Confucian Meritocratic Democracy over Democracy for Minority Interests and Rights

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Abstract

In Western political philosophy, democracy is generally the dominant view regarding what the best form of government is, and this holds even in respect to promoting minority rights. However, I argue that there is a better theory for satisfying minority interests and rights. I amass numerous studies from the social sciences demonstrating how democracy does poorly in accounting for minority interests. I then contend that a particular hybrid view that fuses a meritocracy with democracy can do a better job than democracy in accounting for minority interests and in having more equal rights and fair policies coming from the legislative and executive branches. Finally, I defend this thesis from numerous counters.

1 Introduction

The alarming and recent rise of populist leaders in democracies in the last twenty years, such as in India, Brazil, Indonesia, and in the U.S. with former president Donald Trump, has seen them largely increase corruption and erode individual rights (Mounk 2018). As our primary concern here will be on minority interests, it is important to point out that even a democratically elected demagogue can be bigoted and cause harm to minorities. Today, minorities still widely face discrimination. For instance, in the U.S., Asians are being targeted, killed, and assaulted at an alarming rate as unwarranted backlash from the pandemic, with hate crimes against Asians rising by 567% last year in San Francisco (Associated Press 2022). Moreover, the

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U.S. has recently experienced the Black Lives Matter Movement and the #MeToo Movement for women.[1]

There are numerous factors for evaluating what kind of state is better than another. For instance, there can be economic, efficiency, legitimacy, stability, and intrinsic value considerations. However, this essay will be limited to evaluating only two forms of government in light of the ability to account for minority interests and to increase the likelihood of having equal rights and fair policies for minorities. Rather than focusing on issues like legitimacy and intrinsic value, it will largely be narrowed to focusing on the instrumental value issue of what system can better help address underrepresented minority interests and thus make it more likely to have equal rights and fair policies for them. As such, our focus is on contemporary political philosophy rather than on the history of philosophy. This essay will focus exclusively on two forms of government, democracy and a particular hybrid view that fuses democracy with meritocracy.

Given the history of political philosophy, it is unreasonable to think we can arrive upon a flawless system with nonideal actors; these are actors whose degree of virtue varies and is to some extent a function of the institutions they live under. My inquiry is one of nonideal theory rather than of ideal theory. Ideal theory examines what the best institutions would be if everyone were always morally perfect and never corrupt. My inquiry is more practical and catered to the real-world situation in which there are many nonideal actors. Given my aims, the test for the best political state is not that it is foolproof. It is comparative. Our interest is in which state does better than the competition in spite of its flaws, where actors can be corrupt, racist, sexist, bigoted, self-interested, and desirous of power. Given the existence of such people, what is the best form of government to limit such agents, particularly as it deals with minorities? The above general guidelines will be observed in this inquiry, where I will contend that my specified Confucian meritocracy-democracy is instrumentally better than democracy regarding accounting for minority interests for the legislative and executive arms of government only.[2] This is a new contribution to the literature in that these two

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[1] In the U.S., women are considered minorities despite their large numbers given the systematic inequalities they face in society.

[2] Although I discuss the U.S. government as a democracy in the text, as it is generally understood to be, technically, it is a hybrid in that it contains a nonelected meritocratically selected judicial branch. I continue labeling the U.S. as a democracy since the stated focus of this essay is only on the legislative and executive branches. Moreover, even in such democracies, there are generally small meritocratic elements in the legislative and executive branches, such as having age restrictions for experience. However, such minimal requirements stand in stark contrast to contemporary Confucian philosophies that incorporate actual testing, political experience, and/or educational requirements. Democracies may only have nominal meritocratic restrictions and do not incorporate significant merit-based criteria 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 lay persons, rather than being meritocracies or hybrid views. Following established practice in contemporary Eastern political philosophy, we will call theories that do incorporate actual testing, political experience, 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 point is that I will contend that for the legislative and executive branches, my view which allows for all adult citizens to have an equal vote and which has certain merit-based educational, political experience, and testing requirements for leaders is better for minority interests than theories that allow for all adult citizens to have an equal vote but that has no such merit-based requirements for leaders. This substantive point itself is a novel contribution to the literature.

forms of government have yet to be compared and contrasted regarding their abilities to account for minority rights.[3]

2 Democracy and Minority Interests

I now will present a group of studies I amass from political science and political psychology that shows that democracy does rather poorly regarding minority interests. Many of such studies conclude that most citizens, including most minorities, generally do not know how to vote in ways that promote their own interests (Delli-Carpini and Keeter 1996, Althaus 2003). Experiments show that they might know what kinds of outcomes would serve their own interests, but they lack the social scientific knowledge, such as economics and crime statistics, to know how to vote for policies or candidates that will produce their desired outcomes.

For instance, Adam Smith, in *The Wealth of Nations*, decisively refuted mercantilism, which generally is the view that a government should maximize exports and minimize imports in significant part by having high trade tariffs, among other things. However, even after hundreds of years, most accept mercantilism (Caplan 2007). The desired outcome is to have an overall stronger economy, but the policy preferences of increasing tariffs is not the way to attain this goal. Furthermore, in the U.S., about 75% of actual voters do not know what the policy preferences are of the conservative and liberal candidates (Delli-Carpini and Keeter 1996, Althaus 2003, Somin 2013, Brennan 2016), 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 candidates on issues such as abortion, the environment, and welfare. If most voters do not know what the policies of the candidates are, this makes it difficult for them to vote for candidates who have policies that will satisfy their self-interests. Given that minorities, along with most in the majority, have largely demonstrated a lack of relevant social scientific knowledge to use in deciding which candidate has the better policies to satisfy their self-interests (Althaus 2003, Caplan 2007, Somin 2013), we at many times should not expect such groups to know how to adequately vote to try and satisfy their self-interests. Hence, democracy is inadequate for protecting many minority interests and rights (Brennan 2016).

Democratic deliberation also tends to cause apathy and move people further to the extremes (Kerr, MacCoun, and Kramer 1996; Downs 1989; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002; Mendelberg 2002). Political psychology data seemingly shows that rational deliberation largely adds nothing more than if people simply baldly stated their position without discussion. Rational deliberation, discussion, and debate do not change people's minds but can have a corrupting

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[3] While Jason Brennan compares an epistocracy to democracy concerning minority rights (Brennan 2016), an epistocracy can be distinguished from a meritocracy. An epistocracy focuses on the merit of voters, such as by giving high political information voters more votes, while a meritocracy focuses on the merit of leaders, such as by having merit-based requirements in order to attain office.

influence. 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.

On top of this, minorities largely have fewer votes and are smaller in number than the majority. If, for example, the majority whites only vote for white interests at the expense of Asians, while Asians only vote for just policies, Asians are at a serious disadvantage in a democracy. They will only succeed if they form coalitions, or if the larger white majority does not override them. There are immediate serious disadvantages for minorities in a democracy both in theory and in practice.

Also, even in democratic countries with compulsory voting, a significant amount of people still abstain, and the people who actually vote in democracies are not representative of the demographics of the eligible electorate. Instead, advantaged voters, such as wealthy employed men in the ethnic majorities, vote at higher rates than the disadvantaged (Delli-Carpini and Keeter 1996, Hill 2002, Somin 2013, Brennan and Hill 2014). Thus, well-off white men have more influence than racial minorities beyond normal disparities in the demographics of the eligible. This creates even more difficulties for minorities.

Moreover, a study by Martin Gilens shows that presidents in democracies are six times more responsive to the policy preferences of the rich than poor (Gilens 2012). Economic elites and special interest groups play a substantial role in influencing public policy, but the masses have little to no influence. The poor usually only get what they want if the wealthy want it too. As more and more economically average and below average citizens want something, the odds of a policy change do not increase. However, there is a dramatic increase when more and more economic elites want a political policy change. Gilens determined that it is not due to the wealthy's higher voter turnout rates. Additionally, generally ignoring the preferences of the poor is not due to their lower voting rates. Hence, even if disadvantaged groups turn out in larger numbers to vote, their policy preferences likely will not be instantiated. This is another serious problem with democracies in that they appear to be certain kinds of de facto plutocracies, where the interests of the wealthy rule.

Social science studies also show that high information voters in terms of political knowledge do not generally agree on a variety of issues (Nyhan and Reifler 2010; Kahan, Peters, Dawson, and Slovic 2013; Achen and Bartels 2016). Rather, along with low information persons, they vote based on their social identities and partisan loyalties. When the policy preferences of a party change, its members for the most part eventually 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 (Tajfel 1981, Westen 2008, Haidt 2012). For example, experiments show that voters will approve a policy if they are told that it is what their party approves of, but they will reject this same policy if they are told that it is endorsed by the opposing party rather than their own. The worry is that with tribalism, people will

still vote for a bigoted candidate who is their party leader in virtue of their same tribal membership.

Kahan et al. 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, or when having to assess tricky scientific data and probabilities of success on a matter. However, when given issues discussed in politics, such as global warming, more mathematically and scientifically inclined participants were more likely to be tribalistic when confronted with the data, as contrasted with those who had 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 shape people's identities, and people generally resist factual conclusions that go against their identities and thus, their very existence (Kahan et al. 2013).

Hence, that high information voters are generally not immune from tribalism should not be surprising. It is generally held in evolutionary psychology that in-group biases are innate, and we are genetically prewired for them to support our cooperative tribe. Democracies are not about individuals having the power to vote and put forth their own policy preferences. Rather, democracies are really about political parties and identity groups along with their group agendas. Platforms can change based on the leader's direction, and the people will follow their tribal leader. Given that high information voters largely succumb to tribalism, we cannot rely on them to always pick good candidates when they will vote based on their tribe.

Overall, the empirical data shows that there are significant problems with democracy for minorities, and they are at an even larger disadvantage than one might imagine for a rule by popularity.

3 Meritocracy-Democracy

I advocate a particular hybrid view of a meritocracy with democracy, and I believe it can better account for minority interests than democracy. Meritocracy has its roots in Confucius and Plato and is in significant part a virtue political philosophy. It stands opposed to the unadulterated rule by the largely ignorant masses that should be feared with a democracy by having substantial merit-based criteria for officials to attain office.

Confucius' focus on the importance of having merited rulers helped lead to the imperial examination system in China, starting in the Sui 隋 dynasty. Although I do not necessarily endorse Plato's criteria, he had high education and military experience requirements in order to attain office. There are more stringent criteria for being able to run for office in a meritocracy rather than a democracy, such as passing actual tests, meeting education requirements, and fulfilling political experience criteria. Such additional standards may make it more likely that a leader has intellectual and moral virtues, such as possibly being wise, fair, diligent, emotionally intelligent, generous, open-minded, caring, compassionate, curious, creative, just, insightful, and so on.

It is my belief that a meritocracy hybridized with democracy can do better than democracy regarding minority interests. Contemporary meritocracies are most heavily discussed in Eastern philosophy, and there are many different versions of a meritocracy fused with democracy in contemporary Confucian thought (Wong 2011; Jiang 2013; Bell 2013, 2015; Chan 2013, 2014; Bai 2013, 2020; Fan 2013). Such hybrids have been variously argued for, detailed, and defended. The hybrid I will defend below is Confucian in that it is influenced by Confucius' emphasis on political merit as well as by certain contemporary Confucian-inspired political philosophers who have hybridized meritocracy with democracy in particular ways. Below, I will adopt certain merit-based requirements influenced by Confucian thought, but I only adopt the requirements specified below. I do not necessarily adopt all Confucian requirements put forth by all Confucian philosophers. For example, I do not necessarily endorse Daniel Bell's idea that descendants of Confucius ought to have seats in the upper house of legislature.

As examples of meritocracies and hybrid views, on a pure meritocracy, one may maintain that leaders are selected by a committee based on satisfying standards like education and political experience requirements. Modern meritocratic theories are commonly 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 regional and national levels (Bell 2015). One can maintain a bicameral legislature at the national level with checks and balances where one house is democratically elected and the second upper house is appointed based on merit (Chan 2013, 2014; Bai 2013, 2020). Another hybrid variant endorses a full democratic vote in order to attain office for relevant positions where all adult citizens get one equal vote, but in order for candidates to put their names on the ballot, they must pass certain merit-based requirements (Bai 2013, 2020).[4] This in general maintains a democracy with separation of powers and checks and balances but adds the element that relevant leaders must have passed certain rigorous criteria in order to be up for the democratic vote. Let us call this variant *meritocratic democracy*.

This essay's focus is not to comprehensively adjudicate between the various hybrid forms of meritocracy, as this will require a separate paper, and I have already addressed the benefits of meritocratic democracy over other hybrids elsewhere (Park 2023). Rather, as I have stated, in this essay I will narrow our focus to only two views: meritocratic democracy and democracy. I will rely on a quite influential understanding of a hybrid view that has already been detailed and defended—that is, meritocratic democracy—and show how this framework deals with minority interests in a better way than democracy. While the author of this theory, Tongdong BAI, does not discuss his hybrid view in light of minority rights in particular, I will show

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[4] Here is a quote from Tongdong BAI endorsing this hybrid view: "Nevertheless, when there are far more people taking exams than the number of positions available, the results can be extremely arbitrary. Not only are they deeply unfair, but the perceived unfairness can breed resentment and lead to the loss of respect for this institution. An alternative exam-based selection process can make the passing of exams an eligibility qualification for voting for the upper house or being a candidate of the upper house … the qualified candidate can then be selected on the basis of popular votes…" (Bai 2020: 74–75).

how it can handle minority interests in a fruitful way.[5] To be clear, I borrow Bai's structure here of having fully elected officials who have passed a sufficient level of merit, but I do not necessarily endorse the specifics of what merit-based criteria he adopts. Since our focus is only on minority interests and rights, I append and argue for my own merit-based requirements to the structure of meritocratic democracy that is relevant to our subject matter of minorities without needing to discuss other criteria for other subject matters in politics that I may or may not endorse.

First, there need to be education requirements in early and higher education regarding minority interests. Public, fully-funded universities are a prerequisite for my system so that all may have an opportunity to run for office by acquiring the requisite education. Similar to medical school requirements, in my view, students can choose any major but certain classes must be taken. Moreover, educational time needs to be spent on putting words into real world action.

Politicians are required to have high achievement in college level classes such as in ethics, political philosophy, and multicultural courses, among possible others. Politicians also need to take classes in international relations, where they will learn about different peoples, countries, and cultures. These will expand knowledge of disparate minorities and allow students to see things from diverse perspectives. Philosophy classes will also provide a deeper theoretical basis for understanding minority interests and social justice.

Furthermore, on a merit-based system, education must be different. Required ethics and political philosophy classes can pass along normative knowledge and reasoning, but as Confucius and Aristotle emphasized, one must develop the habit of acting ethically to really influence action. Confucius stated that to develop virtues, one must observe and take part in rituals, such as ceremonies, social norms, and patterns. Having rational ethical knowledge is one thing, but one's motivational makeup, such as emotions, desires, and inclinations, must be aligned with the proper action. Aristotle described virtue as a disposition to have certain feelings. Moral virtues are acquired by habit, where one becomes just by doing just acts. One needs to practice performing moral acts at a young age to develop proper dispositions and habits. As modern psychology shows, our moral habits and judgments are significantly shaped by custom, society, and culture. There must be a fundamental change in the moral educational system for possible future leaders and all citizens all the way through higher education. There needs to be minority sensitivity education starting at a young, impressionable age. Just as the implementation of sex education in schools has had a significant effect in decreasing teenage pregnancies in the U.S., there needs to be relevant education regarding things like race, class, religion, and the treatment of women. This not only may beneficially impact future leaders but also can bring a cultural shift in bringing greater civility in society as well.

Moreover, working together in teams to accomplish goals has also shown to be an effective way to create empathy, understanding, and compassion between minority and majority groups (Estlund 2003, Haidt 2012). Working together in teams at

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[5] Bai allows for several different kinds of hybrid views without favoring one. In this essay, I adopt a particular version of a hybrid that Bai endorses, meritocratic democracy.

a young, impressionable age allows people with diverse backgrounds to view each other as mutually part of the ingroup. Where possible, schools should implement regular team building exercises with diverse individuals that can involve things like intellectual team games or athletic team competitions. If a school lacks enough diversity, such exercises must be conducted together with other schools if proximity allows.

At the collegiate level, regional and national politicians must have had to take a service ethics course that teaches ethical knowledge but also integrates it with real world action by requiring students to go out into the field logging many hours working with diverse communities. I leave the door open for other relevant and effective early and late educational experiences as well.

Second, candidates must have years of experience leading in local government before running for national office. They should also score high on certain indices, such as on decreasing or maintaining low hate crime rates for, say, Asians in the U.S. This shows that the candidate likely has good real-world decision-making skills, leadership qualities, and emotional intelligence in dealing with and motivating other people.

Third, candidates must pass a criminal background test on certain measures. In particular, for our purposes, those who have committed a hate crime or who have broken the law due to discrimination against minorities will not be able to run for office. The idea here is to have requirements that provide epistemic justification in believing that a candidate is more meritorious regarding minority interests compared with democracy. Even though my system is not foolproof and allows for the possibility of bigoted candidates, it is set up such that this is less likely to occur than with democracy. In my view, we may be justified in believing that a candidate desires and has the ability to help minorities more so than with democracy, even though the candidate may not actually have such qualities.

Medical doctors must rightly take relevant classes, such as biology, physics, and chemistry, as an undergraduate student, pass tests on these courses with a high GPA, and attend medical school. They must be in residency to gain experience. By analogy, national politicians, with the fate of many more lives in their hands, must also acquire an education and experience in minority interests and demonstrate their virtue and merit. If we have such requirements for a medical doctor, then how much the more we should have merit-based requirements for those future politicians who will make decisions on the well-being of oppressed minority groups. 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 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, it is astonishing that there are no relevant education and political experience requirements for the most important jobs in a democratic country, but there rightly are relevant requirements in the hiring process for many other jobs even when working for the state, such as being a public university professor, civil servant, police officer, military officer, accountant, lawyer, engineer, secretary, scientist, and so on. It is 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 the country despite committing crimes against minorities and completely lacking education and political experience relevant to minority interests.

Those many candidates who jump through these hoops regarding minority interests (as well as other possible criteria on other matters that do not concern us here and that I may or may not endorse,) in my system then must be elected from a democratic vote. In order to adjudicate between the many candidates who pass the sufficiency threshold for merit, a democracy is implemented. It is too controversial to think we can have a correct hierarchical ranking of the various merit-based criteria such that we can adjudicate which candidate scores the highest. Scores on factors like experience and education may be different between top candidates, and it will be too controversial for a committee to decide which is the best candidate. Instead, we should have a sufficiency threshold as in the medical field, where a candidate advances based on scoring well above average on the various criteria. In the political case, a democratic vote on those who have jumped through the hoops will decide who attains office. This will respect the ability to vote, to have autonomy in voting, and to have equality in everyone having an equal vote.

Although not foolproof, I believe my hybrid does better than democracy for minority interests, given the above, and will make it more likely to have equal rights and fair policies. Let us do some accounting. Remember that a democracy has problems with minority interests in that people are tribalistic and will follow their political leaders for good or for ill. Moreover, minorities rank fewer in number and tend not to vote. They along with those in the majority largely lack knowledge of politics and relevant social science data for making informed votes to attain their ends. Moreover, politicians in a democracy tend to only be moved by the wealthy once they attain office.

Meritocratic democracy does better than these in that it attempts to shape the virtues in leaders who lead the tribe. Hence, voters generally will abide by the tribal leaders who are more likely to be virtuous, in my view. People are generally tribalistic and ignorant of politics, and that is why we need to filter who the leader of the tribes are. This filtering is important because studies show that most people pick a favored candidate from their party first, then adopt the candidate's positions even though they go against the voter's initial preferences or are positions typically held by the opposing party (Zaller 1992, Lenz 2012, Broockman and Butler 2015, Kinder and Kalmoe 2017). Moreover, politicians are not looked upon negatively when adopting contrary views. Peoples' policy preferences largely are malleable, and what it means to be a member of the liberal party or conservative one for the most part is whatever the party leader says it is. Shaping the virtues in leaders is also important because when attaining office, current democratic leaders tend to follow the interests of the very few who are very wealthy. Interests held by the wealthy can be inimical for minorities. Data unsurprisingly shows that the rich often align on issues most relevant to maintaining their basic economic privileges (Winters 2011).

One may object that officials also succumb to tribalism, such as from unelected party influencers in the media. In addition, since data shows that high information voters are generally tribalistic, knowledgeable political leaders will largely be too. Hence, my merit-based requirements, such as education requirements, will not increase the probability of having more virtuous leaders since elected leaders

may succumb to tribalism. If a leader is a member of a tribe where the tribe promotes bigotry, then the leader likely will also promote it.

In response, in order to put your name on the ballot to attain national office in my system, one will have had to accomplish much more than the tribalistic high information voters in the relevant studies who merely score high on political science tests. One additionally will have had to take service ethics classes in college, continuing the practice from childhood of cultivating habits and virtues of being sympathetic to minority groups and working with them such that one likely views them as part of the in-group. One also will have had to score high on indices in one's ability to help minorities when holding office in local government and pass college level courses with high marks on issues relevant to minorities. Unlike in a democracy, one will need a clean criminal history of not mistreating minorities. Although the above does not guarantee that elected officials will not be deleteriously tribalistic regarding minority rights, compared to democracy, it increases the probability that leaders will look out for minority interests when holding national office. Officials are more likely to look out for minority justice regardless of what their tribe says as compared to democracy, for there are no merit-based requirements in a democracy that try to beneficially shape the habits of officials regarding minority interests, there are no programs to help see diverse individuals as part of the in-group, there are no criminal background checks, and there are no demands for prior proof of an ability to help minorities in order to an elected position in local government. It is more likely with meritocratic democracy that appropriate habits and virtues will have been shaped in leaders. Moreover, the fact that people generally will follow the highest leaders on whatever position the leaders may hold provides relevant leaders of the tribe with extra leeway and freedom to advocate for minority rights even though it goes against the tribe. Given that meritocratic democracy increases the likelihood of respecting minority rights compared to democracy, meritocratic democracy is better than democracy concerning minority rights.

Also, even if minorities are significantly less than the majority in showing up for a democratic vote and the wealthy tend to hold more political sway, it is more likely that the candidates will support a number of minority interests on my hybrid account compared to democracy. Given their early and late formative educational experiences regarding minorities, which also include habit-forming actions and being able to perceive each other as part of the in-group, demonstrated ability to help minorities in local politics, absence of hate crimes and of breaking the law due to discrimination in their criminal background check, and high achievement in classes relevant to minorities, social justice, and minority interests, this provides epistemic justification in believing that relevant candidates are more likely to be merited regarding minority interests and social justice. Although not guaranteed, minority interests are more likely to be taken into serious consideration as contrasted with democracy, and it is more likely we will have fair policies and equal rights compared to democracy. Given the merit-based requirements in-and-of-themselves, remember we are epistemically justified in believing all the available candidates we can vote for on my system are more likely to be meritorious regarding minority interests and social justice than with the democratic procedure, even though it may end up being that some of them are not.

4 Objections

Let us anticipate several objections.[6] One may object that deliberative democracy is the best option. A deliberative democracy with plentiful deliberation, discussion, debate, and town halls is all we need to bring about minority interests and more equal and fair policies. I believe that the aforementioned empirical data from political science, such as that deliberation does not work and that democracies end up being plutocracies, strongly goes against the efficacy of deliberative democracy. Yet, all that needs to be said in response is that even if deliberative democracy works, it still leaves the door open for bad candidates for minorities. It is not error proof. Fusing deliberative democracy with a meritocracy as I have so described will increase the likelihood that we will have better officials for minorities. Thus, my hybrid theory is still comparatively better.

The objector may continue by stating that with only ideal actors and deliberators, deliberative democracy will always produce an excellent outcome in an election. However, recall that I qualified that my view is one in nonideal theory only. It is a theory more firmly grounded in politics concerning real-world circumstance where overwhelmingly most people are not perfect. It is a theory that is meant to be practical and implemented in the real world in significant part because it is useful in light of how real people behave rather than being a view fit for ideal theory.

Sungmoon KIM is a Confucian democracy theorist who believes that democracy is superior to Confucian meritocracy-democracy hybrids. He claims that having a separation of powers between the branches of government with checks and balances is sufficient to remedy and combat unmerited elected officials in a democracy. Hence, he says that we should not append a meritocracy to a democracy (Kim 2014). However, given tribalism, this is not always the case, especially when the relevant branch(es) of government is being checked by another branch that is dominated by members of the same party. For example, in 2017, President Trump issued a travel ban that included five Muslim nations consistent with his statements when running for office that he wanted a religious ban against Muslims. This ban was issued without any evidence that there were terrorist threats from these countries, and no immigrants from the five countries have ever killed anyone via a terrorist act on the U.S. soil in the past forty years. Regardless, this unethical discriminatory ban based on religion was upheld by the conservatively controlled Supreme Court. Separation of powers and checks and balances at times is a good thing, however, as we can see, it is not strong enough, especially with tribalism. A democracy with separation of powers and checks and balances appended to a meritocracy in the legislative and executive branches will be better than democracy alone. Representatives will have satisfied requirements that in-and-of-themselves justify our belief that representatives are more merited regarding promoting minority rights as contrasted with democracy. It is more likely to have good officials in this regard.

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[6] I do not have the space here to address all of the objections to hybrid meritocracy-democracy theories. Such objections, along with strong responses to them, are well-rehearsed in the meritocracy-democracy literature in Eastern philosophy (Jiang 2013; Bell 2013, 2015; Chan 2013, 2014; Bai 2013, 2020; Fan 2013).

Other Confucian democracy theorists, like Kyung Rok Kwon and Yutang Jin, take a line grounded in the likes of Confucius, Weber, and Schumpeter (Kwon 2020, Jin 2021). Jin and Kwon adopt an elitist democracy in which there are no formal rigorous merit-based requirements to attain office. Kwon argues the Confucian point that having a meritorious leader contains intrinsic value and provides legitimacy. However, the democratic procedure of acquiring votes is itself a good process for separating merited leaders from the unmerited. Following Schumpeter, Jin states that democracy contains an elite competition for votes, where democracy is not government by the people but is government approved by the people. The people do not decide the law, but they decide on the virtuous people who will make the ultimate political decisions. In turn, political candidates seek public acclamation through competitive elections. In competitive elections, voters pick virtuous candidates, which helps elect superior officials. This is consistent with Confucian values of leaders being responsive to the people's demands. Leaders should provide for the basic materials needed for survival but also provide for the moral education of the people. Leaders should be a model of good citizenship. This will enhance the civility of the people. Kwan claims that this democratic process of mutual moral transformation and trust between leaders and citizens is a key component for raising up the meritorious. It is effective accountability. Moreover, allowing citizens to vote gives them the opportunity to express their mutual commitment and trust to politicians.

While this is viewed as a realist position that takes into account the real nature of how politics works in that elites are the ones who win elections and are running the show in a democracy, let us get more real. We have seen the social science data that the masses largely are politically ignorant and tribalistic. Moreover, we discussed data showing an increase in corruption in many democracies. We cannot always trust people to vote for the virtuous, and this very process of elitist democracy is not very reliable. A more reliable system is one in which there is a competitive democratic election in which all can vote equally with my additional merit-based requirements for putting one's name on the ballot. This itself will be a better form of government than a democracy alone regarding minority interests because it makes it more likely that we will have meritorious leaders who look out for the interests of minorities. If there are any virtues to an elitist democracy, such virtues are maintained in a meritocratic democracy with competitive elections. However, we also can reap the additional benefits of having explicit rigorous merit-based filters for officials with things like criminal background tests, education, and political experience requirements.

5 Conclusion

This inquiry is limited to comparing only two forms of government: meritocratic democracy and democracy.[7] It also only examines which instrumentally does better in accounting for minority interests and in making it more likely that we will have equal rights and fair policies in this regard.[8] Such a comparison in light of minority rights is a novel contribution to the literature. Furthermore, I have amassed a conglomeration of social science

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[7] Remember that other hybrid meritocracy-democracy theories or any other alternative political philosophies are outside of our scope.

[8] Recall that other issues like legitimacy and intrinsic value considerations are beyond our scope. Also, given our limited scope, remember that I only endorse the merit-based criteria I have listed in this essay regarding minority interests and do not necessarily endorse other merit-based requirements.

studies critiquing democracy, showing that democracy does rather poorly in handling minority interests. Given the arguments I have laid out for my own merit-based criteria concerning minority interests which I append to the framework of a meritocratic democracy, I conclude that meritocratic democracy does better than democracy concerning minority interests.

Declaration The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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