revisionist ones) in history. It is true that the communist countries shared, in their public representation at least, the communist ideology. It is also true that when the international communist movement emerged in the wake of the Russian Bolshevik revolution, Moscow served as its indisputable center and headquarters (via the Third International or the Comintern). The movement began with a hierarchical structure. Yet this situation had changed by the start of the global Cold War. The Comintern had been dissolved in 1943. In East Asia, the establishment of such communist countries as the People's Republic of China and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam came from domestic origins. In the case of China, the Chinese communists received substantial support from the Soviet Union in their struggle for China's political power, but they carried out their revolution and waged a revolutionary war to victory primarily by their own efforts.² A noticeable feature of communist revolutions in East Asia was that the communists in various countries, in representing their political philosophy and ideology, all embraced revolutionary nationalism. The most successful communist revolutions were also the ones that were most capable of creating a powerful public image suggesting that no matter to what extent they were loyal to international communism, they were also nationalistic in their essence. Central in the discourse of every successful communist movement in East Asia were the narratives and myths of how the communists played a decisive role in destroying the reign of Western imperialism/colonialism and the alliances between Western powers and the conservative/reactionary local forces. Wherever the communists were able to represent themselves as more nationalistic than their conservative foes in

¹ To be sure, the competition described here between different ideologies and alternative paths toward modernity was not by itself “brute force fighting of total wars.” But it had a life-and-death essence that on one level resembles or even surpasses total wars. This, in my opinion, dramatically increases the difficulty for coercive diplomacy to be performed.

² In my view, the best study on the subject is Yang Kuisong, *Zhongjian didai de geming: Guoji dabeijing xia kan zhonggong chengong zhidao* (Revolution in the Intermediate Zone: Understanding the Chinese Communist Party's Road to Success in the International Context) (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin, 2010). This is a book that should be translated into English and made available to English-speaking readers.

domestic politics, they were able to gain tremendous popular support for the political and social revolutions that they carried out.³

What made the situation more complicated was that in the post-World-War-II era, the worldwide trend of decolonization rose and developed rapidly, and all the communist countries and movements in East Asia, even including the communist regime in North Korea that was formed with the backing of the Soviet Red Army then occupying the northern part of the Korean peninsula, naturally identified themselves as an integral part of the global cause against Western imperialism and colonialism. Mao Zedong's China claimed that the Chinese revolution represented an example of universal significance for promoting anti-imperialist/colonialist national movements, as well as for spreading communist revolutions, in the non-Western world. Thus, from a Chinese communist perspective, it was their overall capacity of revolutionizing the worldwide process of decolonization—a capacity that was not possessed by Moscow—that had qualified Beijing's candidacy for claiming centrality in the world revolution.⁴

Furthermore, ideology mattered, and it mattered in dangerous ways. In its purist form, ideology is persistently exclusive in essence. As Clifford Geertz states in his widely quoted argument: "Like the politics it (ideology) supports, it is dualistic, opposing the pure 'we' to the evil 'they,' proclaiming that he who is not with me is against me. It is alienative in that it distrusts, attacks, and works to undermine established political institution. It is doctrinaire in that it claims complete and exclusive possession of political truth and abhors compromises. It is totalistic in that it aims to order the whole of social and cultural life in the image of its ideals, futuristic in that it works toward a utopian culmination of history in which such an ordering will be realized."⁵ The international communist movement accorded with this line as described by Geertz in that it tried to turn communism as a futuristic utopian vision into extensive mass mobilization and action.

The self-proclaimed consciousness of moral superiority on the part of the communists had an important impact on the orientation of the Cold War in two respects. First, as a whole, all members of the movement, in one way or another, viewed themselves and international communism as a political force in action clearly standing on the correct side of history's annals. This belief attached to the international communist movement and the communist

³ In comparison, it was where the communist rebels were unable to dominate the domestic political agenda by representing themselves as the sole, or at least as the most important, champions of national liberation and independence—such as in Malaya/Malaysia, Thailand, and Burma—that the communist revolutions failed, even in the circumstances that there was no the intervention of the United States.

⁴ For a more substantial discussion about how Mao's China played a pivotal role in bridging "world proletarian revolution" and "decolonization" as two trends perceived as representing history's future development, and how the Chinese perception of such a role sowed a seed for the split between Beijing and Moscow, see Chen Jian, "Bridging Revolution and Decolonization: The 'Bandung Discourse' in China's Early Cold War Experience," in Christopher E. Goscha and Christian F. Ostermann eds. *Connecting Histories: Decolonization and the Cold War in Southeast Asia, 1945-1962* (Washington, DC and Stanford, CA: The Wilson Center Press and Stanford University Press, 2009), 137-171.

⁵ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 197-198.

alliance during the early Cold War a powerful exclusiveness in international conflict, making it more likely for wars (both civil war and international war) to occur and more difficult for compromise to be reached. Second, within the international communist movement, the exclusiveness of its ideological belief also created the prospect for its members to regard differences between them in alienative and exclusive ways, even moving toward identifying the differences between them in a revolutionary versus counterrevolutionary/revisionist and “pure” versus “evil” dichotomy. Indeed, the ‘he who is not with me is against me’ mentality was almost universally in existence among the communist actors. The communist alliance, even from an ideological perspective, was unlikely to become a monolith.⁶

Largely due to the above factors, in the Cold War’s process of development, although there existed important overlap in ideology and strategic interests between China and the Soviet Union, they still went against each other, resulting in the collapse of their alliance relationship. And the communist alliance, as a result, also became permanently divided.⁷

Consequently, all the above combined to create two critical and interconnected features—both of which are related to Christensen’s subject of discussion in the book—of the alliance system formed by communist countries, setting the stage on which the drama that Christensen names “worse than a monolith” was performed.

First, it was extremely difficult for the communist countries to form an alliance with a stable hierarchical structure. Nor was it easy for any member of the communist alliance, even the most powerful and developed as well as globally-oriented one (naturally this should be the Soviet Union) to claim or sustain the leadership role in the alliance, let alone to make the alliance a hierarchical monolith. Ironically, this difficulty was clearly demonstrated in Mao Zedong’s rhetoric of “equality,” which the Chinese Communist Party chairman repeatedly highlighted as the basic principle governing the international communist movement and the “socialist camp.” The irony here is that whenever Mao addressed the “equality” issue, he virtually was delivering it with the unspoken assumption that the “New China” was more qualified than anyone else in the movement, including the Soviet Union, to determine the terms in which “equality” would be defined. Thus Mao, on a very fundamental level, placed himself and the Chinese communists in a morally superior

⁶ The discussion here is quite compatible with Christensen’s, although the issue is approached from different angles.

⁷ The writings on the subject by China’s leading Cold War historian Shen Zihua are highly revealing. With the support of extensive and pioneering research in Chinese, Russian and various East European archives, Shen depicts the tremendous support that the Soviet Union provided to China in the early and mid-1950s. Still the seemingly huge “shared interests” between the two communist giants did not prevent the collapse of the Sino-Soviet alliance. For a recently published book by Shen (and Li Danhui, Shen’s wife and another leading Chinese scholar) in English, see Shen Zihua and Li Danhui, *After Learning to One Side: China and Its Allies in the Cold War* (Washington, DC and Stanford, CA: The Wilson Center Press and Stanford University Press, 2011).

position vis-à-vis all other communist actors. This had a detrimental impact upon any effort to make the communist alliance an actual monolith.⁸

Second, it was next to impossible for members of the communist alliance to find effective ways to reconcile the differences in their perceived ‘national interests,’ so that they might come up with a sustainable consensus about the alliance’s shared interests or shared burdens. As a result, a huge gap emerged between the perceived interests of individual member states and what was supposed to be the shared ‘core interests’ of the alliance. In retrospect, this is exactly the case in the alliance formed by communist countries during the early Cold War.

Therefore, it is not surprising at all if members of the communist alliance oftentimes were unable to produce identical or even similar signals in a confrontational relationship with an enemy alliance. And, from the perspective of the opposing alliance, it was always a daunting task to correctly read or judge the signals that they had received or intercepted. It thus was extremely difficult to use coercive diplomacy to cope with the challenges presented by such a revisionist alliance by avoiding misjudging its signals in strategy and policy making.

East Asia is a geographical location where the above features of communist alliance politics were tested in the Cold War. In the 1950s and 1960s, East Asia became the focal point of ‘hot wars’ between two confronting camps while the ‘cold’ war continued on the global scale. The result was an “‘East Asia deviation’ in the orientation of the Cold War during this period: although the Cold War’s logical strategic emphasis should undoubtedly be in Europe, it was in East Asia that major ‘hot wars’ were fought. In the case of the United States, despite the fact that it was in Europe that the two major military alliances—North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Warsaw Pact—were in a strategic standoff against each other, the emphasis of America’s military deployment lay in East Asia, resulting in its involvement in the Korean War and the ‘longest war’ in its history, the Vietnam War.

All of this is a familiar story that has been repeatedly told and widely discussed by students of international history and the history of the Cold War. Many in the field, including myself, have studied and written on related topics. However, in light of Christensen’s discussion, the existing literature on the subject in international history studies has two shortcomings. First, most of it pays attention to why and how the strategic alliance between the Soviet Union and China and, in a broader sense, the communist alliance system, rose and declined, and how such development shaped the trajectory and end result of the global old War.⁹

⁸ For further discussion about this point, see Chen Jian, *Mao’s China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), introduction and chapter 3.

⁹ See, for example, Odd Arne Westad ed., *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963* (Washington, DC and Stanford, CA: The Wilson Center Press and Stanford University Press, 1998); Chen Jian, *Mao’s China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Lorenz Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: The Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), and Sergey Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy, 1962-1967* (Washington, DC and Stanford, CA: The Wilson Center Press and Stanford University Press, 2009).

Few existing studies in Cold War history, however, have systematically explored the structure, composition and functioning of the communist alliance, and how the alliance provided the context in which misperceptions occurred and mismanagement in crisis situations followed. As a result, students of international history seldom think in ways of coming up with the theoretical generalizations about alliance politics (both communist alliance and alliance politics broadly defined) that Christensen presents in the book.

Second, related to the first point, it seems that international historians have been caught by the 'fact' that when a communist alliance was in existence (even when it was suffering from increasingly deeper internal differences), not only did hot wars like the Korean War and the Vietnam War occur but also the strength of the United States became seriously overextended; in comparison, when the Sino-Soviet alliance collapsed and, especially, when the Sino-American rapprochement happened, the strategic status of the United States and the Western bloc was significantly improved, and it was the Soviet Union that fell into the abyss of power overextension. Thus students of international history quite logically assumed that a communist alliance in unity was more dangerous than when the communist countries were in division, and that the former was more likely than the latter to produce more serious threats to the strategic interests of the United States and its allies. Accordingly, few of us thought that coercive diplomacy as a means short of war in international crisis management was less likely to be effectively carried out toward the communist alliance when it was in division than when it was in unity.

Consequently, in a more general sense, in previous studies by Cold War historians, the widely accepted 'conventional wisdom' was that an alliance or a bloc of monolith was more capable of mobilizing the strength and resources of its members, as well as adjusting and coordinating their interests, and such an alliance was more capable of presenting tough challenges to its adversaries. By the same token, from its adversary's perspective, an alliance of a monolith is likely the most dangerous as it is usually backed by well coordinated power and mobilization efforts.

This is exactly the assumption that Christensen's study challenges and, in my opinions, successfully overturns. As a political scientist, Christensen's main purpose is to have meaningful dialogues with fellow scholars who have written about alliance politics and cohesive diplomacy. Therefore, he clearly spells out how his studies are connected with, and more importantly, add to the existing theoretical approaches toward such issues as alliance composition and cohesion, signaling in deterrence efforts, the impact of internal alliance dynamics upon coercive diplomacy, the catalyzing effects of intramural rivalry of ideologically-driven revisionist alliances, and "veto players" and the difficulty involved in reaching compromises, etc. (8-16). For me, reading Christensen's review of the literature on these topics and his summary of his own contributions to them was a very useful learning experience, which allowed me to get a good sense of the discussion and debate among students of international relations on alliance dynamics and cohesive diplomacy.

Christensen's research truly crosses the discipline line and he demonstrates an extraordinary willingness and ability, usually possessed only by top-level diplomatic historians, to search through historical documents and other sources. He has widely

consulted with secondary literature, including the works of Chinese scholars published in Chinese. He also conducts research in and uses archival and other primary sources. So this book is based on a very solid documentary foundation and is genuinely interdisciplinary in its scope and methodology.

From the book's introduction to its conclusion, Christensen's theoretical analysis focuses on two sets of alliance dynamics and their relations with the creation of hurdles to effective coercive diplomacy. The first set of dynamics, which can be applied to any alliance across space and time, is about the relationship between alliance cohesion and coordination and the strength and clarity of signaling that takes the enemy alliance as its target. He highlights the "worse than a monolith" thesis by emphasizing that a weak and divided alliance is likely to make attempts to carry out coercive diplomacy a nightmare because it is not hierarchically structured with the most globally-oriented member as its leader, it lacks alliance cohesion, and it thus is incapable of producing credible signals that combine threats of punishment and assurance of benefits to the enemies.

Christensen calls this argument "straightforward" as it is generally consistent with much of deterrence theory. (p. 261) Still the cases that he chooses to support his argument are relevant and convincing ones. Prior to the Korean War, for example, the failure on Washington's part to make a clearly-stated commitment to the defense of South Korea and Taiwan, as Christensen states, played a critical role in Beijing's and, especially, in Moscow's endorsement of the North Korean leader Kim Il-sung's plans to use a revolutionary war to unify the entire Korean peninsula, thus contributing to the outbreak of the Korean War.¹⁰ And this phenomenon was to be repeated on many other occasions. In October 1950, the communist side failed to deter the U.S./UN forces from crossing the 38th parallel largely because Moscow and Beijing did not send coordinated signals credible in the eyes of American policymakers and military planners that would stop the advance of American forces.¹¹

Christensen emphasizes that it is the second set of dynamics of alliance politics and coercive diplomacy that represent his main theoretical contribution. As he contends, mutual mistrust and intramural rivalry for the leadership role in a revisionist and ideologically driven transnational alliance (during the Cold War, this was the communist alliance) are likely to be much "more aggressive and harder to constrain" through coercive diplomacy than an alliance of a monolith. (p. 5) In comparison, a revisionist alliance of

¹⁰ The documentary evidence and related literature by historians of the Cold War supporting this are extensive. For the documentary support, see, for example, Su Yu, "Report on the Problem of Liberating Taiwan," January 5, 1950; Su Yu, "Report on the Problem of Liberating Taiwan and Establishing Military Forces," January 27, 1950, in He Di, "The Last Campaign to Unify China: The CCP's Unmaterialized Campaign to Liberate Taiwan, 1949-1950," *Chinese Historians*, vol. 5, no. 1 (Spring 1992), 7-8; Shitykov to Vyshinsky, May 12, 1950, cited from Shen Zhihua ed., *Chaoxian zhanzheng: eguo dang'anguan de jiemi wenjian* (The Korean War: Declassified Documents from Archives in Russian) 3 vols. (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 2003), vol. 1, 381.

¹¹ In this case, only Beijing's leaders publicly issued the warnings, and Moscow's leaders did not.

internal unity and consensus of its shared burdens and core interests, is usually more willing to settle conflicts in a compromise.

This set of Christensen's findings is novel and insightful. Christensen again backs these findings with solid and convincing historical evidence. In such cases as the outbreak of the Korean War prior to June 1950, China's entry into the Korean War in October 1950, and the escalation of the Vietnam War in 1964-1965, it was indeed when members of the communist alliance had significant differences in opinions, or when they were in competition either for seizing the alliance's leadership or for trying to prove that one was more revolutionary than another, that they posed more serious challenges to the United States and its Western allies. For example, the outbreak of the Korean War was primarily the result of the North Korean communist leader Kim Il-sung, who by skillfully using the difference and communication gap between Moscow and Beijing, not only persuaded Stalin to approve his plans to attack the South but also managed to receive a "virtually green light" from Mao.¹² In the escalation of the Vietnam War in 1964-1965, the dispute between Beijing and Moscow resulted in their competition in supporting the Vietnamese communists in the war against the Americans for the purpose of demonstrating that one was more revolutionary than the other, and thus Hanoi was able to take advantage of the Sino-Soviet difference to carry out a much more aggressive war strategy than it otherwise would .

In turn, in all these cases it was very difficult for the policymakers in Washington and other Western capitals to correctly read and judge the enemies' intentions and combined capacities and, accordingly, to use coercive diplomacy as an effective means to cope with the challenge.

In contrast, as Christensen states, the process finally leading to the signing of the armistice agreement ending the war in Korea in July 1953 was characterized by an agreement between Beijing's and Moscow's leaders about concluding the war through negotiations.¹³ In the process that led to the end of the First Indochina War, the Vietminh, the main actor in the war, was unwilling to accept a peace agreement by dividing Vietnam into two parts, certainly not in the circumstances in which their military forces had just won a glorious victory at Dien Bien Phu. Had Beijing and Moscow not reached the consensus of concluding the war through peaceful and diplomatic means, the peace agreement on Indochina that was reached at the Geneva Conference of 1954 was simply inconceivable.¹⁴ Indeed, the

¹² See discussion in Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 106-113. See also telegram, Roshchin to Stalin, May 16, 1950, in Evgeniy P. Bajanov and Natalia Bajanova, "The Korean Conflict, 1950-1953: The Most Mysterious War of the 20th Century—Based on Secret Soviet Archive" (unpublished manuscript, copy in author's possession). 53.

¹³ Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 112-116.

¹⁴ Chen Jian, "China and the Indochina Settlement at the Geneva Conference of 1954," in Mark Atwood Lawrence and Fredrik Logevall eds., *The First Vietnam War: Colonial Conflict and Cold War Crisis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 240-262, esp. 245.

unity of the Soviet Union and China, the two most important members of the communist alliance, could make it more likely for them to accept compromises, and the signals from them would also be easier to be correctly read and judged by their adversaries.

Here I would like to highlight two of Christensen's important notions. First, I find it very helpful that Christensen, in describing and defining the conditions for successfully carrying out coercive diplomacy, has made repeated efforts to emphasize the critical importance of making the distinction between the "opening window of opportunity" and "closing window of vulnerability" as a crucial factor in causing the success and failure of coercive diplomacy. (p. 10) Second, I find truly brilliant Christensen's contention that "the 'normal' baseline behavior of a member of an international revisionist alliance is to support violence against the alleged illegitimate status quo." Therefore, he further points out, "in an intellectual and spiritual sense normal, or 'status quo,' behavior in a revisionist international alliance is to actively spread an ideology and overturn the international political or geographic status quo." (15) This argument further highlights the specific difficulties for the status quo powers to cope with challenges posed by a revisionist alliance.

Christensen does not just restrict his research to empirical cases in East Asia during the Cold War. He goes beyond East Asia's geographical space and the Cold War's timeline to test his findings in other situations. His discussion in applying findings of the "worse than a monolith" thesis to the Arab-Israeli war of 1967, Russia's punitive war against Georgia in 2008, and the impasse in the prolonged Israeli-Palestinian conflict convincingly prove that the thesis—and especially his definition of the conditions and terms for successfully carrying out coercive diplomacy— will enrich scholars' and practitioners' understandings of similar scenarios across space and time.

Christensen's thesis is undoubtedly a path-breaking contribution to the study of alliance politics and coercive diplomacy. I also feel that the analytical power and empirical applicability of his findings could be made broader and deeper if he would take the following issues into consideration.

First, what is the role played by domestic factors in alliance politics? Or to put it differently, how should the interactive relationship between domestic mobilization and the making and implementation of important foreign policy decisions in general and management of alliance policies and coercive diplomacy in particular be evaluated and understood?

In Christensen's first book, *Useful Adversaries*, he thoughtfully and convincingly points out that the existence of an aggressive adversary, or the successful representation of it to this effect, often helps policymakers and military planners in overcoming the "hurdles to mobilization," thus serving as a highly useful means for extraordinary peacetime mobilization of a nation's resources for military and national security purposes.¹⁵ I was a little bit disappointed to find that Christensen does not link the "worse than a monolith"

¹⁵ Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

thesis to the “useful adversaries” notion that he so powerfully presented in his previous study of Chinese-American conflict during the early Cold War. In the current book, he only briefly touches upon the role of domestic mobilization in shaping foreign policy in the discussion of Beijing’s management of the 1958 Taiwan Strait crisis, and does not get into in-depth discussion of this and related issues.

As a matter of fact, among the cases that Christensen has discussed in the book, some are good ones to further test his earlier thesis on the connections between domestic mobilization and international involvement in relation to his “worse than a monolith” ideas. For example, he probably could explore whether China’s decision to enter the Korean War was associated with Mao’s and the CCP leadership’s desire to create a dominant theme of domestic mobilization in their terms in the early years of the People’s Republic, and how such a factor made it more difficult not only for policymakers in Washington to fully grasp the danger involved in China’s intervention in Korea but also for Stalin and the Soviet leadership to appreciate the depth of Mao’s determination to enter the war.

Another case that comes to mind is China’s attitude toward the escalation of the Vietnam War and the prospect of settling it through negotiations in the mid-1960s. Christensen is absolutely right in pointing out that intramural rivalry in the international communist movement, especially between China and the Soviet Union, facilitated the escalation of the war and blocked an earlier peace settlement. In the meantime, it seems that Christensen could further enhance his thesis by taking into consideration the impact of the radicalization of China’s political and social life after 1962 upon Mao’s and the CCP leadership’s militant policy in managing the Vietnam crisis. Also, the escalation of the Vietnam War occurred at the same time that Mao was leading China toward the ‘Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution,’ and thus the persistence of a tense yet manageable crisis situation in a region south of China’s borders could be turned into justifications for the extraordinary mobilization efforts that Mao was to make at home. All of this, in turn, also greatly increased the difficulty for policymakers in Washington to identify China’s goals and carry out effective cohesive diplomacy. Also, there was a profound domestic background against which Beijing’s leaders firmly opposed any Hanoi effort to explore the possibility of ending the war through diplomatic channels in 1965-1968. This was the period in which the Cultural Revolution was emerging and then reached its peak. To a very large extent, the ongoing ‘hot war’ in Vietnam served Mao and the Chinese Communist Party leadership’s purpose of creating and maintaining the momentum of the extensive mass mobilization associated with the Cultural Revolution.

Furthermore, bringing domestic factors into the construction of the “worse than a monolith” thesis could have important theoretical meanings. All politics is local politics. For international actors, however, how local politics as the underlying forces played the role of shaping important foreign policy decisions is the most difficult to understand and the easiest to ignore. Among members of the same alliance system, this probably is also true: they are more likely to concentrate on political issues on international or, at least, national levels, often to the extent of neglecting the impact of local and sub-national factors. I believe that a plausible way to deal with the challenge, again, is to link the “useful adversaries” thesis with that of “worse than a monolith.”

My second suggestion concerns how the possibility and utility of “learning from history” should be applied here, especially in relation to the lessons that one may draw from Christensen’s study. In this respect, a noticeable difference between the U.S. involvement in the Korean War and the Vietnam War is that the former led to a direct U.S.-China military confrontation whereas the latter did not. How did this happen? And, does this have any important implications for Christensen’s “worse than a monolith” thesis? The key here, I would like to suggest, is the fact that policymakers in both Washington and Beijing had learned from history—especially from their experience of the Korean War. In October 1950, despite Beijing’s explicit warning that if the U.S. forces crossed the 38th parallel, China would intervene, American policymakers and military planners failed to treat it seriously.¹⁶ The reasons for the failure were exactly the ones that Christensen highlights in the book—that policymakers in Washington perceived the communist alliance as a monolith, and so they fixed their vision on Moscow—when they were convinced that the Soviet Union was unlikely to intervene in Korea, they also concluded that China would not intervene either. Thus they regarded Beijing’s explicit warning signals as “no more than bluffing.”¹⁷ In contrast, when the Vietnam War was escalating in 1964-1965, both Washington and Beijing made extensive and careful efforts to signal the other—by language as well as by action—of their own intentions and limits of tolerance; and both, and the Americans in particular, tried very hard not to cross the other’s “red line.”¹⁸ If Christensen could incorporate this episode into his narrative and make sense of it in light of his general argument, his excellent discussion about coercive diplomacy will become even more convincing

A great scholarly book is not one that offers ultimate answers to all the questions that it has raised and tried to deal with; it is one that asks meaningful questions and, in coming up with answers to them, serves as a new point of departure for scholarly discussion and intellectual exchange. Christensen’s is exactly such a book, and it is in this spirit that I write this review and put forward the above suggestions. This book surely will be read, discussed and, at times, debated by scholars for a long time to come.

¹⁶ For Beijing’s warning that if the American troops crossed the 38th parallel, “we will intervene,” see Minute, Zhou Enlai’s talks with K. M. Panikkar, October 3, 1950, *Zhou Enlai waijiao wenxuan* [Selected diplomatic documents of Zhou Enlai] (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian, 1990), 25–27.

¹⁷ In early October 1950, when the British diplomats in Tokyo informed General Douglas MacArthur about Beijing’s warning signals, the general immediately dismissed it as “pure bluff” and “blackmail.” Tokyo (Sir A. Gascoigne) to Foreign Office, October 3, 1950, no. 1371 FO 371/84099, Public Record Office, Kew Garden, England.

¹⁸ For a more substantial discussion about this episode of history, see James G. Hershberg and Chen Jian, “Reading and Warning the Likely Enemy: China’s Signals to the United States about Vietnam in 1965,” *International History Review*, XXVII, no. 1 (March 2005).

One would assume that when the Chinese and the Soviets were at odds with each other, and the “communist monolith” became nothing but a myth, the U.S. and its western allies would be in a better position to engage in coercive diplomacy to modify the enemy camp’s behavior in a way that was advantageous to the western interest. In his new ground-breaking study, Thomas Christensen challenges this assumption convincingly by examining the history of Cold War in East Asia in the 1950s and 60s. He concludes that disunity, lack of coordination, and intra-alliance rivalry between the Chinese and Soviets actually made Washington’s attempt to use coercive diplomacy to contain the communist threat more difficult than facing ‘a communist monolith.’ This finding may sound ‘counterintuitive’ but Christensen makes his case brilliantly with solid research into newly available historical evidence and recent scholarship in the field; he masterfully integrates historical research with IR theorization.

Starting from the alliance dynamics during the Korean conflict, Christensen’s analytical sword cuts through major international events in East Asia in those decades: the Vietnam conflict, the Taiwan Strait crises, the Sino-Soviet split, as well as Sino-American rapprochement. He then ends the book with a discussion on U.S.-East Asian relations in the 1970s and the post-cold war era, and the potential application of his findings elsewhere. The last portion of the book clearly bears the mark of a diplomatic policy maker, as the author informs us that many of the issues kept him sleepless during his tenure as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. The combination of his insights of a policy insider and his grasp of historical knowledge and IR theories makes Christensen a must-read author for students of China, U.S. diplomacy, and international relations.

Coercive diplomacy uses a combination of near-term threat and long-term assurance to alter the opponent’s behavior in line with one’s strategic goal. In this case, for the US, the goal was containment of the communist threat. When Washington changed its postwar Japan policy in 1947-8, its opponents in Moscow and Beijing took it as a long-term threat, which may have hardened their aggressiveness in the region as a counter-measure to a U.S.-backed revived militarist Japan. Dean Acheson’s exclusion of South Korea and Taiwan from the defense perimeter also revealed Washington’s lack of clarity on its security commitment in the region, which may also have demoralized U.S partners and encouraged its adversaries to take bold action. Within the communist camp, Mao Zedong, Joseph Stalin, and Kim Il-sung all shared an inflated fear of a remilitarized Japan with American support. Stalin wanted more burden-sharing by the victorious CCP but was suspicious of Mao’s loyalty to the Soviet leadership. Both Mao and Stalin did not want entrapment in a conflict with the U.S. in Korea when they did not think the balance of power in the peninsula was in favor of the North. That was why Kim’s proposal for the invasion of the South was repeatedly rejected, until January 1950. The US ‘hands-off’ policy in Chinese civil war and subsequent victory of the CCP, plus Washington’s unwillingness to commit to the defense of South Korea and Taiwan, emboldened the communists, while it demoralized partners in Seoul and Taipei. Stalin reversed his previous decision, and gave Kim the green light to

invade the South. Mao, eager to prove his communist internationalist credentials to Stalin, gave Kim his blessing as well. The author's analysis of the decision-making process leading to the outbreak of Korean War is a balanced one, acknowledging the shared ideology, fear, and underestimation of U.S. resolve by Stalin, Mao, and Kim, while emphasizing the Machiavellian game-play among them, enabling the tail (Kim) to wag the dog of the Sino-Soviet alliance by manipulating the relationship between Stalin and Mao. Although the author places more emphasis on the game-playing aspect than I would have liked, I have no doubt that this is the best informed and most sophisticated account to date.

The U.S. intervention was unexpectedly quick and massive; Douglas MacArthur's Inchon landing on September 15, 1950 turned the tide of war in Korea, and North Korean forces fled to the north. However, Kim continued to keep the Chinese poorly informed of the battlefield situation and was reluctant to ask for direct Chinese intervention for fear of too much Chinese influence in his country. Not until October 1 did a desperate Kim request a direct intervention by the Soviets or the Chinese, and the request was sent to Stalin, not Mao, although Stalin told Kim that in case direct intervention was necessary, it would be by the Chinese. Stalin then asked Mao to consider sending five or six Chinese divisions to the 38th parallel immediately, but Mao balked when Stalin was unwilling to meet Beijing's request for Soviet air cover and other support as conditions for sending Chinese troops to Korea. The decision on Chinese intervention was not finalized until October 13, and the first Chinese unit crossed the Yalu river on October 18-19, while the UN forces had crossed the 38th on October 7-8. Christensen makes a convincing argument that had the communist camp been more unified and coherent to allow a quick decision to deploy Chinese troops in Korea, Washington would have been deterred from crossing the 38th parallel. The disunity and lack of coordination within the communist camp prevented it from engaging effectively in coercive diplomacy to contain the conflict; as a consequence the war escalated. Conversely, when the coordination between Moscow and Beijing increased after China's entry into the war, coercive diplomacy had a better chance to succeed, as evidenced in the armistice talk which Stalin and Mao agreed on while Kim did not have a choice but to follow along. The Geneva conference of 1954 that settled the first Indochina War revealed the same logic: when the major powers in the communist alliance (Moscow and Beijing) coordinated with each other, their more aggressive local ally (Hanoi) would have to budge, thus enabling coercive diplomacy to succeed.

However, the harmony between Beijing and Moscow was indeed short lived. In fact, before Zhou Enlai arrived back home from Geneva, Mao launched the "liberating Taiwan" campaign on July 23, 1954, without prior consultation with Zhou, let alone Khrushchev. Mao presided at a military planning meeting the next day, but he did not send a letter to Zhou to be conveyed to Moscow until July 27. There is no evidence that Mao told the Soviets anything concrete in terms of his military and diplomatic planning, simply because he did not have one. Although I agree with Christensen's basic assessment that "coordination and comity in the communist camp was unparalleled in 1953-57," Mao's behavior in provoking the first Taiwan Strait crisis, which escalated all the way to the nuclear brink, actually signaled what was coming in the Sino-Soviet alliance. I would place more blame on Mao than Khrushchev for the "distrust and jealous rivalry" that was to ruin the communist alliance. The second Taiwan Strait crisis in 1958 made it even clearer that

Mao provoked the confrontation, in part, due to his contention against Moscow's "peaceful co-existence" policy line, which he accepted earlier in the 1950s.¹ New evidence that reveals Mao's erratic and irrational behavior evidenced in the two Strait crises would further enhance Christensen's thesis: the Sino-Soviet split and rivalry made Washington's efforts to use coercive diplomacy to contain the spread of communism in East Asia more difficult, if not impossible, in the late 1950s and the 1960s. The local and more aggressive communist partners, such as North Vietnam and Cuba, benefited the most from playing up the rivalry between Beijing and Moscow to gain more support.

It is truly an intellectual feast to read this fascinating work. From a short-term policy perspective on the Sino-Soviet rivalry, the "big winners" were the Third World revolutionary movements, such as those in Vietnam and Cuba. "The big losers" were the U.S. and its allies, due to their inability to engage in effective coercive diplomacy to contain communism. The opportunity for Washington to play the "China card" did not present itself until 1969, when the Sino-Soviet border war pushed the conflict between the two communist giants to a new height, and both sides deployed a massive military presence along the long border between them. The author also understands clearly that from a long-term historical and strategic perspective, the ultimate loser had to be the international communist movement which left the U.S. as the only superpower in the world before the end of the twentieth century. The demise of a once powerful communist international movement and the ascendance of the U.S. power can be seen as a drastic shift of the balance of power after the WWII, and this shift was accomplished without a major global-scale "hot war," thanks to the disunity and rivalry within the communist camp.

¹ See Michael Sheng, "Mao and China's Relations with the Superpowers in the 1950s: A New Look at the Taiwan Strait Crises and the Sino-Soviet Split," *Modern China* (October 2008): 477-507.

Thomas Christensen has produced an original and highly revealing book. His contribution to the scholarship on the Cold War in Asia lies less in new historical facts he has uncovered than in his theoretical interpretations of the nexus between alliance dynamics and coercive diplomacy as well as his revelations about the unexpected connections and ironies in the evolution of Cold War confrontation in Asia.

In terms of Christensen's theoretical contribution, his analysis of the relationship between alliance politics and coercive diplomacy is both convincing and refreshing. In a meticulously researched and stimulating account, Christensen succeeds in proving his thesis of a close correlation between Communist alliance coordination and the success of American coercive diplomacy, meaning, when there was more unity and cooperation within the Soviet-led Communist bloc, it became easier and cheaper for the United States and its allies to contain communism in Asia. In contrast, when the Communist camp was rocked by distrust and competition, the United States found it more difficult and costly to contain Communist expansion in such countries as Korea and Vietnam because rivalry between Moscow and Beijing allowed Korean and Vietnamese Communists to manipulate and extract more assistance from their bigger patrons, thus allowing intramural conflict to render the Communist movement 'worse than a monolith.'

The events covered by Christensen --- the Korean War, the Indochina conflict, the Taiwan Strait crises, and the Sino-American rapprochement --- are familiar to scholars of postwar international relations in Asia, but due to the author's ability to discern new meanings and implications as well as surprising connections and ironies in those events, the familiar landscape takes on new colors. In this regard, Christensen's scrutiny of the role of Japan in shaping the development of the Cold War in Asia is especially notable and significant. A recurring theme in his treatment is how often Japan played an important part in contributing to Communist threat perceptions or misperceptions from the late 1940s to the early 1970s. According to Christensen, it was ironic that Washington's decision to withdraw from Korea in 1949 did not reduce the sense of threat among the Soviet, Chinese, and Korean Communists. Instead, the American move actually increased their sense of vulnerability because they feared that Japan might reenter Korea after the American departure. Following the outbreak of the Korean War, apprehensions in Beijing and Moscow about the future of Japan figured prominently in Chinese and Soviet calculations in October 1950 concerning the implications of the U.S. occupation of North Korea and the necessity for China to intervene in Korea to forestall such a development. Later, the Nixon administration's requests for Japan to assume a greater share of the defense burden as part of the U.S.-Japan alliance initially caused serious anxieties in Beijing about Japan's revival as a military power, and more specifically, the likelihood of Tokyo replacing Washington as the principal military supporter of Taiwan. Consequently, Christensen points out, uncertainties in Beijing about U.S. ties with Japan and Taiwan slowed U.S.-PRC rapprochement in the early 1970s.

Japan also shows up unexpectedly in Christensen's summary of a conversation between Le Duan and Zhou Enlai in March 1971 when the Vietnamese Communist party chief flattered China by asking it to lead opposition against the 1969 Nixon Doctrine and the increased U.S.-Japan security cooperation to which it might lead. This phenomenon of a weak ally exploiting the issue of Japan to call its stronger partner's attention to its need for assistance also happened within the U.S.-led alliance. In January 1950, a desperate Chiang Kai-shek used Japan's traditional reliance on Taiwan's rice supply to emphasize to American leaders the importance of denying Taiwan to the Communists. He warned the State Department official Philip Jessup that Japan was facing an exploding population and chronic inability to feed itself and that the United States could ill afford to lose Taiwan's rice exports to Japan.¹

Christensen's findings and revelations about the linkage between alliance politics and coercive diplomacy recast our understanding of the history of the Cold War in Asia and force us to rethink aspects of Washington's approaches toward the Sino-Soviet alliance. If, as Christensen has effectively demonstrated, a coordinated and hierarchical Communist movement brought more benefits than costs to Washington's containment policy and if more unity and cohesion between Moscow and Beijing restrained the more aggressive local actors in Pyongyang and Hanoi and made peace deals easier to negotiate in Korea and Indochina, then what should we make of America's 'wedge' strategy against the Sino-Soviet bloc, especially the Eisenhower administration's effort to divide the Soviet Union and China by maximizing pressure on the latter? Was it wise or counter-productive?

For the most part, Christensen's reconstruction of the trajectory of the Chinese-Soviet-Vietnamese triangular relationship is persuasive to this reviewer. On a few occasions, however, his interpretations fall flat mainly because he tends to simplify either the complex interactions between the Soviet, Chinese, and Vietnamese Communist parties or the often complicated calculations behind Beijing's international policy. To put it another way, Christensen sometimes tends to make tangled and convoluted historical phenomena neater than they actually were, privileging parsimony over nuance. Christensen's treatment of the Chinese-Soviet-Vietnamese partnership during the period of 1949-1953 strikes this reviewer as one-dimensional. Christensen is right in contending that Stalin was indifferent about Vietnam because his strategic priority was in Europe, but he is not convincing in asserting that ideological disagreement led Stalin to cede leadership of Asian revolution to Mao. Christensen overrates the ideological differences between Stalin and Mao over Vietnam and underestimates the cooperation of the two leaders in Indochina during this period. For example, Christensen fails to mention that at the Nineteenth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in October 1952, Stalin and Liu Shaoqi (head of the CCP delegation to the meeting) worked together to force Ho Chi Minh to agree to conduct radical land reform in Vietnam. Stalin permitted the Chinese Communists to play a more active role in fostering Communist revolutions in Southeast Asia more for reasons of geographical convenience than those of ideological divergences. The Soviet Union simply did not share a border with Vietnam.

¹ Ronald L. McGlothen, *Controlling the Waves: Dean Acheson and U.S. Foreign Policy in Asia* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), p. 112.

Christensen tends to view all developments and changes in Chinese foreign policy through the lens of Sino-Soviet competition, thereby simplifying the multiple and complex motives behind the international initiatives of PRC elites. In Christensen's discussion of the Chinese responses to what he describes as Hanoi's "brief, public pro-Soviet tilt" in early 1960 (161), Christensen mentions Beijing's offer of extensive loan agreements to North Vietnam and Zhou Enlai's visit to Phnom Penh in May 1960. Was Zhou Enlai's Cambodian gambit designed primarily to counter Soviet influence in Indochina? It is doubtful. Although one cannot rule out the Soviet factor in the considerations of Chinese policymakers over Cambodia during this period, the overwhelming evidence indicates that the American and Indian factors played a more prominent role in shaping Beijing's approach to Cambodia. After 1954, China had been wooing Sihanouk to prevent him from abandoning his neutral policy and forming close ties to the United States.² Since the late 1950s, Beijing had also wanted Sihanouk's government to allow North Vietnam to use Cambodian territory to infiltrate soldiers and supplies into South Vietnam. In 1959, Sino-Indian relations took a turn for the worse as a result of the Tibetan rebellion and the outbreak of border clashes between the two countries. To win sympathy and support among Third World countries in its conflict with India, Chinese officials looked to Cambodia, a member in the neutralist camp and a participant in the Colombo Conference (the other participants included Burma, Ceylon, Ghana, Indonesia, and the United Arab Republic). When Sihanouk visited China in early 1963, PRC chairman Liu Shaoqi berated India for the 1962 border war and the continuing tensions between the two countries, urging the Cambodian prince to explain the Chinese position at the Colombo Conference, which had been attempting to mediate the Sino-Indian dispute.³

Christensen's description of Hanoi's "brief, public pro-Soviet tilt" in early 1960 is based on circumstantial evidence. He makes no reference to Ho Chi Minh's trips to China and the Soviet Union in the summer of that year to mediate differences between Mao and Khrushchev. The available evidence suggests that the Vietnamese leader was saddened and disturbed by the emergence of the Sino-Soviet rift and was eager to restore the unity of the Communist bloc.⁴

² For a recent account of Zhou Enlai's effort at the 1955 Bandung Conference to befriend Sihanouk and to prevent him from edging towards the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), see Sophie Richardson, *China, Cambodia, and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 31-32.

³ Memorandum of conversation between Liu Shaoqi and Sihanouk, February 12, 1963, Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives, file number 204-01509-04.

⁴ On Ho Chi Minh's mediation effort, see Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), pp. 87-88; Yang Kuisong, "Changes in Mao Zedong's Attitude toward the Indochina War, 1949-1973," Cold War International History Project Working Paper, No. 34, (Washington, D.C.: The Woodrow Wilson Center, 2002), p. 19.

Unlike the writings of international history by some political scientists who tend to clutter their texts with jargon and terminologies in their theorizing, Christensen's study is, for the most part, jargon-free and easy to follow. The only exception is when he introduces the terms "independent variables" and "dependent variables" in his narrative (13). Perhaps because of my professional training as a historian, I always feel a bit uneasy when I see the appearance of "independent variables" and "dependent variables" in what I read. In my study of past events, I do not think in terms of independent and dependent variables, and I do not try to tease out the independent variable. I believe in the interdependency of variables as I investigate their interactions and interconnections over time. To this reviewer, separating them into different categories just isn't very helpful.

Despite these quibbles, Christensen's volume greatly enriches our understanding of alliance politics and deterrence in Asia during the Cold War. It is thorough in its research, clear in its presentation, rich in its insight, and thought-provoking in its interpretations.

Author's Response by Thomas J. Christensen, Princeton University

As a college history major, I simply cannot imagine a greater thrill and honor than to have four leading diplomatic historians offer such generous and intelligent reviews of my book. If I were limited to a two word response, it would be “thank you” but, as with most academics, I would feel the need to exceed my word limit by adding something along the lines of “very much.” But I feel I owe it to these scholars and to the H-Diplo readership to respond more fully than that to the reviews.

I have long felt that the fields of political science and history are too distant from one another. In my opinion, the best work in each field looks quite a bit like the best work in the other. Good political science does not just deductively derive models of political behavior but carefully studies the thought processes of actual political actors, employing archival research, interview research, memoirs, or all three, to demonstrate that the logic and perceptions ascribed to those actors are actually in their heads and are important determinants of their behavior. For its part, good history contains clear causal argumentation and at least the potential to carry lessons from the study of the topic at hand to the analysis of events in other times and places. One of the great strengths of the works of the historians who wrote reviews for this roundtable is that their own work exhibits such clear causal argumentation, and that is how I have come to admire and use their writings in my own work.

Too often political scientists, in the search for elegant and abstract models, spin out into the stratosphere and never successfully return to earth to shed light on real events in a complex, textured, and path-dependent world. On the other side of the divide, too often historians obsess over the unique and complex context of each topic of study and thereby numb our ability to draw useful lessons that can shed light on other cases in the past, present, and future. Since people will make causal arguments and draw lessons from history whether the historians join them in that task or not, and since some of those people will have decision-making authority that can affect many lives, I would rather have the historians actively involved in the process of making and testing causal inferences, even if they are understandably and wisely nervous about generalization, and philosophically uncomfortable with terms such as “independent variable” and “dependent variable.”

As Chen Jian points out in his erudite essay in this roundtable, disasters are sometimes avoided because political leaders learned important political lessons from earlier periods. So, the Vietnam War did not escalate into a major Sino-American conflict in large part because historically informed actors in the United States government, such as the political scientist Allen Whiting (on loan to the State Department in the late 1960s), had a well tested theoretical hypothesis for why China had crossed the Yalu river into Korea in 1950 and applied it in a new but not entirely different context. They instilled caution in their superiors about the dangers of sending large numbers of U.S. ground troops across the 17th parallel into North Vietnam or bombing logistics staging areas in the PRC, and thereby the United States avoided policies that likely would only have triggered Chinese escalation and made the war even more painful and costly for the United States and the Vietnamese

populace. Whiting's work as a policy maker and scholar provides my ideal of what historically informed political science or theoretically informed history, whichever you prefer, can provide for the United States and the world.¹

It is as much an art as it is a science to find the right balance between making a clear argument that can potentially travel to other contexts, on the one hand, and offering a sufficiently nuanced historical account that does justice to the complexity of the historical processes in the cases one chooses to study. I consciously try to balance the two goals in all of my work but I certainly make no claim to mastery. These excellent reviews suggest that some of my arguments have been pushed too far while others may not have been pushed far enough. If I am guilty of both types of errors, and I am sure I am, I must at least be seeking the right balance, even if I have not arrived anywhere near my desired destination!

On the side of underselling one of my arguments, Michael Sheng points out that intramural rivalry, mutual mistrust in Beijing and Moscow, and Mao's drive for independence from the USSR were a source of conflict even in the middle 1950s, the period of maximum communist alliance cohesiveness. On the side of insufficient richness and potential oversell of the factors emphasized in the book, Chen Jian argues that, unlike in my earlier book *Useful Adversaries*, I do not place enough emphasis on domestic politics and Mao's fetish for domestic mobilization and radicalism at home as well as abroad. Both Chen Jian and Brazinsky suggest that the foundation of the communist alliance was particularly weak because of the ideologies and personalities of the leaders in the movement and that it might not, therefore, provide a good example from which to draw general conclusions about all alliances. Qiang Zhai suggests that rivalry with the United States and India may go further in explaining aspects of Beijing's policies toward Southeast Asia in 1960 than a competition with the Soviet Union for influence in that region. Brazinsky argues that I give too much credit to the Sino-Soviet armed conflict in 1969 for explaining the Sino-American rapprochement of 1971-72 and not enough credit to the creative and courageous policies of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger.

The most accurate response to these criticisms is the most disarming one --they are all correct. In a couple of cases I should have raised these points myself in the book but did not because I did not think to do so. In other cases, I consciously chose not to introduce certain issues in part because I had discussed them at some length in *Useful Adversaries* or because they had been ably covered by others in other works. I believe that one book should only try to do so much and by attempting to do too much, we often produce less, not

¹ Accurate knowledge and good analysis, however, is not always enough to create successful policies. As I outline in chapter 6, judging from declassified documents, in the mid-1960s U.S. intelligence analysts seemed to have a much more solid grasp on the internal political dynamics in the PRC-DRV-USSR triangle than most historians subsequently recognized. But Washington elites' understanding that the communist movement was not a monolith and that the Chinese were more radical than the Soviets, who wanted to cut a deal, unfortunately was not sufficient to allow for successful U.S. coercive diplomacy in Vietnam. So, I agree with Gregg Brazinsky's point about the historiography regarding the allegedly blinkered nature of U.S. Asia policy in this period, but I disagree with him about the actual history of the U.S. policymaking process, at least after 1964.

more, in the end. That having been said, even if I am right that lines need to be drawn somewhere, I may not always draw them in the best place! Finally, in other instances, I consciously tried to cover some of these points in the book but apparently failed to do so with sufficient clarity.

On this last score, I never tried to make a mono-causal argument for any of the outcomes, as is sometimes suggested in the reviews by Brazinsky and Zhai. My intended point was always that alliance politics played an important role in complicating or easing the containment of communism through coercive diplomacy, not that it was the only determining factor in increasing or decreasing the likelihood that such diplomacy would succeed or fail in its mission. I also tried to agree explicitly with Brazinsky's and Chen's point that as an international grouping of revisionists, the communist alliance system was not a typical one. This is why I try to distinguish the generic ways that divisions in all alliances can pose problems for coercive diplomacy from the especially dangerous ways that the intramural competition and mistrust that is endemic to revisionist alliances makes them particularly difficult to contain through coercive diplomacy. Both Chen and Brazinsky are right that deep and crippling splits were almost inevitable in the communist bloc and that such factors are largely absent in alliances among democracies. This point has been made by the political scientist Stephen Walt in his book, *Origins of Alliances*, in ways that are consistent with the argument that Brazinsky ascribes to John Lewis Gaddis, a standard-bearer of the theoretically informed type of historical work that I prefer. What interested me, however, was how the process by which the revisionist communist alliance fractured over time rendered its members more aggressive and made it harder for its enemies to contain that alliance through coercive diplomacy. This was true right up to the point at which the split morphed into open conflict among the former allies in 1968-69.

I agree entirely with Michael Sheng's point on Mao's persistent chomping at the bit, even when he seemed to be playing the role of junior alliance partner. His criticism is both subtle and valid. Even in periods of relative unity in the Sino-Soviet alliance, Mao took actions and adopted attitudes that worried his Soviet allies and demonstrated Mao's desire for independence. All of this suggests that the alliance never had a fully solid foundation, even in the middle 1950s, which Sheng and I both recognize as the period of maximum cohesion. But, Sheng and I agree on my main point: the alliance was easier for the United States and its allies to contain in this period than in the periods immediately before or after it.²

I also agree wholeheartedly with Brazinsky that Nixon and Kissinger deserve great credit for their imagination in forging the incipient U.S.-PRC bond that would last until June 4, 1989, or almost to the very end of the Cold War. I never meant to suggest otherwise and, if

² I regret that I completed the research and writing of that chapter of my book before Sheng published the very interesting article that he cites in his review. I recommend it heartily to the readers here as I do a more recent piece on Mao's decisions in the Korean War that combines clear argumentation and careful research in the ways outlined above. See Michael Sheng, "Mao's Charismatic Leadership and Chinese Policy Process During the Korea Conflict," paper presented at the conference on "The Korean War and China's Continuing Rise," 2-3 September 2011, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

I could restate my argument more accurately and completely here, the Sino-Soviet conflict benefitted the United States not because it made the rapprochement with China automatic or easy, but because it provided the opportunity that was so ably seized by the Nixon Administration. Having read the entire declassified transcripts of the meetings that Kissinger and Zhou had in 1971 and 1972 and having myself sat in on high-level negotiations with the Chinese government in Washington and Beijing in a different era, I can say that the two leading diplomats of their respective countries in 1971 and 1972 exhibited incredible strategic vision and an almost mind-boggling knowledge of events around the world. Their conversations jumped from continent to continent and made connections that lesser minds might have missed. It took highly talented diplomats to draft and agree upon the first Shanghai Communiqué; but it is hard to imagine even the most skilled diplomats doing so without the background conditions that are analyzed in the book.

I also cannot challenge Zhai's important point that the PRC's active diplomacy in Southeast Asia in 1960-62 was driven by a number of factors, not only competition with the Soviets. My own thesis emphasizes that regionally focused allies in revisionist alliances will be more likely to be activist in promoting revisionism in their own neighborhoods for a combination of reasons that are not necessarily shared by more globally minded leaders in the alliance. Some of those reasons have to do with the pursuit of prestige and the desire to climb the leadership hierarchy but others, as Zhai correctly notes, have to do with realpolitik considerations rooted in political geography: the differing level of interest that more or less distant powers exhibit in the internal political struggles in certain areas of the world. I would agree with and defer to Zhai that many factors were likely at work in determining the different levels of activism in Chinese and Soviet foreign policies toward Southeast Asia in this period, including China's rivalry with India. Still, at one point Zhai's own account in his review seems to dovetail nicely with mine in the book. Cambodia's rejection of alignment with the United States and its allies was important to Beijing in part because Cambodia was seen as an important logistical staging area for Hanoi's efforts to spread revolution to South Vietnam, a Vietnamese and Chinese goal hardly shared with the same conviction by the more cautious and more distant Soviets. Given the small U.S. military footprint in the region in 1960-62 and Cambodia's distance from China's Southwestern border, Beijing's support for neutrality in Cambodia and revolution in southern Vietnam seems more rooted in communist expansionism than Chinese defensive concerns about a potential U.S. attack on China's southwestern flank. Still, I confess that I did not have access to the Chinese Foreign Ministry archives on these issues during my 2004 research trip there because the documents for that period were not yet open to foreign researchers. I understand that subsequently many more documents have been made available and this might be an interesting and fruitful subject for future research.

On the other side of the equation, I also agree with Chen Jian that Mao's desire to radicalize domestic politics in certain periods also helps explain why he adopted more aggressive foreign policies at various times. Chen is certainly correct that such radicalism cannot be fully explained by assessing China's abstract national interest. After all, even many of Mao's fellow Chinese Communists did not reach the same conclusions and likely would not have adopted the same policies had they been in Mao's shoes. But I would still say that Mao's

desire to paint himself both as a radical revolutionary leader in the domestic arena and as the rightful leader of international communism following Stalin's death were really two sides of the same coin. Mao was a jealous competitor for leadership in every hierarchy he faced whether within his own Party or within the global communist movement.

Of course, I agree with Chen regarding the role of domestic mobilization in driving Mao's policies during the 1958 Taiwan Straits crisis, as I argue in detail in *Useful Adversaries*. Moreover, my research for *Worse than a Monolith* revealed that similar factors contributed to Mao's decision to create the 1954-55 crisis as well. Still, I think that the bulk of evidence indicates that Beijing's concern about trends in the U.S.-led alliance system in 1954 was more important than domestic mobilization in the first of the two Taiwan Straits Crises. Regarding the second crisis, in which domestic factors were arguably the most important, I simply wanted to avoid reiterating my thesis in an earlier book.

By the mid-1960s the domestic political and ideological factors Chen mentioned seemed even more important than in all previous periods, with the possible exception of 1958. In fact, the high degree of ideological content in Chinese foreign policy from 1963-68 in particular provides a good counter to one of the alternative hypotheses to my own argument regarding the catalytic role played by Sino-Soviet competition. One potential alternative explanation would be that China's policies were driven by Mao's realpolitik concerns regarding the threat posed to China by increasing U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia. But such a realist explanation seems untenable when one considers Mao's smacking down of his own comrades, such as senior foreign policy official Wang Jiaxiang, when they suggested that Beijing should consider reducing tensions with one of the two superpowers and/or reducing its active support for revolution. The proposals of these Chinese moderates made sense from the perspective of any normal realpolitik analysis, especially before the United States significantly escalated its military involvement in Vietnam in 1964-65. Before that escalation, the United States did not pose much of a threat to China's southern flank. But even after U.S. escalation in 1964-65, it is hard to sustain the argument that Mao's policies were driven primarily by realpolitik considerations. If they had been, one would have expected to see China welcoming and facilitating Soviet aid to the Vietnamese communists, not jealously complaining to the Vietnamese about that aid and, on occasion, even delaying or blocking the transshipment through China of that Soviet assistance.

The limits of the scope of the book did not allow me to go into greater depth on the domestic forces that contributed to China's radical policies in the 1960s. However, I think Mao's hyper-competitive domestic and international tendencies dovetail well with each other in any case. His use of radical ideology and support for revolution at home and abroad were manifestations of his desire to stay on top of the CCP hierarchy and get on top of the international communist hierarchy. Chen Jian is almost certainly right that both goals---not just the international ones emphasized in my book----helped make the communist movement worse than a monolith from an American perspective.

One last issue to address is whether the Vietnamese communists were really such great beneficiaries of the Sino-Soviet rivalry prior to 1969. I believe that they were and

appreciate the recognition of the reviewers that the Sino-Soviet competition for the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese communists, at a minimum, catalyzed the two large communist states to increase material support for revolution in Indochina (in both South Vietnam and Laos). But I think Sino-Soviet rivalry benefitted the Vietnamese communists and hurt the United States in another important way. Sino-Soviet tensions prevented the Soviets from successfully pressuring the Vietnamese to negotiate a peace accord with the United States from 1965-68 in the same way that the Chinese and Soviets compelled the Vietnamese to compromise with the French in 1954 at Geneva.

That having been said, I appreciate greatly Brazinsky (citing Westad's important work) and Zhai pointing out that Ho Chi Minh sometimes seemed quite nervous about the Sino-Soviet rift and even tried to mediate between the two sides. I still think the basic argument in the book is correct: the Vietnamese Communists at times consciously played the game of exploiting the rift between the two communist giants and manipulating the jealousies among them to gain maximum material assistance and to avoid another humiliating compromise like Geneva. But this does not preclude the fact that the Vietnamese communists would also worry that the severe tensions in the Sino-Soviet alliance might escalate into open conflict. In fact, such a concern would be entirely consistent with my thesis. I argue that third party, local revolutionaries such as the Vietnamese communists benefit most at the expense of the common enemy when their great power revolutionary allies are competing with each other for their loyalties, but that those local revolutionaries suffer and the common enemy benefits most when the intramural rivalry among the larger revisionist allies escalates into direct conflict among those erstwhile allies. It is quite logical then that Ho would be playing the Soviets and Chinese off against each other at times to get the most out of his allies, while also working hard to make sure that the internal rift did not widen so as to avoid the worst possible outcome: open fighting between the two allies. From the Vietnamese communists' perspective, Sino-Soviet fighting fortunately occurred only after they had largely secured victory in their civil war. But truly adversarial Sino-Soviet relations still led eventually to severe hardship for the Vietnamese communists in the form of a Chinese invasion in 1979.

I want to close my response by returning to a couple of aspects of my own history that make this roundtable all the more meaningful to me. At the beginning of my academic career, one of the reviewers, Gregg Brazinsky, then a graduate student in History at Cornell University, did an intensive directed reading course with me. As he describes it here, he was a bit surprised and puzzled when his advisors in the History Department sent him to visit a young political scientist. What he may not have realized was how exciting and even intimidating it was for that young political scientist to be entrusted with that task by giants in his collegiate major field of study, including Walter LaFeber and Sherman Cochran. Even though I was not his formal advisor and the true historians at Cornell deserve the credit for his training, I do take some pride in seeing how well Gregg has done professionally. A second reason that this roundtable means so much to me is that three of the reviewers, Chen Jian, Michael Sheng, and Qiang Zhai have had such a major impact over the years on my understanding of the events addressed in my books and articles. I have not done a formal count, but I would guess that very few, if any scholars, are cited more often in *Worse than a Monolith* than Profs. Chen and Zhai. Prof. Sheng's path-breaking work on America's

“Lost Chance” in China helped inspire some of my earliest publications and influenced this book as well. Chen Jian deserves special mention as I have benefitted so much from his scholarship and sage advice over the years and his work is featured prominently in so many of my publications. I left Cornell reluctantly in 1998 and it holds a strong place in my heart. I am so glad that Prof Chen later decided to move there as he can offer the next generation of history students like Gregg Brazinsky much more expert training than I could possibly have ever provided.

Thanks again to the reviewers and also Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse at H-Diplo for affording me this wonderful opportunity.

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