

THE BEST CONFUCIAN HYBRID MERITOCRACY-DEMOCRACY FOR LIBERAL DEMOCRACIES

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ABSTRACT: *Several contemporary Confucian philosophers have posited differing hybrid views fusing meritocracy to democracy. There is a good deal of interest in a meritocracy in contemporary Confucian thought, and such a view perhaps should receive more serious consideration in liberal democratic thought since it may make for a stronger form of government when appended to democracy. In this paper, four contemporary hybrid theorists who combine elements of a meritocracy with a democracy are critically analyzed concerning an ability for their views to be instantiated in liberal democracies for the legislative branch only. Finally, I provide a modified hybrid view for the legislature that I believe is the best fit for current liberal democracies.*

Keywords: *contemporary Confucian philosophy, democracy, meritocracy, political philosophy*

1. MERITOCRACY

This inquiry is concerned with which hybrid meritocracy and democracy theory is the best for liberal democracies for the legislative branch in today's time. As such, our focus is on contemporary political philosophy rather than on the history of philosophy. By "best", I mean which hybrid theory is instrumentally the best for liberal democracies in producing good outcomes. By "good outcomes", I'm simply interested in which is more likely to lead to producing meritorious leaders and to having political stability with a lower likelihood of having revolts, civil wars, political upheavals, etc. In this respect, this inquiry is specifically interested in and qualified to which hybrid theory is more likely to produce good decision-makers in legislative offices and to lead to political stability in liberal democracies.

Meritocracy is rule by the merited (Jiang 2013, Bell 2013, 2015, Chan 2013, 2014, Bai 2013, 2021, Fan 2013). It has its roots in Confucius and Plato and is in significant

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part a virtue political philosophy. For example, Confucius' focus on the importance of having merited rulers helped lead to the imperial examination system in China starting in the Sui dynasty. Furthermore, Plato despised democracy as it easily can lead to the rule of incompetent demagogues who can sway the ignorant masses. Rather, he advocated for those who had, for example, prior military experience and high honors in education to be the political leaders of a society. One should have merit to lead.

Meritocracy stands opposed to the unadulterated rule by the largely ignorant masses that is a common concern with a democracy. There are stringent merit-based criteria for being able to attain office in a meritocracy, where such additional standards are to try and make it more likely that a leader has the intellectual and moral virtues, such as being wise, fair, diligent, generous, open-minded, caring, compassionate, curious, creative, just, insightful, etc. Although a meritocracy that has rigid merit-based standards for obtaining political office has roots in Ancient Western thought and Eastern Confucian philosophy, it's most prominently and widely discussed today in contemporary Eastern Confucian philosophy. Merit most assuredly is valued in Western thought historically and in contemporary philosophy, such as for judicial branches. However, having rigorous merit-based criteria, like testing and educational requirements, for legislature has been most developed in contemporary times by a number of Confucian thinkers as contrasted with Western thinkers who mostly focus on deliberative democracy for legislature.¹ Thus, its modern form falls under a Confucian philosophy (Wong 2011).

Even in democracies, there's generally small meritocratic elements in the legislative branches, such as having age restrictions for experience. However, such minimal requirements stand in stark contrast to contemporary Confucian philosophies that incorporate elements like actual testing and/or educational requirements. Democracies only may have nominal meritocratic restrictions in legislature and don't incorporate significant merit-based criteria like testing and/or educational requirements to pass the sufficiency threshold of being a meritocracy traditionally set by meritocratic philosophers. Hence, we will call countries like the U.S. "democracies", as they are ordinarily referred to by philosophers and the folk, rather than being meritocracies or hybrid views. Following established practice in contemporary Eastern political philosophy, we will call theories that do incorporate things like actual testing and/or educational requirements along with a democratic vote as being hybrid meritocracy-democracy views. Of course, one may define terms like "democracy", "meritocracy", and "hybrid meritocracy-democracy" however one may want as long as one maintains consistency. Yet, regardless of naming conventions, the important substantive difference is that what I call a "hybrid view" allows for a democratic vote and has things like certain merit-based testing and/or educational requirements for leaders. This differs in substance from what I call a "democracy" in that a democracy allows for a democratic vote but has no significant merit-based requirements like testing and/or educational requirements for leaders. It is this substantive difference that distinguishes what I call a "hybrid view" from "democracy".

¹ See Jason Brennan's (2016) epistocracy as an exception.

There are many different versions of a meritocracy. On a pure meritocracy one may maintain that leaders are selected by a committee or examination branch based on satisfying standards like education and testing requirements. Modern meritocratic theories commonly are hybridized with democracies. For instance, since people tend to be more knowledgeable about local matters, one may hold a democracy at the local level of politics but a pure meritocracy at the national level (Bell 2015). One can maintain a bicameral legislature with checks and balances where one house is democratically elected and the second upper house is appointed based on merit, such as possibly through exams, successful past experience in local government as measured by indexes like economic growth and crime reduction, and being recommended by senior officials (Chan 2013, 2014 Bai 2013).

My purpose here is not to argue for a general justification for a hybrid view over competitors like Confucian democracies (Kwon 2020, Jin 2021). Confucian democratic theorists believe we can have meritorious leaders without having anything like formal merit-based testing and/or education requirements. Engaging this debate would constitute its own separate paper. My scope is limited to just assessing hybrid theories against other hybrid theories. Yet, it will be instructive to give a few of my arguments for a general hybrid theory for background information purposes only. However, they won't be exhaustive. It's important to keep in mind that the main aim of this paper is limited to adjudicate between contemporary hybrid meritocracy-democracy theories concerning which one is a better fit for current liberal democracies *if* one was going to make such a hybridization. We are assuming that we're going to implement a hybrid view.

One argument for a meritocratic component is that medical doctors in the U.S. must take relevant classes, such as biology, physics, and chemistry, as an undergraduate student, pass tests on these courses with an extremely high grade average, attend medical school, and must take medical entrance and board exams. They must be in residency to gain experience. By analogy, national politicians, with the fate of many more lives on their hands, must also acquire an education and experience in political leadership and must demonstrate their virtue and merit. If we have such requirements for a medical doctor, then how much the more we should have such requirements for those future politicians who will make decisions on a nation's healthcare, economy, education, warfare, environment, laws, etc. There is good reason for having requirements to be a doctor given the gravity of the job and the technical skill required. All the reason more to have stringent criteria for being a political leader given the gravity of the job and the more diverse technical knowledge required to perform the job well.

When one stops to really think about, it's astonishing that there's no relevant education and political experience requirements generally in liberal democracies for the most important jobs in a country, but there rightly are relevant requirements in the hiring process for many other jobs that are far less in importance even when working for the state, such as being a civil servant, CIA operative, police officer, public university professor, military officer, accountant, lawyer, engineer, business administrator, secretary, scientist, etc. It's utterly bizarre when one stops to think about

it that pretty much any woman or man off the street can run for national office and occupy the most important jobs in a country despite a complete lack of education, political experience, and clean criminal record.

A meritocracy also attempts to limit the ability for the largely ignorant masses to vote on a candidate who lacks the knowledge and experience to do a good job. Data from political science demonstrates that most citizens generally don't know how to vote in ways that promote their own interests. Experiments show that they might know what kinds of outcomes would serve their own interests, but they lack the social scientific knowledge, such as of economics, crime statistics, or even the policy preferences of candidates, to know how to vote for policies or candidates that will produce their desired outcomes (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, Althaus 2003). In the U.S., about 75 percent of actual voters don't know what the policy preferences are of the democratic and republican candidates (Althaus 2003, Somin 2013), let alone most other relevant facts from the social sciences needed to make informed voting decisions. Voters largely do worse than a coin flip on distinguishing platform positions between the candidates on issues such as abortion, the environment, and welfare.

Moreover, experiments show that democratic deliberation tends to cause apathy and move people further to the extremes (Kerr et al. 1996, Downs 1989, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002, Mendelberg 2002). Political psychology data shows that rational deliberation adds nothing more than if people just baldly stated their position without any discussion. Rational deliberation, discussion, and debate don't change people's minds to the other side but can have a corrupting influence. Yet, irrational influences in deliberation, such as a candidate's looks and a candidate's use of emotionally charged and biased words, can have a strong influence for change.

Moreover, data shows that most vote based on their social identities and partisan loyalties (Tajfel 1981, Westen 2008, Haidt 2012). When the policy preferences of a party change, its members eventually for the most part fall in line. The phenomenon of tribalism has been well found and replicated in political psychology, where people will even deny basic truths of the world and common sense morality to maintain consistency with their tribe. Most people will vote for their tribal leader even though he or she is incompetent, bigoted, or corrupt.

The above are serious problems for a democracy, where appending a strong meritocratic element may make it more likely that virtuous people will be leaders. A democracy leaves open the serious possibility that a demagogue who is ignorant, unjust, and/or bigoted will attain office.

This ends the merely background information of some of my arguments for a meritocracy component that I don't fully defend here. We now turn to our primary objective. *If* a meritocracy is to be hybridized with a liberal democracy for the legislative branch only, which hybrid view instrumentally is more likely to have political stability and virtuous leaders? Notice that this inquiry is a conditional one on *if* we were to implement a hybrid view in liberal democracies. Recall that given our limited and specified scope, we will not address general objections against hybrid theories from the likes of democratic theorists from the West or from democratic Confucian philosophers, although I understand hybrid theorists to already have

addressed these objections sufficiently.² Our scope is narrowed to be only confined from within hybrid theories themselves and assess hybrid theories against other hybrid theories. Which hybrid view is best for liberal democracies if we had to implement one?

We first will have the space to only explore four of what I understand to be the most prominent existent contemporary meritocracy-democracy hybrid views. They come from Bell, Jiang, Chan, and Bai. Although they don't necessarily posit their theories explicitly as ones that should replace liberal democracies, it will be beneficial to see what kind of hybrid is the best fit for liberal democracies. I address each author in turn as different objections apply to different authors. For example, stability concerns can be levied against Bell, Jian, and Chan but not against one of Bai's models. An objection that a theory succumbs to tribalism is applicable to the likes of Chan but not to one of Bai's views on the upper house of legislature. A lack of merit in certain national legislators can be levied against one of Bai's models but not Bell's.

Also, this inquiry of adjudicating between the main hybrid theories is for the most part absent in the field. Moreover, this essay provides another contribution to the literature in that it compares and contrasts the modern hybrid theories relative to liberalism. This essay shifts the focus of examining good hybrid views for certain East Asian countries like China, Singapore, and Hong Kong to what is the best hybrid for liberal democratic legislatures that lack a significant meritocratic component, such as in many countries in the West. Another contribution is that I'll posit a different modified hybrid view as being the best for liberal democracies.

2. BELL'S CHINA MODEL

The latest hybrid view held by Daniel Bell (2016) in his mature thought is called "The China Model". Local positions are acquired using a pure popular vote. The likes of Aristotle and Rousseau have realized that democracy works best in small communities. In local politics, people are more likely to know the candidates and their abilities, and the issues generally are simpler, such as whether we should use funds to have better local roads. Also, the topics are closer to home and can provide more motivation for people to get involved and learn about issues. Moreover, matters generally are less costly at the local level, where mistakes on whether to upgrade public roads aren't as important as making mistakes on going to war. On the China Model, regional offices can be either democratic or meritocratic, where experimentation of political systems is allowed at this level to see what leads to the best results. However, national offices are held only by appointment based on merit by a committee or examination branch with no popular vote. Merit can be based on factors like examinations, education, and successful experience in local government, which demonstrates leadership qualities, social skills, and the ability to make good decisions in the real world.

One might object that a national official could potentially stay in office for too long of a time, which increases the odds of behind the scenes corruption. It's possible that a

² The "West" is meant to refer to Western liberal democratic countries such as in the U.S., England, Europe, Canada, etc.

national politician continually demonstrates his or her high degree of merit such that he or she serves long and multiple terms in office potentially over a lifetime. However, as history has shown that power can corrupt, this could lead to corrupt officials who are sensible enough not to get caught by the examination branch. However, Bell can respond to this by limiting the amount of terms an official may serve.

Nevertheless, a problem with applying Bell's model to liberal democracies is that it goes against the core value of democracy in liberal societies. Liberal values place heavy emphasis on democratic values like freedom of expression in voting for national legislative positions, equality in that everyone gets to vote, and autonomy in being able to cast a vote for many national legislative offices. While democracy at the local level is fine in this regard, a lack of democracy at the national level is not. Relative to liberal societies, democracy carries overriding value and is engrained within the identities and values of its citizens. It's a fundamental individual right at least relative to liberal democratic countries. Thus, an absence of democracy at the national level will lead to political instability, which could result in chaos. Democracy is so engrained within the culture of liberal societies that there will be an uproar if people are denied the ability to vote for national legislative positions. These are significant problems for instantiating the China Model in liberal democracies at our current time. Although Bell likely will agree with my points here as he acknowledges that The China Model is not meant to be implemented in liberal democracies but more so relative to those Asian countries that have values similar to China (2016), we still can conclude that this model isn't a good fit for liberal democracies like the U.S. as it denies some basic liberal values. Thus, it likely will lead to political chaos and upheaval.

3. JIANG & CHAN'S HYBRID

Jiang Qing (2013) offers a hybrid with three legislative houses. There's a House of the People, where representatives are elected by what he calls "Western democracy". The House of Exemplary Persons is composed of Confucian scholars who are knowledgeable about politics, have passed exams, and have successful experience in lower-level offices. The House of the Nation is led by a direct descendant of Confucius. This house is further constituted by members who are direct descendants of past rulers, generals, judges, or other such historical community leaders that had merit. Each house is separate and deliberates on their own. Here, a bill must pass at least two of the houses to become law. However, the House of Exemplary Persons has veto power. These three houses together choose who is the head of the executive and judicial branches of the state by way of consensus.

Joseph Chan (2013, 2014) first distinguishes between *ex ante* and *ex post* methods for bringing about meritorious rule. An *ex ante* system selects and places the merited in office while an *ex post* method helps those who already have taken office, such as a child emperor, to acquire the intellectual and moral virtues through education. Chan propounds an *ex ante* hybrid theory with a bicameral legislature; this is a view that was similarly adopted in the earlier writings of Bell. This system adopts a Confucian perfectionism where leaders promote the well-being of the people, and the people

willingly consent to the rulers. The first chamber is democratically elected, and members of the second chamber are appointed based on merit. Yet, Chan eschews the requirement of taking exams to demonstrate merit in favor of getting in by being recommended by senior officials, staff, and members of the press. At the end of the day, senior public servants, senior political staff members, and senior journalists together pick who gets in the second chamber. They will evaluate the moral and intellectual virtues of candidates. Chan contends that these three groups are more reliable indicators of moral merit than moral exams because people may know ethics but lack the habit to act ethically in the real world. Those who are selected supposedly will have demonstrated their intellectual and moral merit in the field of the real world. On the other hand, senior members will know the true character of an individual. Chan says that those in the second chamber likely will be older and experienced given the requirements for having to know senior officials well so that they can vouch for you. This will require a lot of time and experience in government. Thus, the older and more experienced politicians in the second chamber likely will have had their thirst for power already quenched in virtue of their age and experience. The second chamber likely will be less corrupt than the democratically elected first house, and they only can serve two terms. Moreover, given their recommendations by local elders and close political acquaintances, this makes it even more likely that they'll be virtuous.

Chan also states that which chamber carries more power over the other depends on the level of virtue of the public. If the level is low, the second chamber must be stronger than the first since the first chamber has members that were voted in generally by those who lack the relevant virtues. Chan's theory is similar to Jiang's in that there are separate democratic and meritocratic chambers at the national level, but they differ in important respects. For example, Chan's system lacks Jiang's third chamber regarding the House of the Nation.

Both theories allow for a significant democratic element at the national level which is unlike Bell's view. This gives an advantage to both theories over Bell's position relative to liberal values in offering greater stability. However, the House of the Nation constituted by descendants of historical figures is heavily grounded in a communitarian sense of identity and legitimacy of the state. The idea is that who we are as a people and state is intimately tied and shaped by past historical actors. This tradition and history itself must be properly represented in government with the House of the Nation because it provides partial normative legitimacy to a state. For Jiang, a state is fully legitimate if it has two additional sources of legitimacy also present besides historical legitimacy. There should be legitimacy grounded in a degree of democratic consent represented with the House of the People and the legitimacy of heaven represented in the House of Exemplary Persons.

Yet, concerning the House of the Nation, just because important political persons were in a country's past, this doesn't itself provide good reason to believe that descendants of such persons should be present in government today. For, it could be the case that the descendants of historical heroes are so incompetent, bigoted, or of such buffoonery that their very presence in government itself throws into question the legitimacy of the state and creates immense problems for government. An appeal to

tradition is fallacious and isn't by itself sufficient to generate normative legitimacy for the House of the Nation. Second, even if we assume for the sake of argument that ties to tradition and history provide partial legitimacy to a state, such a link to the past need not be represented by descendants of historical actors in a house of legislature. Rather, the fact that the state still contains certain beneficial structural aspects of governments in the past can represent the continuity with tradition that produces the desired degree of legitimacy. For example, in the U.S., maintaining a democracy for the legislature with two houses, separation of powers, and checks and balances as the forefathers did can help provide historical legitimacy to a government. That laws are produced from a system that at least has some of the same government structures as the founders put in place can be enough to generate historical legitimacy. The House of the Nation is not necessary.

Also, relative to a liberal democracy, there's still the problem that legislation may pass that was not accepted by the House of the People. It may have passed by way of the other two houses but wasn't approved by the democratically elected chamber. This countermands the basic liberal right of having democratically elected representatives of people in some way participate in the construction of established laws, amongst other basic liberal values that are overrun. Hence, this denial of such individual rights likely will lead to political and social instability in relevant countries.³

This possible instability and absence of democratic influence also applies to Chan's view in that the second meritocratic chamber consistently will override the first democratic chamber in liberal democracies, rendering the first chamber impotent. Legislature will be a "democracy" in name only. Given that the above political psychology experiments demonstrate that the masses are largely politically ignorant and lack many of the intellectual political virtues, Chan's hybrid in liberal democratic countries will have the second house as always overriding the democratically elected first house. However, democratic values for the legislative branch are fundamental in liberal societies. Given the prominence of democratic values relative to liberal societies, this strongly speaks against Jiang and Chan's hybrids from being a good fit for liberal societies due to stability concerns.

To be sure, there are bicameral legislatures, such as in the United Kingdom, that have a democratically elected lower house (House of Commons in the U.K.) and an unelected upper house (House of Lords in the U.K.). However, taking the U.K. as the paradigm example, the lower house is much stronger than the upper house. The democratically elected house carries much greater weight in making legislation, which is consistent with liberal democratic values and adds to greater stability. This runs contrary to the power balance as stated by the likes of Jiang and Chan. Moreover, in other countries, like in the current U.S., the idea of one person, one vote for the legislature is so sacred that an unelected upper house will be viewed as unacceptable and outrageous by the people (Bai 2020). Having an unelected upper house will likely lead to turmoil and instability in certain liberal democracies.

³ For other criticisms of Jiang by the likes of Chan, Bell, Bai, Chenyang Li, and Wang Shaoguang, see Jiang (2013).

Moreover, at the national level, once some legislators are elected by democratic vote, they likely will be seen by the people in certain liberal countries like the U.S. as the only ones with legitimacy (Bell 2016). As a descriptive matter, members of the other houses will not be viewed as legitimate.⁴ We see this even in East Asian countries, such as in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, where people came to prefer Western-style democracies over Confucian paternalism once getting a taste of democracy. The human acceptance and desire for democracy once experienced at the national level is such that people won't question a democratic framework for the state even when it results in electing incompetent and morally bankrupt leaders they despise. Having only one house that's democratically elected while the other(s) may continuously override it won't be acceptable to the people in liberal societies, and this will lead to political and social instability. If Jiang and Chan then reduce the influence of the meritocratic house to a more nominal role, then the instrumental value of having more meritocratic influence in political decision-making becomes minimal.

An additional problem with Chan's view is that relying on recommendations from senior officials, staff, and the press in order to establish moral merit may be problematic. Given tribalism, senior officials generally may vouch for anyone who shares the same party affiliation even though they are corrupt or have questionable characters. Take for example the recent strong backing of Republican senators in the U.S. for Judge Robert Kavanaugh for the Supreme Court; this is a judge who was a Republican nominee. The judicial branch in the U.S. is based on a supposed meritocracy rather than democracy. He was charged with alleged sexual assault crimes but was approved as meritorious by the Republican controlled Senate without even launching a full investigation into the matter. Senior politicians and staff in the Republican Party overwhelmingly approved of Kavanaugh as did the conservative media.

4. BAI'S CONFU-CHINA

Bai Tongdong doesn't maintain a concrete theory of the best state (2013, 2021). Rather, he provides several options of a hybrid view that he sees as acceptable without endorsing one over the other. He calls his overarching hybrid, "Confu-China". He writes that since people are more likely to be informed of and engaged with local matters than national ones, a democracy should be held at the local level. However, people can be indifferent or uninformed on more regional and national issues. Hence, we have Bai's first set of acceptable options for dealing with this problem. Route A is where people need to pass a test or take a class on politics to be able to vote. Similar to John Stuart Mill's preferred state, votes can count for more or less depending on education level or test scores. So that anyone can receive the proper education for

⁴ There's a descriptive sense of "legitimacy" that measures for whether the people understand their government to be legitimate. This is a sociological issue. Meanwhile, there's a normative sense of "legitimacy" as to what the conditions are for a government to actually be morally legitimate. For example, Jiang's aforementioned tripartite theory of legitimacy is a normative theory of legitimacy. In this instance, I'm using only the descriptive sense of legitimacy.

passing any relevant tests in a meritocratic system, Bai states that there needs to be free public education.

A problem with this theory is that studies show that even knowledgeable and high information voters actually don't generally agree on a variety of issues (Cohen 2003, Kahan et al. 2013, Achen and Bartels 2016). Rather, they vote based on their social identities and partisan loyalties. When the policy preferences of a party change, its members eventually for the most part fall in line. For example, experiments show that voters will approve a policy X if they're told that it's what their party approves of, but they'll reject this same policy if they're told that it's endorsed by the opposing party rather than their own (Cohen 2003).

Kahan et al. (2013) ran a study showing that people with high level math and science skills generally did better on practical problems, like whether to use a skin cream for a rash or not, when having to assess tricky scientific data and probabilities of success on the matter. However, they found that when given issues discussed in politics, like on global warming, more mathematically and scientifically inclined participants were more likely to be tribalistic when confronted with the data as contrasted with those who have poorer reasoning skills. For instance, more intelligent conservatives in terms of scientific literacy and in assessing mathematical data were more likely to be against the veracity of global warming despite insurmountable evidence as compared with less intellectually inclined conservatives. Even for the intelligent, politics shapes people's identities. People generally resist factual conclusions that go against their identities and thus, their very existence.

Moreover, there's a "backfire effect" in psychology where people will harden their position on a false view when exposed to truthful evidence that is meant to correct their beliefs. For example, in one study, Republicans were presented with false news that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and Democrats were given false news that Republicans want to ban all stem cell research (Nyhan and Reifler 2010). Next, subjects were given direct evidence that the news stories were false. While many remained unconvinced despite the contrary evidence, the contravening evidence backfired in that some even hardened their stance in favor of their partisan position. The effect was more pronounced for high political information voters. It's generally held in evolutionary psychology that in-group biases are innate, and we are genetically pre-wired for them. Even though those who vote are knowledgeable, tribalism means that many people still can vote for an unmerited candidate or demagogue depending on their party affiliation. Against Bai's route A and Mill, instead of focusing primarily on the merit of the voters, it will be more efficient to focus on the merit of the tribal candidates and leaders whom the people will follow.

What we see here is that liberal democracies for the legislative branch are not about individuals having the power to vote and put forth their own policy preferences. Rather, liberal democracies are really about political parties and identity groups along with their group agendas. Platforms can change based on the leader's direction, such as with former President Donald Trump moving the Republican party to the extreme right towards fascism on certain issues. For example, he favored a "total and complete" travel ban on all Muslims, a largely peaceful people, while a candidate for president

(Taylor 2015), and the tribes did align when it came time to vote despite the agenda for a clear violation of freedom of religion. He issued a presidential memorandum that bans most transgender people from enlisting in the military with a few exception cases, such as for service members who were diagnosed with gender dysphoria before the effective date of the policy (Jackson & Kube 2019). This inequality in employment violates their right to serve in the military. A party's platform can come to adopt discriminatory policies that violate minority rights, such as being against civil rights for racial minorities or for slavery as was witnessed in U.S. history. A party may hold white nationalist immigration policies such as in the 1920's in the U.S. against Chinese immigrants and other racial groups, and the adoption of fascistic principles can be cyclical within a state. Given that high information voters succumb to tribalism, we can't rely on them to always pick good candidates when they will vote based on their tribe.⁵

Option B for Bai is to have a bicameral legislature with a lower democratically elected house and an upper Confucian house based on merit. Option B then can split further based on how admission into the upper house is determined. Option B1 is where only local officials who will tend to be more knowledgeable of politics than the masses get to vote for regional political appointments to the regional upper house. The regional lower house is based on a popular vote or democracy. Moving up levels, only regional officials get to vote for who gets appointed at the national level for the national upper house. The national lower house is grounded, however, in a popular vote by the masses.

Yet, this runs into the problem that once given a taste for democracy at the national level with the lower house, the people will view the lower house as legitimate but perhaps not the upper house, especially in places like the U.S. This can lead to instability in certain liberal countries, especially when the upper house at times overrides the decisions made by the lower house. To be fair, Bai (2020) claims that his view isn't meant to apply to the U.S. at the moment as he doesn't think the people will accept it, but this is still a weakness of his theory relative to liberal democracies like the U.S. A further objection is that local and regional officials who vote are susceptible to tribalism, and they can elect unmeritorious candidates in the upper houses based on the fact that they merely are part of one's tribe. Recall that even high information voters largely are susceptible to this. The above makes B1 highly problematic relative to liberal democracies.

For B2, organizations relevant to politics, like environmental, medical, business, and union groups, vote within their group to put someone in the upper house. These also can include the military and scientific organizations. Bai believes such organizations will vote for members whose competence, ethical values, and experience are not in question. Bai notes that democratically elected officials tend to ignore the long-term interests of the country in favor of short-term interests of the short-sighted electorate in order to get reelected again. However, since those in the upper house will

⁵ Strictly speaking, I don't classify option A as a meritocracy since it doesn't focus on the merit of candidates. Because it focuses on the merit of the voters, I view A as an *epistocracy*, such as is defended by Jason Brennan (2016). Although a full discussion of epistocracy lies beyond our scope, this objection against A also applies to Brennan.

have long appointments, they can look out for the long-term interests of the country and for issues concerning non-voters. The upper house should be given overriding weight over the lower house when such long-term issues arise for a state.

Nevertheless, one problem is the familiar one concerning political and social instability in that this upper house is likely not to be viewed as legitimate by the people, especially in countries like the U.S. Furthermore, such organizations can elect unmeritorious candidates within their ranks. Bai installs no filter to stop this possibility. A more instrumental hybrid will have a merit-based filter. An additional worry is that many of such organizations have political bents, and it will be controversial to decide which and how many groups get to elect a representative to the upper house. For example, union and environmental groups tend to be liberal, while large corporations and the military tend to favor conservatives. However, even these stereotypes aren't set in stone as there are conservative union groups and liberal corporations. It can be a complicated mess. There can be worries of stacking the deck in favor of liberals or conservatives. Picking which groups get to send a representative is itself a political and controversial matter. Bai needs to provide more detail on how groups will be chosen in a fair manner. If the selection process is not fair, then this provides an additional reason why this house may not be seen as legitimate by the people, and it can lead to further instability.

B3 for Bai is where exams and experience are used to screen for who gets into the upper house. Since there will be too many qualified people who jump through these hoops as witnessed in meritocracies like China, the final selection comes down to a full democratic vote by the people only on those merited candidates who have jumped through the hoops. Meanwhile, the lower house remains a pure democracy.

Notice the virtues of B3 over the other above hybrids in its ability to adapt to the values of a liberal democracy and provide more stability. It doesn't run into the problem of political instability like the other hybrids in that all legislative officials are democratically elected and will be viewed by the people as legitimate. This does better relative to liberal societies than hybrid alternatives in which only some of the legislative officials are democratically elected. Also, all candidates themselves in the upper house merely cannot be voted in by officials or organizational peers but must pass through individualized hoops that measure for competence. This enhances its instrumental value. Our inquiry is a normative philosophical one about which hybrid meritocracy-democracy is the best fit for liberal democracies if we were to append a meritocracy to a democracy in the legislature right now, and something like B3 appears to be better than the competition so far for the above reasons.

B3 does implement a democratic vote throughout, so it's open to the charge that the voters are tribalistic. The masses are susceptible to other problematic cognitive biases like framing effects and confirmation biases, and consistent with Plato, contemporary political science data demonstrates that they largely are ignorant. However, relative to liberal societies and as we have discussed, some powerful presence of democracy is required for legislature to respect basic liberal rights in voting and thus, maintain stability. Therefore, the above psychological biases are going to apply to all contender theories that really meet the requirement of having an overriding

value of democracy in the legislature in our specified inquiry relative to liberal democracies. However, appending a meritocracy to a democracy along the lines of B3 can meet the present challenge at least for the upper house in that it's likely to produce leaders with merit in spite of tribalism and other psychological biases or faults. Countries who have candidates who have credentials, such as possibly attaining the proper education achieving high marks, having appropriate experience in local politics scoring high on relevant indices, passing a criminal background check, and being able to pass relevant non-ideological tests like critical thinking exams are likely to have merited rulers. Voters may be tribalistic just as high information senior politicians are, but the only candidates they can vote for are ones that have demonstrated intellectual and moral merit to the point that we can be epistemically justified in believing that they're merited even though they may not end up being so. Our goal is not one of finding the perfect state. For, that may be impossible in light of non-ideal actors that may be corrupt, greedy, and desirous of power. Rather, our aim is to find the hybrid state that is more stable and more likely to have meritorious leaders in liberal democracies than the competition despite having flaws. B3 respects democracy as a basic right in both houses which provides greater stability in liberal societies, and it responds to tribalism and other cognitive faults of the electorate at least for the upper house in that upper house candidates that one may vote for will have provided good reason to believe that they're merited.⁶

However, a problem with B3 is that the lower house doesn't have a stringent meritocracy component. Notice that this differs from Bell's theory in which all legislative officials must pass merit-based requirements. In his later work (2020), Bai allows for combining elements of B1-B3 for the upper house. However, any of such combinations won't be able to bypass my current objection since all of these variants have the same problem and common denominator in that the lower house doesn't have a meritocracy component. This can allow for unmeritorious candidates in the lower house, where for Bai, this house will at times deny the upper house from passing a bill especially on matters that are on the short-term interests of the country. It's generally known that the lower house in the U.S., or the House of Representatives, has many questionable members in terms of merit, while the upper house or senate is more likely to have more level-headed officials. For example, in 2017, Greg Gianforte body-slammed a reporter who was asking relevant but tough questions he couldn't answer. He pleaded guilty to assault and was elected shortly thereafter to the House of Representatives. Although his violent actions were praised by then President Trump (McGraw 2018), those with criminal records or pending criminal investigations should not be able to run for office. One should have the moral virtues. Also, 139 members of the House voted to challenge the 2020 U.S. elections based on a false disproven

⁶ One may object that a deliberative democracy with lots of deliberation, discussion, debate, and town halls will be better than something like B3. However, recall the empirical data shows that people largely aren't moved by rational debate. Moreover, our inquiry is on what kind of hybrid view is best for liberal societies. We're assuming the existence of a robust meritocratic element in legislature as well as a democratic one, and our focus is not on entertaining arguments from contender theories to a hybrid view like deliberative democracy or a Confucian democracy.

conspiracy theory that there was widespread voter fraud, where this helped lead to an attempted coup by a mob against the U.S. government (Yourish 2021). A stronger and instrumentally better hybrid contrasted with B3 will be one that maintains that all legislative officials are democratically elected, but in all houses, they must demonstrate the moral and intellectual virtues in order to put their name on the ballot.

5. MERITOCRATIC DEMOCRACY

So far, I believe the above modified account of Bai's B3 that has merit-based requirements for both houses is the best hybrid view for liberal democracies that comparatively provides more political stability and increases the likelihood of having virtuous leaders and decision-makers. Instead of reinventing the wheel with a brand new hybrid theory, I rely on a quite influential understanding of a hybrid view that already has been well detailed and defended with a book-length treatment (Bai 2013, 2021), but I add an extra provision. Let's take Bai's B3 view with two houses of legislature. However, the only addendum to Bai is that for both houses, national legislative officials are democratically elected, but they all must demonstrate their merit in order to be able to run for office. There are significant merit checks in both houses, which will make it more likely that virtuous officials will be making the laws. Insofar as this modified B3 contains meritocratic and democratic elements for both houses, let us call this hybrid *meritocratic democracy*.

Notice that meritocratic democracy contains all the virtues of Bai's B3, where B3 supersedes the other prior modern hybrid views in terms of instrumental power relative to liberal democracies. However, it differs in that it can respond to the above objection against B3 in that membership in the lower house is also strongly based on merit. Meritocratic democracy provides a sharp response to the negative political psychology data against the masses and provides for an even more instrumentally powerful theory for liberal democracies than B3. In this respect, it's the best hybrid option for being implemented in a liberal democracy.

One may object that officials have advisors who are wise. Since leaders follow the advice of their advisors, it's fine to have a lower house without my merit-based restrictions. However, politicians can have poor advisors that themselves lack merit. For example, officials may practice nepotism and choose unmerited advisors or select yes-men. Furthermore, even if one's advisors are merited, one still may not listen to them. Leaders are in charge and may have some narcissistic tendencies that makes them think that they know best despite what their wiser more experienced advisors may say. There are too many pitfalls here, and appending a meritocracy to a democracy in the lower house leads to a better more reliable system.

Another worry is that people won't accept the merit-based requirements for putting your name on the ballot in a liberal society. This may create political instability such that we shouldn't implement a meritocracy component. The quick response to this concern is to remember that our inquiry presupposes the implementation of some kind of hybrid view in liberal societies in which there will be things like tests and/or education requirements. Which hybrid is most instrumental if we had to implement one?

Thus, the objection at hand doesn't apply to our specified inquiry and lies outside our scope.

Furthermore, even if the objection is relevant, it applies equally to any hybrid, so it doesn't discount my view compared to the other hybrids. All hybrids are on an equal footing in this regard. Hence, given the aforementioned virtues of my hybrid over others, my theory is still the most instrumental compared to other hybrids, and my thesis is still secured.

Also, even if the objection is relevant, merit is not a foreign concept in liberal countries. Remember that liberal societies like the U.S. tend to have judicial branches, such as the Supreme Court, that solely are based on a meritocracy. Such societies also can have other political positions, such as the civil service, be based on merit. Moreover, for almost all professional jobs in liberal countries, like being a professor, doctor, lawyer, etc., there are merit-based requirements to attain the jobs. Merit is a big part of the political and non-political culture in liberal societies as is democracy for the legislative branch. Hence, it won't create instability if there are merit-based requirements in order to put your name on the ballot for a full democratic vote. A meritocratic democracy strikes the right balance of having a full and equal democratic vote throughout the legislature, which fulfills the requirement of having a robust democratic presence in this branch. This will create stability in that attaining a position in legislature in the end boils down to a democratic vote. Meanwhile, my hybrid implements reasonable merit-based requirements only for putting your name on the ballot, where the notion of merit is embedded and widely accepted within other political and non-political aspects of liberal culture.

In conclusion, we have examined four of the most prominent hybrid theories in the literature in contemporary Confucian philosophy along with my modified hybrid built off of Bai's B3 as to which instrumentally is the best fit today for liberal democracies in terms of stability and having meritorious legislative leaders. Positing my modified hybrid is joined by other contributions to the literature, such as being the first to compare and contrast the various hybrid theories and examining the hybrids in light of what's best for liberal democracies rather than in light of what's best for certain East Asian Confucian-influenced states like China. While I have shown that the first four hybrid theories are problematic at times in different ways, I have argued that meritocratic democracy contains more virtues. Hence, I conclude that meritocratic democracy is the best hybrid option among the competitor hybrid views if we had to implement a robust meritocracy component into liberal democracies for legislature.

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