

This article was downloaded by: [University of California Berkeley]

On: 16 December 2008

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 792228213]

Publisher Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



The Pacific Review

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title-content=t113707111>

A response to Michael Green

T. J. Pempel ^a

^a University of California, Berkeley

Online Publication Date: 01 December 2008

To cite this Article Pempel, T. J.(2008)'A response to Michael Green',The Pacific Review,21:5,595 — 600

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/09512740802488703

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09512740802488703>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

A response to Michael Green

T. J. Pempel

The editors of *The Pacific Review* have generously offered me the opportunity to reply briefly to Professor Green's critique. I have benefited considerably in the past from Green's work and I have been an admirer of his dedicated and diligent public service even when I have disagreed with some of the policies he has advanced. That he has responded with such care and balance to my broad-ranging critique of the Bush administration's policies toward Asia reflects his unusual fusion of talents as a policy maker and a scholar. I learned a great deal from his response and hope that my comments will shed further light for readers on our areas of agreement and disagreement.

The editorial deadline is short and because there are many areas where I agree with Green's critique I will highlight those points in bullet form. I will then spend a little more time in defense of my arguments where we disagree. I hope that the exchange will prove not only intellectually rewarding for readers but also that it will underscore and perhaps influence the incoming American administration which both Green and I agree will face considerable challenges in improving US–Asian relations.

Our areas of agreement fall into several key categories:

Foreign policy tools and approaches:

- failure to devote consistent high-level attention to Asia because of pre-occupations with the Middle East;

T. J. Pempel is Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley. His latest book is *Crisis as Catalyst: Asia's Dynamic Political Economy* (Cornell University Press), edited with John Ravenhill and Andrew MacIntyre.

Address: Department of Political Science, Barrows Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720, USA. E-mail: pempel@berkeley.edu

- the damage done to US naval and air force structures in Asia due to disproportionate American military expenditures in Iraq and Afghanistan;
- the virtues of bipartisanship in US policies toward Asia;
- the need for vastly more American fiscal and monetary discipline at home to enhance foreign policy options;
- our positive assessments of APEC and Clinton's decision to highlight the leaders' meeting;
- the need to avoid bifurcating 'engagement' and 'containment';
- the desirability of utilizing a full toolkit of tactics in diplomatic negotiations;
- the unfortunate consequences of Rice's skipping ARF meetings in 2005 and 2007;
- the desirability of a US-ASEAN Summit during the next administration;
- the potential benefits of greater American engagement with Asian regionalism.

China:

- following a rocky start, US relations with China improved toward the end of Bush's eight years;
- the Chinese military buildup is real and potentially a threat to regional stability, though we differ on how to deal with it.

Republic of Korea:

- US-ROK relations have been highly problematic as a result of domestic political thrusts in both countries, though we differ on which country contributed more to the downturn;
- American and Asian interests would be well served by passage of KORUS (the Korea-US Free Trade Agreement);
- the ROK deserves treatment as a first-tier partner.

DPRK and the Six Party Talks:

- the DPRK is a despotic, dangerous, and deceptive regime, though we differ on how best to deal with it;
- DPRK nukes and missiles pose a serious threat to regional stability and will remain a key challenge for the incoming administration;
- a variety of tactical failings were made by the Bush administration during the Six Party Talks;
- the Six Party Talks would have been more effective if regularly scheduled meetings had denied the North a de facto power of veto over when to meet;
- the talks may now be on a positive trajectory, though I am more optimistic than Green.

Despite such areas of agreement, I differ with Green's critique on at least four key points. First, has public opinion in Asia deteriorated toward the United States? Obviously different questions and discrete survey methods and samples can be mustered to dramatize specific claims. Green presents a range of public opinion polls to make three interwoven but analytically quite distinct claims: (1) that the United States remains the most popular country in many parts of Asia; (2) that American soft power outweighs that of any other country in Asia; and (3) that the popularity of the United States did not decline in Asia under Bush and is in fact higher than it was under Clinton. My essay did not deal with the first two claims, where Green is generally correct. Still, even his first two points are not without challenge. Thus a recent Pew report showed that of the Asian countries surveyed positive views of the United States outweigh negative views in Japan and the ROK but the negatives outweigh the positives by 57–34 in China, 69–27 in Malaysia and 66–29 in Indonesia (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2007). A recent BBC poll (World Public Opinion 2006) showed that 62 percent of Chinese questioned said that the United States is having a negative influence in the world, while just 22 percent said American influence is mostly positive. That negative percentage is up 20 points from January 2005, when just 42 percent gave a negative rating and 40 percent a positive one. Still another survey (BBC 2008), exploring views of US influence, shows that 58 percent of Australians rate American influence negatively versus only 32 percent who view it positively. In Indonesia the numbers are 55–32, in China 46–25. In Indonesia 80 percent of the public is worried that the United States could pose a threat to their country; only 19 percent lack those fears. Such data make it clear that even in 2008 claims that America is widely applauded across the region are overstated to say the least.

But my case centers on the third point, namely sharp drops across most of Asia following Bush's entering office, rather than the relative influence of the United States versus other powers within Asia. That US popularity worldwide has deteriorated under Bush remains beyond question. One recent Pew poll of 47 countries finds that 'since 2002 . . . the image of the United States has declined in most parts of the world. Favorable ratings of America are lower in 26 of 33 countries for which trends are available' (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2007). The same pattern is found in Asia. Green claims that attitudes in China toward the United States are now more favorable than they were under Clinton but that is not supported by the surveys he cites which deal only with data from one year, 2007. Data in my paper show such drops for Japan, China and India, the only Asian countries surveyed over the full time span by Pew. They also show a rise in perceptions of the United States as a threat to peace. Gallup surveys not cited in my paper show that while 66 percent of Korean respondents held generally favorable feelings toward the United States in 1993, that figure had fallen to 58 percent in 1999/2000 and to 46 percent by May 2003.¹ That there has been some improvement in the last two or three years within the ROK is true; a 2008 BBC poll (BBC 2008) thus indicates more positive views of the United States

in the ROK and the Philippines. But the same poll also shows a continued deterioration in America's 'positives' in China, India, Indonesia, Australia, and Japan. There is a strong case, therefore, that views of America deteriorated significantly in all or most of Asia under Bush's tenure. They dropped radically following the invasion of Iraq; in a few places they have improved but hardly across the board.

In a tangential comment Green argues further that Asians prefer Republicans. Perhaps, but a 16 July 2008 poll showed that Obama outdrew McCain in favorable and trust ratings by 82–33 in Australia, 36–31 in China, 56–30 in the ROK and 77–40 in Japan (Pew Research 2008).

A second area of disagreement centers on our views of American interactions with the DPRK and China. Here our differences reflect how best to deal with the classical strategic dilemma problem. At base, the dilemma centers on the fact that actions taken by country A which it views as purely 'defensive' may well be viewed as threats by country B. Country B then claims justification in responding with its own 'defensive' actions. These in turn reinforce preexisting fears in country A and the spiral of action and reaction generates an increasing and self-fulfilling spiral of military tit-for-tat and an ever-worsening security situation. Green stresses actions by the DPRK that he says indicate its deceptiveness and unreliability. I stress that, even if innately paranoid, the DPRK leadership had adequate reason to fear attack by the United States following the 'axis of evil' speech; the Bush–Cheney–Bolton *et al.* comments about regime change and confronting evil; the clear buildup for the preemptive attack on Iraq based on shaky claims about non-existent WMD programs; and America's so-called comprehensive deal offered to the DPRK, the essence of which would have required a broad range of unilateral actions by the North involving not only nuclear weapons and missile systems but also conventional weapons and human rights as a prelude to the United States providing the security guarantees demanded by the North. While I accept Green's and Jim Kelly's assertions that the DPRK orally acknowledged having an HEU program in October 2002 (despite the DPRK's later denial of having made such claims), it is completely disingenuous for the Bush administration, which demonstrated utter disdain for international opinion, preexisting treaty obligations, and the US Constitution, to argue that such a DPRK acknowledgement made it legally necessary for the United States to scrap the existing Agreed Framework. Without doubt, had the administration wanted to deal diplomatically with the DPRK in 2002 it could have done so, HEU program or not. And the history of the subsequent developments, I would contend, make it clear that negotiating then would have seen the United States playing a much stronger hand than the one it held when it eventually began negotiating seriously in 2006–07.

China's military buildup has indeed been substantial and ongoing and it is not being met by similar expansions by Japan or Taiwan (or the ROK or Viet-Nam for that matter). Green treats the Chinese buildup as an endemic

challenge to which the United States must respond; I argue that the Chinese buildup must also be seen in the context of America's overwhelming military superiority in the Asia-Pacific and China's efforts to modernize its forces to prevent any undercutting of existing Chinese defenses or any facilitation of Taiwanese independence. Proving intentions is impossible. Yet the joint US–Japanese missile defense system and growing force integration between the United States and Japan can legitimately be seen as equally destabilizing to the military status quo as China's buildup. With US military power so preponderant in East Asia, the United States could well afford to be the first-mover in de-escalating the situation with an eye toward catalyzing a mutual reduction in Chinese and US armaments.

A third area of contention involves the role of the Bush domestic base in driving Asian policy. Green suggests that my only evidence for partisan intrusion into Asian policy rests on claims about personnel selection for the US–Japan Friendship Commission (JUSFC). I disagree. The JUSFC indeed strives to be non-partisan; however, all private-sector nominees must be approved by the White House, which accepts or rejects individuals with no explanation to justify its action. But it is incorrect to assume that partisan views or behaviors are unknowable to White House political operatives simply because no such information is submitted along with the nomination. A quick search, for example, of www.politicalsecrets.org allows instant identification of all political contributions made by any individual in the United States. There is overwhelming evidence that the Bush administration used such political criteria along with views on social issues from abortion to court decisions to women's pay, often illegally, in selecting or rejecting nominees for a wide range of non-political positions.

My claim for domestic political influences on Asia policy goes beyond such relatively trivial interference, however. Green stresses bipartisan continuity in the Bush years, most particularly reflected in the Armitage–Nye reports on US–Japan relations, the first of which was issued under Clinton. I stress the Bush administration's heavy reliance on unilateralism and military force as important tactical deviations that left allies and others facing an unpredictable behemoth which argued that countries must be 'for us or against us' and that scrapped old alliances in favor of ad hoc 'coalitions of the willing' and 'a la carte multilateralism'. These were not the tactics of Bush I or Clinton. I also emphasize, among other things, the role of neo-conservatives and hardline conservatives in pushing the policy of regime change in the DPRK; in early confrontations with China; in the disdain shown for ROK efforts at engagement with the North; in securitizing APEC; and in the sweeping 'war on terror' and its implications, particularly in Southeast Asia. These are my central claims about the influence of Bush's domestic support base as it played out in Asia. To my thinking these were neither bipartisan nor trivial in their consequences.

Finally, the evidence is compelling that US monetary and fiscal policies, with their deleterious consequences for US influence in Asia, the rise in

American protectionism, the declining dollar, the rising dependence on Japanese and Chinese funding of the US debt, and the overall diminution of a once key tool in the American foreign policy toolkit, are the direct outgrowth of efforts to accommodate the tax-cutting demands of Bush's electoral supporters. Green largely ignores this point, but it is vital to my overall contention about domestic politics and what I believe has been a key component in the deterioration of American influence in Asia as a result of Bush administration policies.

To close on a more positive note, I believe that Green and I would concur that the new administration should not panic about its current situation in Asia. The United States is critical to Asia both economically and militarily. Most Asian governments applaud that reality and want a continued US involvement in the economics and security of their region. At the same time, I would argue, they prefer an American involvement in which their views actually influence developments rather than merely being told what America wants and being expected to accept it or be ignored. Such a more genuine partnership, I believe, would represent a positive improvement over the Bush years.

Note

- 1 Gallup Korea conducted the 1993 poll (unless otherwise noted, Gallup Korea data are from <http://gallup.chol.com>). The 1999/2000 data are from the Office of Research, US Department of State, cited in Pew Global Attitudes Project (2003: 19). Pew Research conducted the May 2003 surveys.

References

- BBC (2008) 'Global views of US improve'; accessed at http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/views_on_countriesregions_bt/463.php?nid=&id=&pnt=463, 24 October 2008.
- Pew Global Attitudes Project (2003) 'Views of a changing world, June 2003'; accessed at <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/185.pdf>.
- (2007) 'Global unease with major world powers'; accessed at <http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/256.pdf>.
- (2008) 'Global economic gloom – China and India notable exceptions: some positive signs for U.S. image'; accessed at <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=260>.
- World Public Opinion (2006) 'Chinese become sharply negative about U.S., Americans Mildly Negative about China'; accessed at http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/views_on_countriesregions_bt/189.php?lb=bras&pnt=189&nid=&id=.