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** The surnames are listed in alphabetical order.*

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BOOK REVIEW

Daniel A. Bell and Wang Pei

Just Hierarchy, Why Social Hierarchies Matter in China and the Rest of the World

(USA: Princeton University Press, 2020, ISBN: 978-0-691-20088-0, 270 pp.)

The international system is going through a period in which multi-polarity has increasingly been the main characteristic identifying the whole system. Within such a multi-polar/multi-centred world order, the Eurocentric approach to politics and socio-cultural life has increasingly come under question. Besides these developments, traditional cultural identities and nationalist sentiments have become decisive dynamics in international politics. Even though the world is in need of more integrated policies against global issues such as environmental and security threats, bringing cultural differences to the fore seems to shape the near future of the world.

The cultural and national differences gaining more importance, the need for reciprocal understanding undoubtedly increase more. In such an atmosphere, writing a book that contributes to the different social values has a remarkable meaning. *Just Hierarchy* was written to highlight traditional social values behind the political and social approaches of the Asian nations. Therefore, this book should be considered as a significant contribution to the new world, which is under transformation. Moreover, as the authors are familiar with the Asian way of life and have particular proficiency in political science and sociology, the central assertion of the book gains more importance.

The book's main point can clearly be identified as distinguishing "just" and "unjust" forms of hierarchies. Authors have an intellectually significant question in their

minds. This complex set off the book's central question: which forms of hierarchy are morally justified today, and how can they be promoted in the future? (p.8) By asking this question, the authors aim to reveal the main philosophy behind the social hierarchies in East Asian countries.

Bell and Wang try to support the book's central argument by analysing five different kinds of social hierarchies in detail. The book's main argument is that *different hierarchical principles ought to govern different kinds of social relations* (p.16). For example, a hierarchical order between intimates can be identified as a "just hierarchy" only in case of it is supported by the principle of shifting roles. On the other hand, a just hierarchy between states requires a vital principle of reciprocity.

Book consists of six different chapters, and each has its arguments and explanations. The introduction has been conducted as a space for mental preparation for the rest of the book as a first chapter. The first chapter has the title "Just Hierarchy between Intimates": On the Importance of Shifting Roles, and it looks at the guiding principles of relations with friends, lovers, family members and housekeepers. The second chapter focuses on the hierarchical political system, meritocracy and its justification in the Chinese context under the title of "Just Hierarchy between Citizens: On the Importance of Service". The third chapter has the title of "Just Hierarchy between states: On the Need for Reciprocity" and take a deep look at the hierarchical world

order both in the past and the future. The last two chapters handle the issues such as "hierarchy between humans and animal" and "hierarchy between humans and machines". Within this structure, Bell and Wang try to ease in explaining their arguments in a logical flow.

In the first chapter, the authors look into the "just hierarchy between intimates" and analyse the nature of the relationship with friends, lovers, family members and housekeepers. Within this chapter, they argue that the main requirement for relations between intimates to be classified as "just hierarchy" is that *they must involve shifting roles. According to this approach, the main reason to make the caste system so morally repugnant is that hierarchical social roles are fixed for eternity* (p. 30).

In the second chapter, "just hierarchy between citizens" is examined. The main idea of imposing the efficiency of the political hierarchy in large communities is deeply mentioned through this chapter. The authors point out that political meritocracy is an ideal order, particularly for China and the rest of the East Asian nations. They also add that *political meritocracy can and should be complemented by such democratic practices as sortation, referenda and elections, consultation and deliberation, as well as the freedom of speech* (p.75). At the end of the chapter, the authors argue that *democracy is necessary to save political meritocracy in China* (p.95).

The relationship between states is analysed in the third chapter. The main requirement for harmonised hierarchical relations is presented as "the need for reciprocity". The authors firstly examine the chronological order in ancient China and India. Then they arrive at the conclusion that includes *the global order consists of a hierarchy between different states, with some states having more de facto power than others* (p.108). Bell and Wang make their claim that the current world order may be established on the principle of "one world, two hierarchical

systems" and support this claim in the next chapter.

As a substantial part of the book, the third chapter includes the most assertive idea of the book. Authors argue that a desirable model for modern inter-state relations can be established basing on the China-led traditional hierarchical relations called as tianxia.

"On this modernised account of tianxia, China is the centre of East Asia by virtue of its dominant economic status and increasing ability to project military power, and it has both extra powers and extra responsibilities in the East Asian region" (p.136).

Except for suggesting the idea of reformulating the tianxia model for the current world order, the authors assert that the United States must recognise the Chinese superiority in the East Asian region.

"If the United States genuinely wants to avoid war in the East Asian region, it should try to accommodate and make concessions to China's desire to establish a regional hierarchy with itself at the head of the table" (p.139).

"In short, the most viable path toward global peace in the region involves a bipolar world with the United States and China as heads of two regional hierarchies of states. Both China and the US recognise each other's leadership in their respective regions, and they work together to solve common global problems such as climate change" (p. 140).

The last two chapters examine the ideal form of human behaviours against animals and machines. Through these last two chapters, machines and animals are handled with a

utilitarian approach that advises human superiority.

Within the context presented above, *Just Hierarchy Why Social Hierarchies Matter in China and the Rest of the World* has great importance to those who try to understand the social and traditional values of Asian nations. As the authors also mention in the book, Confucian originated social values still maintain to affect moral and political approaches of the Asian nations. Therefore, those who realise that Eurocentric world order and social values are not enough to understand Asian nations motivation have to apply for this book.

Even though the book aims to contribute to be understood of the primary motivation behind the social values of Asian nations, the authors present a Sino-centric approach. They even impose Chinese superiority for the Asian region and clearly tell their ideas to *originate from China*, and they *write for China* (p.25). However, what the good thing is that they encourage the audience to read the book with a critical eye and open to critics on their arguments.

Even most of the arguments seem strange for those who belong to different cultural traditions from the Confucian ethics. The authors support their argument by referring to ancient philosophers such as Aristotle, Mencius, Vatsyayana, and Kant. Unfortunately, the comparative historical approach does not present a persuasive explanation in terms of the argument. Precisely because of that, the direct approach of the book should be identified as eclectic, which includes modern and traditional, progressive, and conservative approaches rather than "progressive conservative".

In a few words, Bell and Wang's *Just Hierarchy* is a remarkable contribution to the newly emerging world order, which necessitates expanding the mutual understanding and moving away from Eurocentric socio-cultural prejudices. Under the light of explanations above, *Just Hierarchy* is a reference book for those who

try to understand the Asian way of thought, especially for those studying political science, sociology and international affairs.

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