
Who Threatens Whom? The ‘Chinese Threat’ and the Bush Doctrine

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‘Chinese threat’ is highly controversial in international academia. This article attempts to expose the China threat and provide a comprehensive analysis as to the extent of the so-called threat. The essence of the ‘Chinese threat’ is based on misunderstandings concerning Chinese culture, on ill-reasoned historical experiences of rising powers and conflict, on the great gap between Christian and Chinese culture, and on the inherent nature of expansiveness of the former. In contrast, the Bush Doctrine (including the preemptive strike theory) poses an actual threat to China, as does the US protection of Japan unconditioned on Japanese admission and repentance for heinous war crimes committed during World War II. Treating China as an equal is the best policy that could be employed by the West. China’s unification and domestic stability would greatly contribute to world peace, while supporting the China threat ideology would have the opposite effect.

Keywords

Chinese Threat, Bush Doctrine, Chinese Culture, Christianity, Evangelical, Axis of Evil

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I. Introduction

The term ‘Chinese Threat’ has not been a novel wording for the past twenty years. Its references date as far back to the nineteenth century, *e.g.*, in Mikhail Bakunin’s work entitled “On Statism and Anarchism,” which implies the “tremendous and dreadful threat from the East.”¹ Wilhelm II von Deutschland’s vivid cartoon “The Yellow Peril” (*Völker Europas, wahrt eure heiligsten Güter*) depicted a common European perception of China at the turn of the nineteenth century. (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Wilhelm II von Deutschland’s vivid cartoon “The Yellow Peril”²



When western and Chinese Christians were killed in China during the Boxer Uprising,³ the Eight-Power allied expeditionary force⁴ invaded China and imposed treaty terms, including a cash indemnity and grants for further occupation rights of western powers. The core of the ‘Yellow Peril’ theory lay in the fact that some Europeans regarded yellow-faced Chinese as ‘uncivilized’ and stupid locusts causing great, albeit potential, threats to the ‘civilized (western)’ world.

“The Yellow Peril” was reprised from about the mid-1990’s through present, with western politicians and scholars giving voice to the so-called ‘Chinese Threat’.

¹ Mikhail Alexandrovich Bakunin (Russian: Михаил Александрович Бакунин, 1814-1876) is considered the most influential figures of anarchism, and one of the principal founders of the ‘social anarchist’ tradition. See M. BAKUNIN, ON STATISM AND ANARCHISM (trans. into Chinese, Commercial Press, 2013). For details on the idea of “the Yellow Peril,” see An Chen, “Chinese Threat”: Sources, Essence of “Yellow Peril” and the Newest Hegemonic varieties, 33 MOD LEGAL SCI. (*Xiandai Faxue*) 10-36 (2011).

² See the introduction of ‘Yellow Peril’ <available only in Chinese>, in THE BAIDU ENCYCLOPEDIA, available at http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=WeZEvy1lzuCwEwKcFQA7301YQqm0OroQxxCYcJDQO_cop4PO2vccnvzv99qtqAtOfcHjFqTWthQBDHTbevq (last visited on May 6, 2014). Prof. An Chen simplified the “Yellow Peril Theory of Russian and German style.” See An Chen, *supra* note 1.

³ See generally J. ESHERICK, THE ORIGINS OF THE BOXER UPRISING (1988).

⁴ This force consisted of France, Britain, the US, Japan, Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy.