

Chapter 6

Why Meritocratic Democracy is Better than Democracy

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Abstract: The other major question in the history of political philosophy besides the issue of distributive justice is what the best form of government is. In Western philosophy, this question has long been thought to be resolved with democracy. There is a dogma plaguing Western political thought; a dogma whose iron grip has held steadfast since the Enlightenment and the establishment of liberalism. This dogma is none other than democracy itself. Political philosophers largely have been interested in theories of distributive justice while generally ignoring the other major question concerning the best form of government. The issue of what the best form of government is, such as democracy or monarchy, has roots in the Ancients, such as Confucius, Plato, and Aristotle. However, more recent philosophers largely have ignored this question, assuming it generally has been resolved by their predecessors. Others have worked within the framework of democracy, such as positing a deliberative democracy, tinkering with it here and there. Winston Churchill once said that “democracy is the worst form of government except for all those other forms...” This general attitude of the supremacy of democracy is pervasive in Western thought; attaining the status of dogma. However, especially in light of the re-emergence of certain fascistic principles within certain democracies, such as in the U.S., I believe we can do better than a democracy alone; indeed, that we must do better. This paper challenges this thesis by presenting arguments against democracy relying in significant part on empirical data from political science and political psychology. Moreover, it presents a general case for a hybrid view over democracy for the legislative and executive branches that appends a meritocracy or rule by the merited from Eastern philosophy to democracy.

Keywords: Meritocracy; Democracy; Eastern Philosophy; Cross-Cultural

The other major question in the history of political philosophy besides the issue of distributive justice is what the best form of government is. In Western philosophy, the received view is democracy. However, this paper challenges this thesis by presenting arguments against democracy relying in significant part on empirical data from political science and political psychology. Moreover, it presents a general case for a hybrid view over democracy for the legislative and executive branches that appends a meritocracy or rule by the merited from Eastern philosophy to democracy.

Winston Churchill once said that "democracy is the worst form of government except for all those other forms..." This general attitude of the supremacy of democracy is pervasive in contemporary Western thought. However, especially in light of the re-emergence of certain fascistic principles within certain democracies, such as in the U.S. as will be described below, I believe we can do better than a democracy alone; indeed, that we must do better.

Churchill is right in that we shouldn't expect any form of government to be perfect, and this is important to keep in mind. Given the history of political philosophy, it's unreasonable to think we can arrive upon a flawless system with non-ideal actors; actors whose degree of virtue varies and is to some extent a function of the institutions they live under. As we can see, this inquiry is one of non-ideal theory rather than of ideal theory. Ideal theory examines what the best institutions would be if everyone always was morally perfect, where anarchy may be the correct answer.¹ For non-ideal theory, the test for the best political state is not that it's foolproof. It's comparative. Our interest is in which state does better than the competition in spite of having flaws, where actors can be corrupt, self-interested, and desirous of power. This general guideline will be observed in this inquiry, where I will contend that a particular hybrid meritocracy-democracy does better than democracy. This essay will be limited to only focusing on the comparison between my hybrid view and democracy rather than evaluating other forms of government, such as monarchy or epistocracy.

¹ If everyone is perfectly ethical and just, such as by helping those in need whenever it's required, not killing or stealing, etc., then the idea here is that there will be no need for government to exist at all to lay down principles of justice and threaten people with sanctions.

Political Science & Democracy

Let's first discuss empirical evidence against democracy from the social sciences. As is well known in political science, data from political psychology confirms Plato's worry that most citizens in a democracy largely are politically ignorant. Studies demonstrate that people 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.²

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, amongst other things. However, even after hundreds of years, most accept mercantilism.³ The desired outcome is to have a stronger overall economy, but the policy preferences of increasing tariffs is not the way to attain this goal. Also, Americans seriously overestimate how much the government spends on foreign aid, so based on this misconception, they mistakenly desire to reduce the deficit by cutting foreign aid. While most believe that immigration is holding America back, economic data shows that the gross world product would be doubled if there were no immigration restrictions, most present U.S. citizens would see wage increases, and illegal immigrants partake less in violent crimes than U.S. citizens.⁴ Given that the masses largely have demonstrated a general lack of relevant social scientific knowledge, we at many times should not expect them to know how to adequately vote to try and achieve their outcome preferences. One might object that representatives will serve the outcome interests of the people by relying on policies that they don't favor. However, empirical data shows that politicians tend to give relevant people what they want rather than what's good for them.⁵

² Michael Delli-Carpini and Scott Keeter, *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996). Scott Althaus, *Collective Preferences in Democratic Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

³ Brian Caplan, *The Myth of the Rational Voter* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

⁴ Helene Landemore, *Democratic Reason: Politics, Collective Intelligence, and the Rule of the Many* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

⁵ Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels, *Democracy for Realists* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

As another example of the lack of knowledge in the social sciences, in the U.S., about seventy-five percent of actual voters don't know what the policy preferences are of the democratic and republican candidates.⁶ Voters largely do worse than a coin flip on distinguishing platform positions between the candidates on issues such as abortion, the environment, and welfare. The amount of knowledge journalists in the mainstream media have over the masses is extraordinary.

Moreover, democratic deliberation tends to cause apathy and move people further to the extremes.⁷ 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.

While it was initially thought that people mostly vote for their perceived national good rather than selfishly,⁸ new studies show that high and low information voters in terms of political knowledge vote based on their social identities and partisan loyalties.⁹ When the policy preferences of a party change, its members eventually for the most part fall in line regardless if they're politically competent or not. 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.¹⁰ For example, experiments show that voters will approve a policy X if they're told that it's what their party approves of, but

⁶ Althaus, *Collective Preferences*. Ilya Somin, *The Problem of Political Ignorance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

⁷ Norbert L. Kerr, Robert J. MacCoun, and Geoffrey P. Kramer, "Bias in judgment: Comparing individuals and groups," *Psychological review* 103, no. 4 (October 1996): 687. Donald Downs, *The New Politics of Pornography*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). John Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, *Stealth Democracy: Americans' Beliefs About How Government Should Work* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Tali Mendelberg, "The Deliberative Citizen: Theory and Evidence," in *Research in Micropolitics, Volume 6*, ed. by Michael Delli Carpini, Leonie Huddy, and Robert Shapiro, (Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2002), 151-193.

⁸ Althaus, *Collective Preferences*. Caplan, *The Myth*.

⁹ Achen and Bartels, *Democracy for Realists*.

¹⁰ Henri Tajfel, "Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations," *Annual Review of Psychology* 33, no. 1 (February 1982): 1-39. Drew Westen, *The Political Brain*, (New York: Perseus Books, 2008). Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2012).

they'll reject this same policy if they're told that it's endorsed by the opposing party rather than their own.¹¹ It's generally held in evolutionary psychology that in-group biases are innate, and we are genetically pre-wired for them.

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. Studies show that for those who know the policy preferences of politicians, 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.¹² Moreover, politicians are not looked upon negatively when adopting contrary views. Peoples' policy preferences are malleable, and what it means to be a Republican or Democrat is largely up to the party leader.

Platforms can change based on the leader's direction, such as with 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 and the tribes did align when it came time to vote despite the agenda for a clear violation of freedom of religion.¹³ He has 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.¹⁴ 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 or for slavery, imperialism, and genocide as was

¹¹ Geoffrey L. Cohen, "Party Over Policy: The dominating impact of group influence on political beliefs," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 85, no. 5 (November 2003): 808.

¹² John Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Gabriel S. Lenz, *Follow the Leader?: How Voters Respond to Politicians' Policies and Performance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). David E. Broockman, and Daniel M. Butler, "The Causal Effects of Elite Position-Taking on Voter Attitudes: Field Experiments with Elite Communication," *American Journal of Political Science* 61, no. 1 (January 2017): 208-221.

¹³ Jessica Taylor, "Trump Calls For 'Total And Complete Shutdown Of Muslims Entering' U.S.," *NPR*, December 7, 2015, <https://www.npr.org/2015/12/07/458836388/trump-calls-for-total-and-complete-shutdown-of-muslims-entering-u-s>.

¹⁴ Hallie Jackson and Courtney Kube, "Trump's controversial transgender military policy goes into effect," *NBC News*, April 12, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/trump-s-controversial-transgender-military-policy-goes-effect-n993826>.

witnessed in U.S. history. A party may hold white nationalist immigration policies such as in the 1920s in the U.S., and the adoption of fascist principles can be cyclical. Given that high and low information voters succumb to tribalism, we can't rely on them to always pick good candidates when they will vote based on their tribe.

Experiments show that the masses are susceptible to many other cognitive biases relevant to politics like peer pressure and framing effects. Framing effects are where people will give different answers on exactly the same issue depending upon what words are used or how the situation is framed. In Tversky and Kahneman's classic study, the following political policy question is provided to the first group of subjects:

Imagine that the U.S. is preparing for an outbreak of an unusual Asian disease which is expected to kill 600 people. Two alternative programs to fight the disease, A and B, have been proposed. Assume that the exact scientific estimates of the consequences of the programs are as follows: If program A is adopted, 200 people will be saved. If program B is adopted, there is a 1/3 probability that 600 people will be saved, and a 2/3 probability that no people will be saved. Which of the two programs would you favor?¹⁵

The second group of subjects was provided with the same question except with a different set of options:

If program C is adopted, 400 people will die. If program D is adopted, there is a 1/3 probability that nobody will die.

On closer examination of the two sets of options for the two groups of participants, we can see that programs A and C are the same while programs B and D are also exactly the same. However, there is a discrepancy in that participants in the first group chose A instead of B 72% of the time while in the second group, subjects picked C instead of D only 22% of the time. We can see that how different groups of subjects chose differently for equivalent sets of options is based on the use or non-use of particular words such as 'saved' rather than 'die' and vice versa. Note that politicians are very adept on word choice and utilizing emotional language that can elicit this bias.

¹⁵ Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, "The Framing of Decisions and the Psychology of Choice," *Science* 211, no. 4481 (January 1981): 453.

Another is the confirmation bias, where people tend to reject or ignore evidence that goes against their views but search for evidence that favors their current positions. Moreover, they interpret data that goes against their political views as being in favor of their position. For example, liberals and conservatives both were given conflicting studies, where one of the studies had data supporting the practice of having concealed handguns in that bans on such guns failed to decrease crime.¹⁶ The other study showed that bans on concealed guns decreased crime. However, both liberals and conservatives viewed both contradictory sets of data as supporting their own disparate conclusions on concealed weapons.

There is also 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 (WMDs) in Iraq, and Democrats were given false news that Republicans want to ban all stem cell research.¹⁷ Next, subjects were given direct evidence that the news stories are false, such as viewing a video of George W. Bush publicly admitting that there were no WMDs in Iraq. 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 above consensus and well-replicated findings are well known in political science and paint a depressing picture of the electorate in democracies. They show that democracies and a vote by popularity isn't a reliable form of government. Condorcet's jury theorem is a familiar mathematical proof based on probabilities. It shows that if voters on average are more likely to make the right choice ($>.5$), then as the number of voters increases, the electorate is more likely to make the right choice as the probability approaches 1. Conversely, it also demonstrates that if voters on average aren't likely to make the right choice ($<.5$), then the electorate is more likely to make the wrong choice with increasing numbers. The ignorant masses in a democracy aren't likely to make the right choice, so Condorcet's theorem allows us to conclude that democracy is a form of government that is likely to lead to poor leaders in most cases.

¹⁶ D. Kahan, E. Peters, E. Dawson, and P. Slovic, "Motivated Numeracy and Enlightened Self-Government," Unpublished manuscript, Yale Law School, Public Working Paper No. 307, http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2319992.

¹⁷ Brendan Nyhan, and Jason Reifler, "When Corrections Fail: The persistence of political misperceptions," *Political Behavior* 32, no. 2 (June 2010): 303-330.

Moreover, a study by Martin Gilens shows that presidents are six times more responsive to the policy preferences of the rich than the poor and middle classes.¹⁸ Economic elites and special interest groups play a substantial role in influencing public policy, but the masses have little to no influence. The poor and middle class 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 new political policy change. Gilens determined that it's not due to the wealthy's higher voter turnout rates. Also, generally ignoring the preferences of the poor isn't due to their lower voting rates either. Hence, even if disadvantaged groups came out in larger numbers to vote, their policy preferences likely will not be instantiated unless they're in league with the wealthy. 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.

Meritocratic Democracy

We have seen how data from political science weighs heavily against democracy. In light of this, I advocate a specified version of a meritocracy, or rule by the merited, that is hybridized with democracy.¹⁹ Meritocracy has its roots in Confucius and Plato, and it stands opposed to the largely unadulterated rule by the largely ignorant masses that should be feared with

¹⁸ Martin Gilens, *Affluence and Influence*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

¹⁹ Qing Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013). Daniel Bell, "Introduction: The Theory, History, and Practice of Political Meritocracy," in *The East Asian Challenge for Democracy*, ed. by Daniel A. Bell and Chenyang Li, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1-30. Daniel Bell, *The China Model*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015). Joseph Chan, "Political Meritocracy and Meritorious Rule: A Confucian Perspective," in *The East Asian Challenge for Democracy*, ed. by Daniel A. Bell and Chenyang Li, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 31-54. Joseph Chan, *Confucian Perfectionism*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014). Tongdong Bai, "A Confucian Version of Hybrid Regime: How Does It Work, and Why Is It Superior?," in *The East Asian Challenge for Democracy*, ed. by Daniel A. Bell and Chenyang Li, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 55-87. Ruiping Fan, "Confucian Meritocracy for Contemporary China," in *The East Asian Challenge for Democracy*, ed. by Daniel A. Bell and Chenyang Li, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 88-115.

democracy.²⁰ There are more stringent criteria for being able to run for office in a meritocracy rather than democracy, where such additional standards are to make it more likely that a leader has the intellectual and moral virtues such as being wise, fair, diligent, generous, open-minded, compassionate, caring, curious, creative, just, insightful, etc. It is to also make it more likely that officials have political knowledge. Although a meritocracy that has rigid merit-based standards for obtaining legislative and executive offices has roots in Ancient Western and Eastern philosophy, it's most prominently and widely discussed and developed today in contemporary Eastern rather than Western philosophy, and thus, its modern form falls under a Confucian philosophy.

Our focus here is only on the legislative and executive arms of government. If we were to include the judicial branch, then the overall U.S. government is a hybrid democracy-meritocracy. Entry into the Supreme Court is supposed to be based on merit rather than popular vote. However, given our focus, I continually describe Western liberal societies as democracies, as they're commonly described. Moreover, even in Western democracies, there are small meritocratic elements in the legislative and executive branches, such as having age restrictions for experience. However, such minimal requirements are too insignificant to label them as hybrid branches with any seriousness in light of Eastern thought. My thesis is that

²⁰ A meritocracy diverges from an epistocracy in that a meritocracy focuses immediately on the virtues of officials while an epistocracy focuses on the virtues of the voters. To be sure, there might be overlap between the two. Some meritocratic philosophers like Bell (2015) claim that Mill's form of government, where voters can get more votes depending on education levels, is a meritocracy. Yet, I suggest we classify Mill's view as an epistocracy-democracy hybrid since it focuses on the virtues of the voters. Brennan (2016), who endorses a general epistocracy, discusses a hybrid form of government in which there's universal suffrage, but there's an "epistocratic" council that can veto decisions made by the elected government, like a judicial branch. Membership in the council is determined by having a clean criminal record and passing relevant exams. While he waffles as to whether this is a legitimate epistocracy or not, I suggest for ease of classification we understand it as a hybrid between a meritocracy and a democracy. Everyone gets to vote for elected representatives which is the democratic element, but there's at least one branch in which members are selected based on merit rather than by popular vote. This view focuses on the virtues of the officials rather than on the voters, so a meritocracy is a better fit. Ultimately, we can define our terms here however we want, but I suggest my demarcation as it will be easier to classify the various theories while capturing certain nuances. Although full analysis of an epistocracy is well beyond our scope since our focus is only on my hybrid and democracy, data that high information voters also are tribalistic strongly bespeaks against an epistocracy.

for the legislative and executive branches, my hybrid theory that contains a significant meritocratic component is better than democracy.

There are many different versions of meritocracy developed in contemporary Confucian thought. Although we don't have the space to introduce every possible variant, on a pure meritocracy, one may maintain that leaders are selected by a committee based on satisfying standards like education, experience, 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.²¹ One can maintain a bicameral legislature with checks and balances where one house is democratically elected and the second upper house is a pure meritocracy.²²

Although this essay's focus is not to adjudicate between the various forms of meritocracy as that would constitute its own paper, I favor my own hybrid view with a separation of powers and check and balances. Local elections are by pure democracy. However, what makes my theory unique compared to other hybrids in contemporary Confucian thought is that national legislative and executive representatives all are democratically elected in which everyone has an equal vote with no pure meritocracy component, but they must successfully demonstrate their merit to an examination body in order to have their name on the ballot.²³ As my view espouses a full democratic vote for all relevant offices but strong meritocratic requirements as well, I call my hybrid, *meritocratic democracy*. My aim in this paper is to show that my meritocratic democracy is better than democracy.

Some of my merit-based standards at these levels are that political candidates must 1) take relevant higher education classes, such as economics, political science, history, environmental science, and political philosophy. Students can choose any major to keep the benefit of a diversity of thoughts and prior careers among national politicians, but like medical school entrance requirements, certain classes need to be taken. Public fully funded

²¹ Daniel Bell, *The China Model*.

²² Joseph Chan, "Political Meritocracy," 31-54. Tongdong Bai, "A Confucian Version," 55-87.

²³ The judicial branch will remain as a pure meritocracy, however, my standards for being in the Supreme Court is very different compared to the supposed merit-based standards in the U.S. Although I don't go into any real detail on them here, examples such as the way Justice Kavanaugh's recent appointment was handled absent of a full investigation into his alleged sexual assault activities demonstrates serious flaws with this pure "meritocratic" element of U.S. government.

universities are a prerequisite for my system so that all may have an opportunity to run for office by acquiring the requisite education.

2) Pass a non-ideological standardized factual test on one's ability to predict events that are relevant to politics. Philip Tetlock's (2005) studies show that there are two kinds of experts: Foxes and hedgehogs. Foxes are able to utilize a variety of theories and frameworks in reasoning. They have a wide variety of eclectic knowledge from different traditions and don't stick to only using one tradition. When faced with a dilemma they can rely on a variety of different frameworks. Hedgehogs are dogmatic in that they stick to one theory and apply it to all situations. They are formulaic and mechanical in their responses to diverse situations and to ill-defined problems with a one-size-fits all framework. Both kinds of experts when asked to make predictions of political events, such as on potential war and the economy, are generally outperformed by statistical regressions. Initially, this appears to cast heavy doubt on the ability of experts as they don't seem to be any better than laypeople regarding predicting events. However, there is a silver lining to this. It was found that foxes are better at making predictions than hedgehogs. There are people who are measurably more merited at politics than others. Hence, regardless of being a formal expert – such as having a PhD in philosophy, economics, or political science – or being a lay person, we should prefer people in office who are foxes rather than hedgehogs. Note that these findings are only on the ability to predict emerging situations in politics and not on being able to know what the possible good options for action are that one should choose from once an accurate prediction has been made or a situation has fully emerged. The latter can require higher education level knowledge of subjects like economics, constitutional law, history, international relations, etc., where I already have course requirements for many of these subjects.

Non-ideological tests, such as those used by Tetlock, to determine whether someone is a fox rather than a hedgehog should be used to vet candidates for office. Free public education, including in higher education, is a prerequisite for my system so that all may have the opportunity to receive the education to potentially think like a fox, although studies show that one need not be formally educated at higher levels to think like a fox.

By 'non-ideological,' I mean tests that don't favor one normative political theory over another. By 'non-ideological,' I'm invoking a fact/value distinction between non-moral facts versus moral and political values. Moral and political normative judgments are about what we ought to do in a moral or political situation, and they are in part informed by non-moral facts. For example, there is the non-moral fact that we are being invaded by a formidable enemy, and then one might make the normative political judgment that government ought to send the military to defend our shores.

Tetlock's test is on the ability to predict non-moral facts and events only. By staying out of the normative moral and political domain, there beneficially will be no bias at this level of the normative moral/political for one ideology over another, such as between conservatives and liberals.

3) Have prior experience leading in local government while scoring high on various indices such as on decreasing or maintaining low crime rates and maintaining a healthy economy. This shows that the candidate has good real-world decision-making skills, leadership qualities, social skills, and emotional intelligence in dealing with and motivating other people. Also, as sometimes inimical events can happen beyond a leader's control, such as a pandemic causing an economic recession, one need not score high on all indices, like regarding the economy. There will be leeway for scoring low on some of them. Furthermore, once attaining national office, leaders need to score generally well on the indices in order to be able to run for reelection.

4) Have a clean criminal record. All pending official criminal investigations must be carried out to the fullest extent before the candidate's name can appear on the ballot. If they've had their record expunged or sealed many years after the crime was committed due to good behavior and paying their debt to society, then they may run. Also, if their crime is able to be expunged, but they simply lack the finances to get it expunged, they may also continue to be a candidate. To note, courts don't expunge major felonies. Other possible exception cases include minor traffic violations and violations due to civil disobedience.

Moreover, there are problems in the justice system, where wealthy whites are able to obtain better legal counsel and at many times more leniency or a presumption of innocence from juries. They are more likely to get off for a crime, where members of certain other groups, like racial minorities, usually will not. Hence, for national candidates, the FBI needs to run a new and further investigation with the examination committee on a candidate's possible criminal history even if they were found innocent or had a charge dismissed. As having moral merit for our leaders is vital, in this investigation a lower epistemic standard of guilt for major felonies that only requires a 'preponderance of the evidence' rather than evidence 'beyond a reasonable doubt' common in criminal trials is required to bar a candidate from running further. If the evidence shows that the candidate is more likely than not to have committed the crime, he or she can't be on the ballot. Conversely, a candidate who believes she or he was falsely convicted may also undergo this new investigation to see where the preponderance of the evidence lies. If it's more likely that she or he is innocent, then they may run despite the prior conviction. All in all, given the satisfaction of the above four criteria in-and-of-themselves, we will be *epistemically justified in believing* that a candidate is merited.

One may counter that the merit-based standards may be incorrect. However, the merit-based standards revolve around central values for a liberal democracy, such as supporting equal rights for citizens, having low crime rates, and promoting a healthy economy. Yet, this objector may have in mind that the courses that are required are incorrect. Yet, the course requirements will be on those core classes relevant to politics and political decision-making, such as in ethics, economics, constitutional law, and the like. Moreover, a committee of professional educators and senior political officials will get to set the course requirements, where they will reconvene every few years to make possible alterations as necessary in our ever-changing world. Notice setting course requirements occurs in other fields, and there are core courses that generally are uncontroversial, such as in political science, economics, law, medicine, business, etc. It will not be too controversial what core courses are required for pursuing a career in politics, where fringe classes can be options as electives for fulfilling elective course requirements for running for office. In fact, given our current knowledge of politics and education, so long as we follow a reasonable procedure as in most other fields for setting requirements, we will be justified in believing that the arrived upon curriculum for candidacy in national politics is *sufficient* for our purposes, although it may not be exactly perfect. Of course, there's always the possibility in the future through further knowledge gathering that we realize that the requirements were not quite correct or we need to make changes, but at this moment in time, we're still justified in our beliefs on the course requirements. We're epistemically justified in implementing our course criteria. To maintain that we are not so justified is irrational and goes against the evidence of our current curriculum-making abilities and knowledge of what's relevant to politics.

Overall, regarding what counts as political competence, studies show that people generally are good at and agree on what criteria would make for a competent leader.²⁴ The masses reach a consensus on the criteria for merit in politics. The only problem is that people are bad at applying such standards when voting.

Those many candidates who jump through my hoops then must be elected from a democratic vote.²⁵ In order to adjudicate between candidates who pass the sufficiency threshold for merit, a democracy is implemented where everyone has the equal right to one vote. This is for several reasons. One is that it's too controversial to think we can have a correct hierarchical ranking of

²⁴ Brian Caplan, *The Myth*.

²⁵ China's meritocracy provides an example of how there will be many candidates who will sufficiently demonstrate merit for one position.

the various merit-based criteria such that we can adjudicate which candidate overall legitimately scores the highest and is the best candidate. Scores on factors like experience versus tests may be too similar or even different between top candidates, and it will be too controversial for a committee to decide which is the best candidate. This inexactness in the merit selection procedure is just the nature of the beast. Instead, we should have a sufficiency threshold, where a candidate need only score well above average on the various criteria. Then, a democratic vote on those who have jumped through the hoops will decide who attains office. Democracy is used to select officials based on an admittedly inexact and imprecise merit-based procedure. Other benefits of attaching democracy to my theory will be described shortly below, such as having the ability for freedom of expression in voting.

The FBI reports that hate crimes dramatically have risen by seventeen percent in the U.S. in 2017 since Trump took office.²⁶ This can be problematic on my system. As a candidate, Trump has previously refused denouncing the KKK in order to get their votes and thus, politically align himself with them in that respect.²⁷ Regarding other domestic terrorist organizations, he has claimed that there are many fine people at a neo-Nazi rally.²⁸ He falsely has called most Mexican illegal immigrants rapists.²⁹ As Confucius and modern psychology show that many people are influenced by the leaders of their tribe, it's unsurprising that hate crimes have dramatically risen during Trump's tenure. Similar to how local politicians must generally score well on the same indices and pass exams with high marks in order to run for national office, amongst other things, national politicians also must continue to generally score well on the same indices while still in office in order to be able to run for reelection. This is similar to many other jobs that have performance evaluations.

²⁶ Jessica Schneider, "Hate Crimes Increased by 17% in 2017, FBI Report Finds," *CNN*, December 11, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/11/13/politics/fbi-hate-crimes-2017/index.html>.

²⁷ Melissa Chan, "Donald Trump Refuses to Condemn KKK, Disavow David Duke Endorsement," *Time*, February 28 2016, <https://time.com/4240268/donald-trump-kkk-david-duke/>.

²⁸ Katie Reilly, "President Trump Again Blames 'Both Sides' for Charlottesville Violence," *Time*, August 15, 2017. <https://time.com/4902129/president-donald-trump-both-sides-charlottesville/>.

²⁹ Michelle Lee, "Donald Trump's false comments connecting Mexican immigrants and crime," *The Washington Post*, July 8, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2015/07/08/donald-trumps-false-comments-connecting-mexican-immigrants-and-crime/>.

On my 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. Aristotle describes 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. Confucius stated that to develop the 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. As Aristotle states and as modern psychology shows, our moral habits and judgments significantly are 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. This increases the likelihood of having cultural shifts towards more civility as well. For example, 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, there needs to be relevant education regarding things like race, religion, and the treatment of women. This not only will help to shape the minds of future politicians but also of future adult citizens, which increases the likelihood for greater civility in society.

Moreover, working together in teams to accomplish goals also has shown to be an effective way to create empathy, understanding, and compassion between minority and majority groups.³⁰ Working together in teams 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, then such exercises must be conducted together with other schools if proximity allows for it. At the collegiate level, national politicians must have had to take a service ethics course that teaches ethical theorizing but also integrates it with real-world action by requiring students to go out into the field logging many hours working with diverse communities in need. I leave the door open for other relevant and effective early and late educational experiences too as well as other mechanisms that can lead to creating a more civil honest culture.

³⁰ Cynthia Estlund, *Working Together*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*.

Of course, much more details and specificity are required to fully fill out my hybrid theory. However, this would require a book-length treatment. Regardless, we have enough of the basic structure of my system here to now argue that although not perfect, it's better than democracy.

Arguments for Meritocratic Democracy

Despite the negative data on voters in a democracy, democracy does have notable general benefits. For example, Western democracies tend not to go to war against other democracies, and it has outcompeted most of its rivals, such as monarchies, oligarchies, and dictatorships, on several levels. History and political science show us that Western democracies have provided a greater level of freedom for its citizens, economic prosperity, and political stability compared to other historical Western forms of government. Other virtues have been ascribed to this form of government, such as that it has intrinsic value, is just, allows for consent, autonomy, equality in that everyone gets to vote, freedom of expression in voting, the right to vote, political legitimacy, and personal growth in learning about politics and ethics in order to be a good voter. Also, once legislators are elected by democratic vote, they likely will be seen by the people as legitimate even by those citizens who were in opposition to the winner, which adds important political stability in that transfer of power is peaceful. We see this even in East Asian countries, such as in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, where people came to prefer Western democracies over Confucian paternalism once getting a taste of democracy. The human acceptance and desire for democracy once experienced is such that people won't question an underlying general democratic framework for the state even when it results in electing incompetent and morally bankrupt leaders they despise.

Some of these supposed advantages may be questionable. For instance, it's dubious that a form of government that has a procedure that allows predominantly ignorant people to vote to potentially cause great harm to innocent lives, such as via slavery, imperialism, or genocide, has intrinsic value. Also, overwhelmingly most people don't give *informed* consent in a vote as they are far from informed, and overwhelmingly, most don't take the opportunity to self-develop themselves as being knowledgeable in politics. Regardless, many of the above-listed benefits to democracy, such as autonomy, freedom of expression through voting, relative stability, and equality in voting, will be preserved on my account in that all the usual elected officials are democratically elected and everyone gets the equal right to one vote. These are more virtues of my hybrid, and it provides further reason for attaching a democratic component to my theory. Any virtues a Western democracy may have, whatever the full list might be, will be retained

on my view. However, I append a contemporary Eastern philosophical component of a meritocracy to Western democracy as I believe that such a hybrid government is comparatively better than democracy alone. Although not foolproof, my theory is better than what we have currently in the West. I now present several additional arguments in favor of my view largely focused on the meritocratic component.

My meritocratic democracy limits the ability for the largely ignorant masses to vote on a candidate who lacks the knowledge and experience to do a good job. This is a way to shore up democracy and respond to the threat of the above political psychology data. People can only vote for candidates that formally have provided a good reason to believe they're merited. Also, given the stringent criteria, it's less likely that a morally unmerited candidate will take office. For example, in 2018, 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 U.S. Congress. Although his violent actions were praised by then-President Trump,³¹ those with criminal records or pending criminal investigations cannot run for office on my account except for relevant exceptions listed above. One should have the moral virtues.

The following is my more modern Platonic argument. Medical doctors rightly must take relevant classes, such as biology, physics, and chemistry, as an undergraduate student, pass tests on these courses with an extremely high GPA, attend medical school, and must take medical entrance 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 take exams, acquire an education and experience in political leadership, and demonstrate their virtue and merit. If we have such requirements for a medical doctor, then how much more we should have such requirements for those future politicians who will make decisions on a nation's healthcare, economy, education, warfare, environment, laws, disaster relief, pandemic response, 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.

³¹ Kathleen M. McGraw, Neil Pinney, and David Neumann, "Memory for Political Actors: Contrasting the use of semantic and evaluative organizational strategies," *Political Behavior* 13, no. 2 (June 1991): 165-189.

Moreover, regarding experience, it would be irrational to hire a CEO for one's own large corporation who lacks any experience in the industry and field. To hand over the keys to your company to someone who lacks any relevant experience would be a poor business decision. Likewise, to hand over the much more important and complex job of a leadership position for one's country to someone who lacks political experience and has not shown success on various indices in local government also would be the wrong move.

When one stops to really think about it, it's astonishing that there's no relevant education and political experience requirements for the most important jobs in a country, but there rightly are relevant requirements in the hiring process for many other lesser jobs even when working for the state, such as being a civil servant, CIA operative, police officer, public university professor, military officer, CEO, accountant, lawyer, engineer, business administrator, 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 the country despite a complete lack of education, political experience, and clean criminal record.

Several other virtues of a meritocracy are that it allows for proper desert. Political office must be properly *earned*, *deserved*, and *merited* by having the relevant knowledge, experience, and virtues, just as being a doctor must be properly earned. Being popular in-and-of-itself doesn't mean that one deserves to hold a national office let alone be a medical doctor.³²

A benefit of my hybrid is that it contains performance evaluations while in national office. It's only logical that if many other jobs warrant performance evaluations that have teeth and measure for whether one deserves to keep one's job, then for national political occupations that are more important and involve serving and protecting thousands or millions of lives, a performance review also is warranted that has teeth. Such a review will contain broad indices valued in Western democracies similar to the indices politicians need to meet in local government to run for national office, like having low crime rates, and will not have a vast array of nitty-gritty measurements that effectively would end up micromanaging politicians. Continuation in the job like most other occupations must be deserved, earned, or merited.

My view doesn't purport to be able to stop all possible non-ideal actors from acting non-ideally in office, but it helps to limit such a possibility by making it more within an official's short-term self-interest compared to democracy to

³² Popularity could provide legitimacy, but here we can see legitimacy and desert are two distinct things.

put forth certain good policies. As political philosophers have noted for millennia that people largely are clouded by their short-term self-interests, we shouldn't naively hope for most politicians to be motivated by the long-term self-interests of their country absent of constraints. Many politicians in a democracy notoriously attempt to satisfy the short-sighted interests of others and themselves. Hence, we must alter the system with performance evaluations such that it's now within their more short-term self-interest compared to democracy to put forth certain good laws or policies. By implementing meritocratic procedures that now make it within more of their short-term self-interest contrasted with democracy to put forth certain good policies for the long-term interest of the country, we now make it more likely that such policies will be put in place. This increased probability is a substantial virtue of my hybrid that helps place it over democracy.

One problem with democracy is that it tends to dissuade the most qualified people from running for office given the grueling campaign season, negative campaigning, personal attacks, and what can be viewed as more of a popularity contest of trying to capture the whims and fancies of the masses using looks, propaganda, and loaded biased emotionally-charged words rather than a contest based on competence and leadership qualities. Having my rigorous merit-based criteria can better motivate the most qualified people in a country to run compared to democracy as they know that it's significantly based on merit, and if they lose, they will lose most likely to a worthy adversary who likely is qualified for the job rather than being a simple demagogue.

Empirical evidence from political science also can help support the meritocratic element of my hybrid view. Take as a possible example the meritocracy in early Singapore. Singapore is a multicultural country consisting of predominantly Chinese constituents but also many Malays and Indians. A democracy would have led to the dominance of its Chinese citizens' interests and culture in Singapore over that of the minority groups. However, the meritocratic system in Singapore has led to leaders that focus on looking out for the long-term interests of the country regarding certain minority rights rather than short-term interests commonly held by populist candidates in democratic countries. For instance, the Singapore government combatted ethnic parochialism by fostering a new Singapore identity for all its citizens. They broke up ethnic enclaves and had mixed public housing. They also marginalized Chinese clan associations. The government overrode the wishes of all ethnic groups by promoting English, a neutral language, as the country's main language. All of this would not have occurred with democracy, and it provides positive evidence on how meritocracies can handle pluralistic societies better than democracy.

China has developed into a pure meritocracy at the national level in the last thirty years that heavily focuses on economics education and testing for its leaders in order to be appointed at the national level.³³ Western political analysts have criticized China for not having political structural reforms in the last few decades. However, their view is biased and clouded as positive reform for them only means democratization. China actually has gone through significant reform by implementing meritocracy. Selection is based on several criteria such as rigorous testing, performance evaluations, and having past successful experience in local government. Thousands of candidates jump through these merit-based hoops and compete for a single spot. Similar to Singapore, this resulted in extreme success economically as Chinese merit-based leaders have presided over the single most impressive poverty alleviation achievement in recorded human history. Several hundred million people have been lifted out of poverty over the past few decades. Such like success would be much welcomed in the U.S., the wealthiest nation in the world, as one in five children are at risk of hunger in the U.S.³⁴ What the empirical evidence shows us is that meritocracies can lead to high degrees of success in relevant matters in which there are merit-based criteria, such as in economics and for certain minority rights.

Despite these stunning economic and, at times, social successes of relevant meritocracies, there are still problems in the relevant Eastern countries in which there can be improvements. This can include things like acquiring knowledge of the importance of a free press, environmental pollution, allowing for political dissent and freedom of expression, women's rights, and freedom of religion. One problem is that Eastern meritocracies tend to focus mostly on economics education for future politicians, which generally has led to stunning economic successes in the relevant countries, but their governments need to have more meritocracy. They need further education, testing, and evaluation in areas outside of economics in which there are deficiencies. As meritocracy for economics and certain other factors empirically have proven to work, more meritocracy is needed in other areas, not less. This empirical evidence provides further support for the meritocratic component of my meritocratic democracy.

There also are consequentialist justice-based reasons in favor of meritocratic democracy. Equality in that everyone gets to vote, freedom of

³³ Daniel Bell, *The China Model*.

³⁴ Alyse Shorland and Jamie Gumbrecht, "Report: 1 in 5 U.S. children at risk of hunger," *CNN*, November 23, 2011, <https://www.cnn.com/2011/11/23/us/cnnheroes-hungry-children/index.html>.

expression in voting, and exercising the individual right to vote in a Western democracy are just some of the benefits of this system. However, there seemingly are competing reasons against democracy at times in that such rights can be outweighed by the severe negative consequences of certain poor political outcomes that can result from the incompetent masses and unmerited leaders. Despite its individual rights the system itself contains, democracy can lead to a dystopian society generally absent of truth and significantly lacking in justice. Why should we allow groups of ignorant people to have significant negative unjust effects on the lives of others, such as supporting unjust wars based on false pretenses like the Iraq War which led to the death of over 100,000 innocent civilian lives? Is this a just system? However, insofar as meritocratic democracy is a hybrid view, we can have our cake and eat it too. We can maintain the benefits of democracy while also addressing consequentialist justice-based concerns by making sure candidates who appear on the ballot are ones that for the merit-based criteria in-and-of-themselves, we are justified in believing that they likely won't make decisions that lead to hugely disastrous consequences. We at a minimum can at least say that such merit is more likely to be had by our leaders on my system than with democracy.

Although not foolproof, my hybrid does better than democracy given the above positive arguments and the negative data on democracies from political science. Meritocratic democracy significantly increases the likelihood that we'll have virtuous leaders compared to democracy alone.

Objections

One may object that officials have advisors who are wise. Since leaders follow the advice of their advisors, they need not receive extra training nor exercise in developing the virtues. However, politicians can have poor advisors that themselves lack merit. For example, officials may practice nepotism and choose unmerited advisors, choose advisors that are linked to the alt-right, 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 make them think that they know best despite what their wiser more experienced advisors may say. There are too many pitfalls here, and appending meritocracy to democracy leads to a better system that makes it more likely that an official will have and exercise the intellectual and moral virtues.

Another objection is that someone may jump through all the hoops required of a meritocracy to demonstrate merit. However, when in office, all of that may be thrown out the window, and the elected official may be bigoted, letting out his or her true colors. First, remember that I don't claim my meritocratic democracy is perfect but that it's comparatively better than democracy. It's

unlikely that a philosopher can arrive upon a foolproof state that guarantees perfection in the light of non-ideal actors. However, I do want to claim that such potential bigoted leaders are more unlikely to attain power than with democracy, and this is all I need to prove my thesis. Indeed, given my requirements in-and-of-themselves, remember that we're epistemically justified in believing that candidates that are able to be put their names on the ballot are meritorious even though it might be the case that underneath it all, some are not. In-and-of-itself, my merit-based criteria allows for an induction that a candidate is merited. Hence, my view comparatively is better than democracy.

Another counter is that meritocracy is impractical and will never be implemented. However, as discussed, meritocracies have been implemented in some Eastern countries. This objection is false. Yet, one still may wonder if it can be put in place in the West. In response, my theory is a normative one about what ought to be the case even though descriptively, it may not be implemented any time soon. It may take revolution to instantiate it, just as liberalism and the political philosophies from the Enlightenment initially did. Yet, my hybrid is much more likely to be peacefully implemented than a democracy would be over a monarchy given that it keeps democracy as an important element. We already have weak merit-based criteria for being in Congress or being the president in the U.S. Recall that such standards are so weak that we can't label these branches as hybrids with any seriousness. We also have a pure meritocracy for the judicial branch in the U.S. My view involves adding amendments and more to the lists of pre-existing merit-based criteria for office, and like the judicial branch, the new requirements are merit-based.

A fourth possible objection is that meritocracy in modern times is an Eastern philosophy and part of Eastern culture. Relative to the values and traditions of Western liberal democracies, meritocracy has no place. However, this is false as, for example, the U.S. government as a whole is a hybrid democracy-meritocracy. The judicial branch is supposed to be a pure meritocracy, and even the legislative and executive branches have very minimal merit-based criteria.³⁵ Merit is a political value in the West just as it has an extremely high value in the workforce in the West. It's not a foreign concept. People and philosophers in the West do value merit in politics. My view gives merit its rightful place in Western political philosophy by fusing a substantial merit-based element alongside democracy. Also, recall that Plato, one of the founding thinkers of Western civilization, held a meritocracy.

³⁵ Recall that since my focus is only on the legislative and executive branches, I've labeled Western countries as democracies rather than hybrids in this paper.

Fifth, since I maintain a democratic component, my view is open to the charge that the voters are tribalistic. The masses are susceptible to other problematic cognitive biases, and consistent with Plato, contemporary political science data demonstrates that they largely are ignorant. However, appending a meritocracy to a democracy as with meritocratic democracy can meet the present challenge in that it's likely to produce leaders with merit in spite of tribalism and other psychological biases or faults. Voters may be tribalistic, but the only candidates they can vote for are ones that have demonstrated merit to the point that in-and-of-itself, we can be 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. Rather, our aim is to show that meritocratic democracy is better and more likely to have meritorious leaders than democracy despite having flaws. Meritocratic democracy respects democracy as a basic right, and unlike democracy alone, it responds to tribalism and other cognitive faults in that candidates that one may vote for will have provided a good reason to believe that they exercise the virtues.

One may object that a deliberative democracy consistent with the likes of Joshua Cohen and Habermas with lots of deliberation, discussion, debate, and town halls is all we need. If we have people come together to weigh the pros and cons, debate with an open, sincere mind, listen to one another where everyone is allowed to speak, present criticisms backed by reasons in a non-coercive/threatening way, think with logical consistency, be able to introduce any topic for discussion, etc. then this will lead to better leaders than my meritocratic democracy. However, recall the empirical data shows that people largely aren't moved by rational debate.

In a survey of the vast empirical literature on deliberative democracy, Mendelberg writes that the benefits of deliberation in a democracy is thin or non-existent.³⁶ In the literature, when political tribes debate against each other, it does bring more awareness to participants of the reasons held by the other side. However, data shows that a group stating their preference without debate leads to the same final outcome as groups stating their preference with deliberation. People are fans or fanatics of their political team. In the real world, non-ideal actors have confirmation biases and respond to peer pressure and tribalism. While deliberation has demonstrated to be useful regarding reaching consensus on immediately verifiable facts, such as facts that can be found on the U.S. census bureau website, when it comes to

³⁶ Tali Mendelberg, "The Deliberative Citizen: Theory and Evidence," in *Research in Micropolitics, Volume 6*, ed. by Michael Delli Carpini, Leonie Huddy, and Robert Shapiro, (Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2002), 151-193.

normative claims about morals and justice about what the government ought to do in light of such facts, deliberation has shown to fail. Moreover, experiments show that deliberation often causes people to believe that there are no correct answers at all, which then causes them to disengage in political deliberation and participation. Studies show that most people also dislike political deliberation and prefer that it not last long. Real-world political deliberation is more likely to lead to the opposite results than what deliberative democracy theorists want.

A reply from the objector may be that if we alter the deliberative process in a certain unique way that wasn't directly tested for in any extant political psychology experiment, then it will lead to having virtuous officials, and voters will be responsive to good reasoning. Also, perhaps we'll discover in the future a new deliberative process we can implement in the real world, and it will work. We need to have a *proper* procedure, and current participants in experiments aren't *proper* deliberators. Yet, given the diverse replicated studies of different kinds of deliberative circumstances that led to negative results, such as ones with a neutral moderator to introduce controversial topics and keep people in line during deliberation, we are warranted in drawing an inductive inference that such a unique deliberative process likely won't alter ignorant and tribalistic people's minds in the real world. On top of this, even if proper deliberation in the real world with real people led to good results at most times, deliberation still will at times lead to the wrong outcome with the presence of non-ideal actors. A deliberative democracy appended to a meritocracy still will increase the likelihood of having meritorious leaders as compared with deliberative democracy alone. Hence, meritocratic democracy is better than democracy.

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

Another challenge is that we can eliminate gerrymandering, first-pass-the-post voting to allow for smaller parties to occupy more seats, have campaign finance reforms, eliminate the electoral college and have the presidency based on popular vote, have split electoral votes from a state for the presidential election, and/or a variety of other measures to shore up democracy. We don't need meritocratic democracy. While some of these measures may be beneficial, like curtailing gerrymandering and having

campaign finance reforms, such measures are consistent with meritocratic democracy. Such potential beneficial changes to democracy may be put in place on my view too. Meritocratic democracy can implement such changes given that it contains Western democracy, and it also leads to a state with such changes that is more likely to have merited officials than democracy given the substantial merit-based criteria it implements. As both sides equally can implement the same above changes and thus, it's a stalemate in that respect, meritocratic democracy is still better than democracy given my above and below reasons throughout this paper.

Another possible objection is that my hybrid disallows for complete autonomy. Autonomy is a heavily weighted value in liberal democracies, and a part of autonomy supposedly may be being able to vote for whoever you want without merit-based restrictions. In response, there's already some very minimal merit-based restrictions for being in Congress in the U.S. and for the executive branch. Hence, such unadulterated autonomy doesn't exist in the U.S. today, and it shouldn't. Recall that the West also values merit and has implemented very minimal restrictions already. The appropriate question isn't whether we should implement merit-based criteria, but rather, how much merit-based restrictions should we have? Given globalization and the diverse technical skill required to be a politician in today's day and age with more fine-grained specialized knowledge being discovered in the relevant fields, politicians must be more knowledgeable today than in the past to be good decision-makers. This along with the above negative political psychology data on the masses warrants a kind of democratic autonomy that includes the right to vote for all representative positions with significantly more merit-based restrictions for running for office than what presently exists.

This objector then may counter along the lines of James Madison that having less merit-based restrictions allows for people from all walks of life to potentially have their say and influence as a national politician, such as farmers, construction workers, and plumbers, even though they may be ignorant of economics, international affairs, political history, politics, etc. However, once again, the amount of knowledge required in today's day and age for politics is much greater than in Madison's time. In Madison's era, all branches of knowledge were still housed under philosophy, and certain philosophers could plausibly say that they had a general grasp of all human knowledge. It would be easier in that day and age for a non-politician to learn the relevant knowledge available for politics.

One needs to have the relevant knowledge to make it more likely that one is an informed and good decision-maker in national politics. Once again, it would be irrational to hire a CEO to take over your corporation who lacks sufficient knowledge in the relevant industry. Why would we want to make

this mistake then in politics, which generally is much more important in that a representative is responsible for countless lives? It is pure folly and utterly bizarre, when one really thinks about it, to allow some person who has little to no relevant experience and knowledge in politics to run for national office to take care of the lives of countless people when we rightly require proven merit for other jobs that are far far less in importance and complexity. Diversity of walks of life in office easily is overridden by consequentialist considerations concerning the greater good. To have people in national office lacking knowledge in international relations when it comes to our adversaries and warfare or in how to promote a healthy economy should be frightening and could be catastrophic for a nation or the world. Moreover, a level of diversity is preserved in that course requirements for running for office are loose enough to allow one to choose one's own major in any field such that one can pursue a career in one's major before later running for office. This is similar to medical school that has strict and diverse college course requirements even in the humanities but allows students to choose any major they want.

Ninth, one may counter that Western liberal democracy promotes important values like equality in voting, the right to vote, and freedom of expression in voting for all representative legislative and executive positions. Thus, democracy is better than my hybrid. However, meritocratic democracy, unlike other Eastern hybrid views, contains democracy for all representative offices as in Western democracies. Hence, such democratic values all still are respected under my view.

A common objection stemming back to the likes of Aristotle against Plato's meritocracy is that there can be corruption, especially since the most merited individual in a state may maintain office for his or her life, similar to the meritocracy in the Supreme Court. Power tends to corrupt, so the longer someone stays in office, the more corrupt they may become. It's possible they can be a sensible knave and hide their corruption from the examination committee. However, in meritocratic democracy for the legislative and executive branches, leaders don't have life appointments as they must be reelected by democratic vote, amongst other things. Moreover, prior demonstration of moral merit makes it less likely that we'll have corrupt officials as compared to democracy alone.

Another worry is that political hierarchies may become stagnant with less political mobility between economic classes. It may be the case that only the rich can hold office due to my higher education requirements. This possibility of stagnation may be similar to what we see in many democracies, where, for example, in the U.S., about half the Senate is occupied by millionaires and a vast majority of presidents have been millionaires. In response, meritocratic democracy is predicated upon public fully funded education all the way

through college, giving all the opportunity to achieve the educational requirements to run for national office regardless of one's finances. This objection may continue by stating that my merit-based requirements will severely limit possible candidates from underrepresented groups from attaining office. However, of the current fifty-nine African Americans in the U.S. Congress, all but three of them have a college degree. The college education requirement isn't a significant damper. Moreover, recall that my testing requirement can just as easily be passed by a layperson than by an expert.

Twelfth, there may be a worry of politicians having an elitist attitude given that they've passed the merit requirements on my view such that they lack compassion for the common person. However, the meritocratic component of my view includes early and late education for having compassion for the disadvantaged, successful experience in helping the less fortunate in local government, as well as performance reviews evaluating for helping those in need. This makes it more likely that officials are compassionate, understanding, and have solidarity on my view as compared to democracy.

Next, Sungmoon Kim 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.³⁷ Hence, he says that we shouldn't append a meritocracy to a democracy. However, given tribalism, this always isn't so 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 killed anyone via a terrorist act on U.S. soil in the past forty years.³⁸ Regardless, this 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 isn't strong enough. A democracy with separation of powers and checks and balances appended to a meritocracy in the legislative and executive branches will be better than a Western liberal democracy alone in that

³⁷ Sungmoon Kim, *Confucian Democracy in East Asia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.)

³⁸ Lisa Rose, "ISIS arrests: How many are from travel ban countries?," CNN, October 17, 2017, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/10/17/politics/isis-arrests-travel-ban-countries-numbers/index.html>.

representatives will have satisfied requirements that in-and-of-themselves allows us to be justified in believing that representatives are merited.

Our inquiry has focused exclusively on whether my meritocratic democracy is better than democracy. Given the negative data from political science on democracy, my numerous general contentions in favor of meritocratic democracy, and my defense of my view, I conclude that meritocratic democracy is superior to democracy.

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For further reading, see an edited volume on meritocracy, *The East Asian Challenge for Democracy*, edited by Daniel A. Bell and Chenyang Li. This volume contains a host of articles by the likes of Daniel Bell, Joseph Chan, Ruiping Fan, and Bai Tongdong. Books of interest on meritocracy are Daniel Bell's *The China Model*, Joseph Chan's *Confucian Perfectionism*, and Jian Qing's *A Confucian Constitutional Order*. For a book on epistocracy, see Jason Brennan's *Against Democracy*.