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Edward Friedman, ed. *The Politics of Democratization: Generalizing East Asian Experiences.* Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 1994. xi + 276 pp. $23.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8133-2265-0.

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This book is one of a series, the editor of which is Mark Selden, whose distinction between "issues of 'pure' versus policy-oriented research" (with his shuddered rejection of the very concept of pure research) may hint at what we are to expect from the present authors. And indeed what they offer is (to quote Jeanne Kirkpatrick) the popular American conviction that "it is possible to democratize governments, any time, anywhere, under any circumstances."[1]

Section I of this review gives a summary survey of selected parts of the work; comment is in Section II.

I: Summary survey

The book's editor, Edward Friedman, takes the lion's share of this book with over sixty pages which aim to give a frame of reference in which to place the other contributors. They are Masanori Nakamura, David Arase, and Yasunobu Sato on Japan (54 pp.); Tun-jen Cheng and Eun Mee Kim, and Heng Lee on Korea (33 pp.); Ming K. Chan on Hong Kong (20 pp.); Hung-mao Tien and Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao on Taiwan (33 pp.); and Su Shaozhi and Stephen Manning on China (27 pp.).

In his Introduction and "Theoretical Overview" (which has the same title as the book), Friedman seems to conceive democracy as a state in which accountable governments are institutionally and peacefully chosen "without fear" and by "fair rules" to deliver a transparent administration. I think he also regards judiciary independence, due process of law, and "human and civil rights" as of the essence of democracy (p. 3), but since he doesn't clearly distinguish democracy itself from either its pre-conditions (if any) or its outcomes, I may be wrong.

I may be wrong because, in his Introduction, Friedman repeatedly emphasizes that in his view, there are *no* "unique historical, cultural, and class preconditions" for democracy (p. 4), and there's nothing in Europe or the West that was peculiarly conducive to democracy. What *does* lead to democracy says Friedman, is politics. Politics themselves, however (the *only* "preconditions" of democracy) have no preconditions at all; for politics lie in "a contingent realm" (p. 41). "Rather than focusing on inherited historical preconditions," he writes,

> the universal political approach of the authors investigate political actions, leadership, alliances, programs, trade-offs, and the like. Democratization is then understood as the building of political institutions, common interests, and new forms of legitimation. Consolidating a democracy requires building political parties and alliances capable of establishing credible national agendas and control of the military, making the security forces accountable to electoral representatives, and crafting a constitutional arrangement … that will seem fair, open, and in the interests of all major social sectors, including old and new elites. (p. 5)

There's nothing at all distinctive about the West's democratic achievements. Anyone can do it, anywhere, any time: "In contrast to the lesson derived from theories premised on unique historical, cultural and class preconditions that people must wait for democracy … the lesson from a focus on ordinary politics in Japan or anywhere is that democrats can learn and then act more wisely in the here and now to secure democracy" (p. 4). What is needed for democracy is not "unique preconditions" but "generalizable politics," for "[d]emocracy in the West was not the consequence of a purported culture of Protestant individualist consciences" (p. 7). All of which is illustrated, according to Friedman, by his contributing authors. History has shown that"unique" culture has nothing at all to contribute to democracy: to the contrary, "democratic cultures are the consequences, not the causes, of democratization" (p. 20). Although Friedman nowhere elaborates a definition of democracy, he regards its definition as of such impact that influential and "narrowly self-serving" Eurocentric theorists with their "[h]istorical cultural blinders" have so grievously *misdefined* democracy as actually to conclude that Japan is not a democracy at all: "[i]n this view that mythologizes the Western experience, democracy means a clash of oppos-

ing interests resulting in the voting of 'ins' out of power. Democracy is defined so that Japan is not democratic" (p. 19).

Friedman regards this as misconceived since, by his criteria, Japan *is* democratic. Those criteria are given on page 21: 1) fair rules, 2) the possibility of peaceful challenge to existing rule, 3) the possibility of eventual compromise between government and opposition. In less than two pages (pp. 22-23) Friedman summarises the U.S.-Japanese reaction to the Cold War to serve as an example of *how* Japan then "consolidated" its democracy.

If I properly grasp him here, he claims that Japanese democracy was consolidated during that period because (and only because) Japan's socialists succeeded in "preventing Japan from military action on the side of U.S. Cold War policies. The socialists won on this agenda because … the ruling Yoshida faction and bureaucrats of the powerful Ministry of Finance were willing to forego a global politico-military role for Japan." The resultant compromise, diagnostic of democratic consolidation, was itself the result of the government's "concessions to left-wing challengers" (p. 23), *i.e.*, the result of party politics. Such political compromise in Japan did in fact "reveal a general political pattern for the consolidation of democracy" which, in the case in question, had nothing to do with any cultural or historical disposition to social harmony. It was contemporary politics, not historical culture.

The post-WW II outcome in Japan was a "grand conservative coalition, usually treated by Western analysts as so strange as to be beyond the pale of democratic mores … " (p. 46). He calls it a coalition, I think, not because the conservatives formed a coalition of parties or factions but rather because, as I understand him, the LDP formed a *de facto* coalition with the socialists to isolate the extremes of the left and right. There is a hint of a suggestion, on page 47, that Japan's "grand conservative coalition" (an oft-repeated phrase) actually constituted a *socialist* victory since, had the established middle and upper classes been isolated, they'd have been strong enough to stop any democratic consolidation. (He thinks the same happened in England in and after 1688, and in America's Federalist success.)

Friedman concludes that "[t]o understand democratization, it is useful to abandon a misleading opposition of consensual Asia versus individualistic Europe and to rethink Western experience in terms of generalizable lessons of consensus building" (p. 25).

Briskly moving from Japan in the Cold War to China's history from Confucius to the present day (pp. 24 ff.), Friedman suggests that Deng Xiaoping was much mistaken not to have foreseen that his "1989 suppression of democratic forces" would lose him a place in which "his name and fame would resound happily to Chinese ears for centuries to come" (p. 25). And an equally curt glance at Mencian Confucianism's doctrine of popular support as the only basis for legitimate rule, and Confucius's concept of the educability of everyman, and Daoism's focus of freedom, the Legalists' concept of universal equality before the law, and Mohism on egalitarianism and "the yin-yang school on compromise and dialogue … [shows that] China seems replete with tendencies favorable to democratization" (pp. 27-8).

Friedman actually says that in the light of the foregoing "[o]ne might expect that Chinese *culture* [my italics] … would lead Chinese intellectuals … to take the lead against … Leninism"; and, he adds, "[t]hat is precisely what happened in China's 1989 democracy movement" (p. 28). He therefore feels able to conclude that "all [*sic*] people and all [*sic*] cultures are alive with a democratic potential."

However, having said that "[a]ny society tends to be rich in multiple possibilities," he immediately and in the next sentence adds that "in actuality, most cultures are largely authoritarian" (p. 31). Whence I infer that his position, if coherent, is a intricate as these words suggest. He repeatedly asserts or implies that democracy is a good thing. It has always been "the simple truth that democracy was humanly attractive and dictatorship inhumanly repellent" (p. 33), and "the universal attractiveness of democracy and human rights" (p. 34) should need no demonstration.

But lest they do, he gives such demonstration, saying that democracy "can appeal to any society because democracy helps bar the evils of a permanent succession crisis that, in despotisms, continually threatens chaos"; it "offers public accountability that can limit … corruption" and blocks "arbitrary arrest, degrading treatment, internal exile, slaughter,and torture … Whether the culture values face, pride, or individual dignity, only political freedom can offer a life fit for human beings" (p. 34), for such freedom "is a facilitator of continuous progress." Yet, alas, the universal appeal of these obvious truths *was* concealed from Marx, Weber, *et al.*, who "slight the East Asian experience that the authors of this volume stress, moral legitimacy, the politics of social equity, and democratic consensus building" (p. 35).

Friedman considers the widely held view that first, since it was individualism in the West which led to its

democratic achievements and, secondly, since such individualism is lacking in East Asia, therefore East Asia will have difficulty in developing democracy. He simply denies the two premises, and claims that the observable fact of successful East Asian democracies prompts reassessment:

In the conventional wisdom, democracy in Europe is related to a rise of self-interested individuals. In East Asia, successful democracy is linked to the rise of a patriotic people willing a common, better destiny. *But that is how it actually was in the West, too.* The East Asian experience calls attention to almost buried Western essentials. Democracy succeeds best when it ends archaic humiliations imposed on a long-suffering people. Even when one looks at the revolutions of 1688, 1776, and 1789, one finds in England, America, and France, as in East Asia, an emerging group solidarity that defined the old despotic system as outmoded, traitorous, and beyond the pale of the true national community. To look back at Western experience with a vision sharpened by East Asian glasses focused on nationalistic identities permits one to see both East and West more clearly … The East Asian experience thus permits the uncovering and recovering of the West's actual political path to democracy. (p. 36, my italics)

In this connexion he considers Japan (p. 37f.):

National survival required political democracy and social equity … In Japan, the democratic constitution, social equity, land reform, and legalization of labor unions facilitated a prodemocracy consciousness … [W]ithin a democratic consensus, conservatives, needing a regular popular mandate, offered the Shinto-Buddhist-Confucian people of Japan a social equity pact that could facilitate national consensus [for] …[c]ommon identity does [!] matter. Democracy is not easy to consolidate in a nation-state era if there is no shared national identity … [and] the conventional wisdom that dismisses East Asia because people there are supposedly homogeneous could not be more wrong. It is *wrong everywhere* because, when closely examined, *all* constructed national identities are replete with an almost endless diversity of particularisms from histories of conquest, sectarian religious conversions, regional affections, and speech differences … In the chapters on democratization in Taiwan and Korea the authors correct the error of dismissing East Asia's achievement with the misleading assertion that it is uniquely homogeneous.

That surely is not how the fudatories of Tokugawa Japan conceived each other. A politics replete with regionalisms, particularisms, and conflicting interest is *ubiquitous.* … That divisive danger was softened during democratization in Japan, Taiwan, and Korea because of political mobilization against a common threat to all in the nation and because of governmental policies fostering greater equity among diverse social groups. Politics can encourage local communalisms to find a fair stake in a national democratic community, a compacted patriotism" [my italics]

Contrary to the "Occidentalism" of "self-serving" and "blinkered" Eurocentrics that there is something "culturally peculiar about the West," the West is not that different from the East for, as in the East, democracy is also under threat in the West, where

[r]eligious or *cultural*fundamentalism, racist nativism, and military chauvinism still threaten democracy. As with those French forces backing fascism in the Nazi era, as with the racism that facilitated America's civil war, as with the embrace of local ethnonationalisms against the United Kingdom, political threats to democratic consolidation persist … *The politicization of ethnic, regional, religious, and other cultural identities can challenge democracy anywhere.* (pp. 38f, my italics).

Such Eurocentric Occidentalism is also invoked by Orientalist Asian "dictators to legitimate their anti-democratic cause by contending that their people are not yet ready for democracy," as did the old French counter-revolutionary monarchists. Such "super patriots" as " Korean reactionaries, Taiwan militarists, or Mainland Chinese xenophobes" also pretend that democratic movements will cause national disintegration. They claim that Western "individualism" is "hostile to virtually all *cultural* communities" whereas, in fact, "the actual creation of national culture in the democratizing West was also in conflict with the West's subsequent mythos of rational secular individualism" (p. 40, my italics).

Democracy was first said to be confined to Calvinists, then to all Protestants, then to all Christians:

But by the end of the twentieth century, after lengthy eras of democracy in Hindu-Muslim-Sikh-Buddhist India and Shinto-Buddhist-Confucian Japan and its spread to Confucian East Asians, Muslim Albanians, animistic Pacific Islanders, and Buddhist Mongols, one might think that this diversity would discredit all notions of peculiar cultural, value or socioeconomic prerequisites of democracy (p. 40).

Friedman, however, still allows some connexion between the economy and democracy. While on page 2 he rejects the "conventional wisdom" that "a large middle-class socioeconomic foundation" is a "precondition" of democracy (repeated on p. 12 and 32), he also says that economic growth can "help" democratization

(p. 33). And he remarks that "Japan's grand conservative coalition actually has much to teach about … a linkage of a legitimate polity to economic growth." However, he immediately, on the same page, claims that in Chile and Taiwan "democratization was made possible not by economic growth but by political struggles," and that "[p]olitics … is not an immediate reflection of some deeper economic reality. Democracy is not determined by economic preconditions" (p. 51).

That last quoted sentence seems contradicted by Masanoru Nakamura on page 70 of his following contribution, "Democratization, Peace, and Development in Occupied Japan." His main concern is with the politics and economics of the Reverse Course and the Dodge Line. He believes that economic "stability and growth could encourage both labor and business to abide by the rules of a democratic political process" (p. 69). And epitomises the relation between politics and economics by saying that

The Japanese experience after the occupation reveals *mutual* support between democracy and development. The democratization of economic reward was only delayed, not denied. In the era of high-speed economic growth, movements for wage increases, social welfare, and social security policies were institututionalized. In contrast, in the post-oil shock years when economic growth was sluggish, people tended toward conservatism, and the movement for further democratic progress receded. (p. 70, my italics)

That passage, which continues his identification, on page 62, of democracy with "progressivism" and of conservatism with anti-democracy, also continues his claim that there are indeed economic and ideological "mainstays" for political structures (p. 64).

David Arase's chapter, on "Japan's Foreign Policy and Asian Democratization," explores Japan's shift from the "Yoshida doctrine" of "low-cost, low-risk" dependency on America to an independent international influence consistent with its economic power. Japan, "without being selfish or crudely interventionist, can link its resources to the promotion of democracy and human rights in the countries of democratizing Asia … [but] has not grasped the opportunity to lead Asia toward democracy despite the many gains and modest costs involved, due to domestic factors" (pp. 83 and 96). The *reason* for this woeful dereliction is obvious to Arase:

The insulated, autonomous bureaucracy serving primarily the interest of the dominant conservative coalition keeps Japan from embracing democracy in foreign policy. This gap can hurt Japan's search for an appropriate set of values that are classically 'political,' that is, having to do with defining those moral and spiritual values that accompany the good life not just for Japanese but for all of humanity" (p. 97).

In this connexion, he is particularly severe on Motofumi Asai's claim that "the true nature of the Tiananmen incident is unclear," since the participants "interpreted democracy as all democrats do, and no one credits the Li Peng government's account of the massacre, of peaceable soldiers responding to violent attacks by hoodlums" (p. 91).

As with Friedman, Arase offers no extended examination of the nature of democracy, or of what he takes democracy to be, although at one point he explicitly recognises the possibility of a different view from that presupposed by Friedman:

… Ardath Burks notes that Japanese democracy 'opts in favour of the individual person rather than for individualism. The person often achieves security in the group. … To the Japanese, it is the right to belong to a group and to become involved in a demanding but protective world of duties that is the core of human rights.' *Equating democracy with individualism may be problematic.* Nevertheless, calls for human rights and government accountability are compatible with *all* Asian systems and portend continued democratic development in ways suitable to these Asian societies" (p. 96, my italics)

Yasunobu Sato's "New directions in Japanese foreign policy … "considers the Tiananmen incident, Japanese promotion of human rights and democracy in Asia, and ODA. His consideration of these topics is little (if anything) more than a repetition of standard and well-known slightly left of center critics such as Asia Watch, Amnesty International, *et al.*.

I am sorry to ignore the contributions on Hong Kong, Korea, Taiwan and China, but this review is already far too long. Stephen Manning's final contribution, however, merits attention because of its apparent inconsistency with the over-all Friedmanian orientation of the book. Manning does echo Friedman's lamentations about the "Eurocentric" and "self-congratulatory" thesis that "posits democratization as a historically specific phenomenon" etc.

But he then considers "the social and the cultural" conditions (or "preconditions") of democracy (pp. 232-33) and concludes that "[s]ocial pluralism, that is, the existence of a variety of groups that are independent of the state, is conducive to, indeed a crucial precondition for, democratic development … " (p. 233). He thinks that

has been demonstrably so in China so that "the obstacle to democratizing therefore seems to Chinese analysts to be not in economics but in social values. Democracy requires a transvaluation of social values (p. 238)" Such a "shift in mind-set is perhaps a first and necessary step in the eventual emergence of a genuine civil society (*loc. cit.*)."

The same, however, cannot be said for that beteist of the *bete noir*, culture, where he centers on the Beast with seven heads and ten horns, the apocalyptic Huntington, whom he rebuts by appeal to Barrington Moore *et al.*

In his conclusion he briefly mentions "six additional explanatory variables [which] together can comprise a composite theory of democratization." They are foreign relations, economic development, economic growth-rate, income distribution, international debt, and the economic system type. "Of these eight environment variables," he writes, "only two–a market-oriented economic system and an independent and autonomous civil society–correlate strongly with a democratic transition" (p. 243). Politics is in the drivers seat but "[t]his is not to urge unidimensionality, and ignore other, non-political variables" (p. 244)–all of which seems inconsistent with Friedman.

Section II: Comment

I think most political theorists distinguish, albeit intuitively, between matters of political fact on the one hand and, on the other, concepts used in the description of those facts; between empirical political science and political philosophy. It's often hard to decide where one ends and the other begins but, at least ideally, the distinction (even when made only to be rejected) is tolerably familiar.

I think it's also fair to claim that there is a large class of terms, of which "democracy" is one, which are *essentially* ambiguous, or contestable. However, lest I be seen as idiosyncratically question-begging, let me quote A.W. Sparkes's *Talking Politics: A Wordbook*:

It is not news that the words 'democracy', 'democratic', 'democrat' are both ambiguous and vague, that they have 'emotive force' and all the rest of it. As Hobbes might say, many apply the word 'democratic' to any socio-political thing *liked*, merely because they like it ... What is undemocratic is the socio-political *misliked*" (p. 148)

"This kind of talk," claims Sparkes, "has nothing to recommend it" which, if not new, seems (if one might venture) true.

I am therefore bound to note as a massive weakness of these essays the failure to grasp what Sparkes thought to be elementary. Thus we find Arase saying that the Tiananmen participants "interpreted democracy as all democrats do" (p. 91). *All democrats* interpret democracy the same way? I'd not have thought it needed a Sparkes to tell us the assumption is indefensible. But there it is.

While Arase's remark is the *locus classicus* of this weakness, the same weakness does rather run through the whole book, and I'll concentrate my attention on it.

Human Rights

Nothing in this book would suggest that it's perfectly well-known that the concept of "natural rights" (the old-fashioned term for "human rights") was rejected by Burke, Hume, Hegel, Bentham, Mill, Marx and (by implication) Austin and Wittgenstein. Bentham, it is notorious, dismissed the concept as "nonsense." These philosophers may have been mistaken (for some sort of "transcendental deduction" may be conceivable) but it seems reckless to develop a whole argument as though they'd never spoken. And that seems even less defensible when, as I believe, virtually everything that most believers in human rights want to claim can equally be claimed without any reference whatever to these fictions. The only loss (I assume) will be that of a spurious sanction, for it may sound grander (to the uncritical), more persuasive (to the many) to say "everybody has a human right to liberty" than to say "I, Eric Dowling, would like everybody to be free if that were possible."

While its not in place here to argue the case against the concept of human rights, it is in order to suggest that it not be taken for granted in the way that these authors have, particularly since they use the term so extensively in their references to other central concepts, like democracy.

Friedman's enthusiasm for the virtues of democracy, its "simple truth" and "universal attractiveness," (obvious to everyone of sound mind and honest disposition) is reminiscent of the earlier Western enthusiasm for the virtues of Christianity, similarly obvious and ready for export to the benighted heathen. And when Asian leaders fail to share that enthusiasm they are traduced as dishonestly seeking to "legitimate their anti-democratic cause" etc. But I can't see that this enthusiasm for democracy is any less "Eurocentric" than Christianity was, nor any more obvious in its virtues. Friedman seems to assume that it is *perfectly* obvious that the future could hold nothing better than democracy. He may, however, be mistaken: it's not impossible. Enthusiasm is no substitute for analysis and demonstration.

Neither is it obvious that the concept of "Asian values" is, for all its confusion, wholly without merit. Fried-

man speaks of "the error of ... the misleading assertion that it [East Asia] is uniquely homogeneous. That surely is not how the fudatories of Tokugawa Japan conceived each other. A politics replete with regionalisms, particularisms, and conflicting interest is *ubiquitous*." All of which seems to me a gross over-simplification, unfortunately very common and thoroughly confusing.

Here I may refer to a discussion in The Dead Fukuzawa Society between T.J. Pempel and Brian McVeigh on 27 and 28 May 1997 on the topic of "homogenized Japan," in which McVeigh pushed the Friedman line. Pempel simply invited comparison of Japan with Switzerland (on cultural homogeneity), U.S. (on ethnic sub-grouping), Australia (on immigrant sub-grouping) and concluded a longish rejoinder by inviting McVeigh to "compare the various public opinion surveys done among citizens of the OECD; Japanese almost invariably come up with far less deviation from the national mean than do most other countries ... Do Japanese differ on their answers? Sure; but far less than the Americans, the Italians, or Belgians. You want to stress, it seems, that 'Japanese differ from on another.' I don't disagree; I suggest that these differences are, generally, far less than in numerous other countries." While it does seem to me that Pempel is right and Friedman and McVeigh are wrong, what is even more obvious is that what Friedman takes to be obvious is obviously not obvious.

To come to Arase's remark, quoted above, that Ardath Burks noted that for the Japanese "The person often achieves security in the group. ... To the Japanese, it is the right to belong to a group and to become involved in a demanding but protective world of duties that is the core of human rights." (Rikki Kersten elaborates a little on this in her *Democracy in Post-war Japan: Maruyama Masao and the Search for Autonomy,* p. 213.) Arase agrees with Kersten when he comments that *[e]quating democracy with individualism may be problematic,* and his unease is understandable, since he thinks that all democrats interpret democracy the same way.

It is therefore most unfortunate that Arase and Friedman failed to see the full significance of Burks's remarks, not merely for their understanding of Japanese politics, but also for their understanding of the concepts of democracy and consensus.

Finally, I should note that Friedman's concept of democracy as essentially incorporating "fair rules" is not all that obviously consistent with his belief that Japan is a democracy. For it hasn't seemed that obvious to the many critics who have noted its judiciary as *typically* refusing to accept the most obvious of "implied" rights (when claimed against the state), as preferring (unlike the democratic High Court of Australia) to leave legislation to the democratically elected legislators. Which rather suggests that the conceptual analysis of "democracy" is more complex than these authors have presupposed.

Note

[1]. See Selden's introduction to a symposium "Asia, Asian Studies, and the National Security State" in *The Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Jan.-March 1997 and Jeanne Kirkpatrick, as quoted by D. K. Mauzy in "The human rights and Asian values debate in Southeast Asia ... ," *Pacific Rev.*, 10:2, 1997, p. 214.

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