Contemporary Southeast Asia Vol. 28, No. 3 (2006), pp. 531–34 DOI: 10.1355/cs28-3m

ISSN 0219-797X print / ISSN 1793-284X electronic

***Beyond Liberal Democracy: Political Thinking for an East Asian Context*. By Daniel A. Bell. Princeton, New Jersey and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006. Hardcover and softcover: 379pp.**

The issues surrounding the transferability of liberal democratic governance to non-Western societies have been at the forefront of normative studies in the vast literature on democratization and democratic theory, particularly since the end of the Cold War. This period has also coincided with U.S. foreign policies of democratic enlargement and transformation, together with the robust role played by international non-government organizations in facilitating the development and institutionalization of liberal democracy and civil society in societies around the world. Paralleling these developments in international relations has been the unprecedented economic growth and development witnessed in many East Asian societies in this age of economic globalization. It is at the interface between the universal spread of liberal democratic thinking and the rise of East Asian economies that the issue of transferability of liberal democratic governance has become a significant area of intellectual and scholarly inquiry for students of democratization, political theory and philosophy, and Asian governments, politics, and philosophy. Daniel Bell's recent work, *Beyond Liberal Democracy*, makes a significant contribution to this area of study and it ought to be read by scholars who are undertaking research in this area. This work is a culmination of at least a decade of thinking and writing by a scholar who has observed closely the many intellectually significant issues that have arisen from political developments in East Asian societies during this period. Although some of the themes in this work have been examined by Bell in his previous works, most notably in *East Meets West: Human Rights and Democracy in East Asia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), this latest work covers a broad range of new issues. This combined with the elegant narrative form in which *Beyond Liberal Democracy* is written makes for an interesting and timely piece of scholarship that should attract a wide readership.

Organizationally, the book is divided into three parts, each addressing one of the components identified by Bell to be "the main hallmarks of liberal democracy — human rights, democracy, and capitalism" (p. 9), in other words, the constituent parts of democratic capitalism. Operationally, Bell has delineated these three areas by examining (1) Human Rights For An East Asian Context, (2) Democracy For an East Asian Context, and (3) Capitalism For An East Asian Context. Clearly ambitious in its scope, *Beyond Liberal Democracy*

is the product of Bell's efforts to consolidate in one comprehensive work the many issues that have arisen in recent years following the counter-arguments provided by the political, cultural, economic, and normative experiences of East Asian societies. In this sense, readers would benefit from being exposed to the intellectual evolution of the many issues raised in the debates surrounding the transferability of liberal democratic governance, as seen from the East Asian perspective. While Bell does an adequate job of laying out these arguments in a fair and balanced way, the nature of the questions raised preclude any definitive or conclusive arguments that would lay these issues to rest once and for all. Indeed, one could speculate that rather than to aim for the latter; Bell's real contribution with this book is to raise some of the fundamentally significant questions that subsequent works in this area of study would have to address and with which future scholars would have to contend.

The main argument in Bell's book is that when it comes to the question of transferability of liberal democratic governance, "one size doesn't fit all" (p. 1), and that Western advocates of the universality of liberal democracy who miss this important insight often do so through an almost unconscious sense of cultural parochialism shaped by the Western intellectual development of the ideas associated with liberal democracy. Following this argument, Bell urges Western advocates of liberal democracy to seriously engage their intellectual counterparts in East Asia, particularly those who are well versed in both Western and East Asian traditions of political philosophical thought, in order to not only come up with more sustainable human rights and liberal democratic regimes in the East, but also to appreciate some of the deficiencies of the same in the West. Here, Bell highlights one of the more enduring features of the debate over liberal democracy, and that is, the "asymmetry" between the Western and East Asian positions, whereby the former has been unwilling to concede much in the way of useful contributions that could be distilled from East Asian normative traditions and political experiences. This creates the potentially untenable situation of a uni-directional flow of ideas from the West to the rest, in this case, to East Asian societies, rather than the inherently more beneficial multi-directional flow of ideas that would create a mutually enriching and truly universal liberal democratic regime.

One of the ways in which Bell illustrates this is in Chapter 2, "Just War and Confucianism: Implications for the Contemporary World" (pp. 23–51), where he draws upon the ideals of good government from the writings of Mencius to develop a set of just war principles

which Bell then uses to critique the use of force in contemporary international relations, especially in the case of the U.S. war in Iraq. Clearly tapping into the morally ambiguous position many observers attribute to current U.S. foreign policy in Iraq, Bell uses this opportunity to demonstrate that normative and ethical arguments on the justifiable use of force in international relations need not be under the complete domain of Western theorizing. Drawing upon the Confucian heritage, this chapter makes the case for just war through the Confucian principles of good government, thereby strengthening the "normative validity" (p. 50) of alternative normative frameworks beyond just that of Western political philosophy. However, as if to foreshadow some of the inherent complexities in cross-cultural transferability of normative and ethical arguments across time and space, Bell concedes that the "ancient Confucian world is far removed from our own, and one has to be careful about drawing implications for contemporary states" (pp. 40–41). For example, in this case, one could raise the question, to what extent do these normative frameworks used to construct a Confucian just war theory influence contemporary Chinese thinking at the individual level with regard to China's role in international relations? In Chapter 3, entitled, "Human Rights and 'Values in Asia': Reflections on East-West Dialogues", Bell examines the "Asian values" challenge to the universality of liberal democratic values. Here he reiterates many of the points that have been raised in his previous work and by others working in this area. He does manage to situate these points within an interesting intellectual framework, while introducing some new arguments that have been raised by numerous participants in the many conferences/workshops that Bell has organized in collaboration with others. Just to provide one illustration of this, some of the intellectually provocative chapter subheadings include, "Asian Justifications for Human Rights: *Human Rights: Is Liberalism the Only Moral Foundation?*" (pp. 62–65) and later in this chapter, "Cross-Cultural Dialogues On Human Rights: What Is The Point?" (pp. 78–83). Bell's chapter on the role of international actors, "The Ethical Challenges of International Human Rights NGOs: Reflections on Dialogues between Practitioners and Theorists" (pp. 84–117), reiterates his message on the importance of practitioners having an appreciation of local conditions and of local knowledge in order to craft effective methods for human rights advocacy.

In Part 2, "Democracy for an East Asian Context", Bell develops a strong case for democracy led by "a ruling educated elite" (p. 153), which he claims resonates with the political culture of Confucian societies. Chapter 6, "Taking Elitism Seriously: Democracy with

Confucian Characteristics", lays this case out quite compellingly, using both textual sources and empirical cases in the East Asia region. Particularly interesting is Bell's attempt to reconcile this model of "meritocratic rule" with the liberal democratic requirement of "rule by the people" through various proposals of bicameralism (pp. 165–79). Part 3, "Capitalism For An East Asian Context" examines the unique development of capitalism in the East Asian experience. The contribution of this section to the overall argument of "one size doesn't fit all" is to demonstrate the ways in which economic development in East Asian societies was steered by the "autonomous and interventionist state" (p. 260) to achieve specific political, social, and normative goals that reflect Confucian values, as well as to achieve some of the conventional economic goals associated with Western capitalism. Foremost among these alternative Confucian goals are the securing of people's basic means of subsistence and intellectual/moral development (p. 237), and human flourishing seen within the wider context of familial ties and obligations. Bell describes one of the fundamental ways in which East Asian capitalism could be delineated from Western capitalism in the following terms: "More precisely, the Confucian view is that the good life consists first and foremost of relationships of care and affection between family members, including elderly parents, with the political implication that the state has an obligation to promote profamily policies even if they place constraints upon individual autonomy (and property rights). The Confucian view may resonate in non-Western societies that similarly prioritize relationships between family members. But Western societies shaped by the liberal emphasis on individual autonomy will likely reject this Confucian value along with its political manifestations" (p. 253).

Not surprisingly, with a book of such ambitious goals, there will inevitably be many more questions that were raised than would have been fully answered or examined. Bell attempts to cover some of these potential questions in his final section, which is written in a brief question and answer format, in which he responds to some of the anticipated criticisms and questions that would be raised by readers. In a departure from the conventional format, Bell returns to the dialogue form used in his previous writing to respond to some of the enduring questions that have been raised in this area of study, and in doing so, provides some refreshingly candid responses.

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