

Confucianism and Democracy Testing Four Analytical Models in an Empirical World

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Abstract

In the past, debates have focused on the question of whether Confucianism is in conflict or compatible with democracy. While these two models are partially accurate, they are increasingly becoming inadequate when dealing with new political and social forces and new sets of questions concerning the relationship between democracy and Confucianism. This essay deconstructs the conventional conceptualization of the relationship between Confucianism and democracy through a critical and empirical examination of four ideal-type models of that relationship. These models can be characterized as *conflictive*, *compatible*, *hybrid*, and *critical*. The essay examines the strengths and weaknesses of each model, and tests each through empirical engagement.

Keywords: Compatibility, conflict, Confucianism, democracy, hybridity.

In the past, debates have focused on the question of whether Confucianism is in conflict or compatible with democracy. Samuel Huntington and many others have worked from a *conflict* model, holding that Confucianism is an obstacle to Chinese democratization. By contrast, scholars such as William Theodore de Bary, Andrew Nathan, and Edward Friedman have adopted a *compatibility* approach, which points to elements in Confucian culture that are positive in relation to democracy.¹ These two models are partially accurate, yet they are

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This essay revisits, reassesses, substantially expands, and empirically tests the four models of the topical issue that this author first advanced in an article published in the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 37, no. 1 (2010): 18-33.

¹ William Theodore de Bary, *The Liberal Tradition in China* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1983); Andrew Nathan, "The Place of Values in Cross-Cultural Studies: The Example of Democracy and China," in *Ideas across Cultures: Essays on Chinese Thought in Honor of Benjamin I. Schwartz*, ed. Paul Cohen and Merle Goldman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 293-314; Edward Friedman, "Democratization: Generalizing the East Asian Experience," in *Politics of Democratization: Generalizing the East Asian Experience*, ed. Edward Friedman (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), 27-28; and Baogang He, "Dual Roles

increasingly inadequate when dealing with new political and social forces and new sets of questions concerning the relationship between democracy and Confucianism.

In recent years, there has been an attempt to *go beyond these two conventional models* to explore alternative ways of thinking. The conventionally close association between Confucianism and authoritarianism has been deconstructed.² Jiang Qing (蔣慶) distinguishes *politicized ruxue* (儒學) that frequently was used to maintain autocracy from *political ruxue* that seeks to uphold social justice by criticizing government, its institutions, and policies.³ Often, an idealized version of *ruxue* has been developed so that its moral and political principles offer new criteria for rethinking democracy.

In the political context of the failure of democracy in Iraq, Egypt, the Middle East, and Greece, the question of what is wrong with democracy has been discussed. In 2013, the National University of Taiwan organized a conference to examine the question of whether Confucian ideas and values could be a source of inspiration for reforming, improving, and enhancing a Western style of liberal democracy.⁴ On May 14, 2014, the National University of Singapore organized a public forum at which Daniel Bell discussed whether Confucianism could save the world, whether China was rewriting meritocracy, and whether China's promotion of Confucianism was having a global impact. In contrast, Joseph Chan held a pessimistic view that Confucianism itself first had to be saved, before it could save democracy. On November 20, 2015, Yale-NUS College organized a public debate on "How Much Democracy? How Much Meritocracy?" between Daniel Bell and Philip Pettit.⁵

In the above new round of debates, scholars have pushed the intellectual inquiry further. If democracy and Confucianism (or meritocratic Confucianism) are compatible, how and what can be combined and why? Sungmoon Kim, for example, has moved the debate on whether democracy is compatible

of Semi-Civil Society in Chinese Democracy," *Australian Journal of Political Science* 29, no. 1 (1994): 154-171.

² Russell Fox criticizes the view of Confucianism as necessarily authoritarian. See his article, "Confucian and Communitarian Responses to Liberal Democracy," *Review of Politics* 59 (1997): 561-592.

³ John Makeham, *Lost Soul: Confucianism in Contemporary Chinese Academic Discourse* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 265, and Jiang Qing, *Zhengzhi ruxue: Dangdai ruxue de zhuanxiang, tezhi yu fazhan* [Political Confucianism: The development, characteristics, and reorientation of contemporary Confucians] (Beijing: Shalian, 2003).

⁴ A Symposium on Confucianism, Democracy and Constitutionalism: Global and East Asian Perspectives, organized by the Institute for the Advanced Studies of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Taiwan University, June 14-15, 2013, Taipei, Taiwan.

⁵ Yale-NUS, "Daniel Bell & Philip Pettit—A Debate on "How Much Democracy? How Much Meritocracy?" (November 20, 2015), <https://www.yale-nus.edu.sg/events/president-speaker-series/daniel-bell-philip-pettit-a-debate-on-how-much-democracy-how-much-meritocracy/> (accessed August 16, 2016).

with Confucianism to the new question of “the particular mode of Confucian democracy” that is appropriate for East Asia.⁶ This question leads to the *hybrid* model. Moreover, if democracy and Confucianism can be blended, how can Confucianism improve and enhance democracy? Such a question leads to the *critical* model.

The hybrid model goes against both the conflict and compatibility models and occupies a middle position. It examines the complex institutional and behavioral practices and holds that the practice of democratization in East Asia is always a mix of Western and Confucian cultures. This model is used to describe the mixture of democracy and Confucianism in a variety of ways at different levels. It asks, what is the best proportion of the different ingredients from each culture for different times and places? It reveals the complex relation between democracy and Confucianism in practice.

The critical model reverses conventional thinking, and turns the logic upside down. In both the conflict and compatibility models, democracy is the judge and final truth, while Confucianism is deemed passive: either it should be abandoned for the sake of democracy, or it ought to be modified to make it compatible with democracy. In the critical model, however, the primary standing is from the Confucian point of view rather than from the Western perspective. From the former viewpoint, Confucianism is regarded as the active arbiter of the political norm rather than as a passive listener or beneficiary. From a Confucian perspective, electoral democracy has many deficiencies and flaws, while deliberative democracy is a more acceptable form of government and decision-making. It should be noted that the critical model is not a simplistic form of the conflict model, because it recognizes and respects the core values of liberal democracy. It does not reject liberal democracy, but operates from an awareness of its problems and suggests that Confucianism can be used to address them. Of course, there are variations of each model.

This essay examines *the four models of thinking on the relationship between Confucianism and democracy*. It aims to (1) develop an analytical framework through which we can examine the four ideal-types of the relationship: *conflictive*, *compatible*, *hybrid*, and *critical*, and to (2) examine both the advantages and disadvantages of each model through empirical inquiry. The essay begins with a methodological discussion of the different approaches, introducing the approaches adopted in this essay. It then examines each model, in turn. The essay first describes the background and key characteristics of each model, introducing scholars who advocate different models with great variation. This is followed by an empirical test of the four models.

⁶ Sungmoon Kim, *Confucian Democracy in East Asia: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, March 2014), 247.

Methods and Approaches

Before examining the four models, the different approaches to the question of Confucianism and democracy are reviewed and discussed. Scholars from varying disciplines adopt different methods and approaches.

The Plural Approach

The plural approach is favored in this essay on the following grounds. Confucianism is not a conceptual monolith but rather has a variety of traditions, versions, and forms, including imperial, reform, elite, merchant-house, and mass Confucianism. Just as Confucianism is multidimensional, democracy also is multifaceted, including liberal, developmental, social, deliberative, and republican conceptions of democracy. The relationships between democracy and Confucianism therefore must be multiple and complex. Much of the controversy stems from the fact that scholars use different conceptions of democracy and give different interpretations of Confucianism to support their positions.⁷ Any single conceptualization about correlations between democracy and Confucianism, therefore, of necessity will be narrow, one-sided, and incomplete. It seems inappropriate to start with a monocular definition of Confucianism or democracy because such an approach will exclude others. It is better to remain open to other definitions and interpretations, because different understandings and conceptions of Confucianism and democracy, together with historical contexts, cultural backgrounds, power relationships, and geopolitics, all play their part. In building democracy, changing interpretations and reconstructions of Confucianism often come into play.

There are plural truths and multiple ways of reconsidering the relationship between democracy and Confucianism. Traditional Western liberal democracy is not the final truth or criterion by which to judge all political systems. There are different models of democracy, ranging from direct and representative democracy to communitarian and deliberative democracy. Each model of democracy has different relations with the rich traditions of Confucianism. Clearly, the conflict model exists between electoral democracy and Confucianism, yet there is greater compatibility between Confucianism and deliberative democracy or elite democracy.

The Philosophical Approach

Daniel Bell, a philosopher, has developed a new political imagination about the ideal of Confucian democratic meritocracy. Bell's recent book, *The China Model*, engages in the grand task of reconciling democracy and Confucian

⁷ Joseph Chan, "Democracy and Meritocracy: Toward a Confucian Perspective," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 34, no. 2 (2007): 179-193.

meritocracy, which is significant for both China and the rest of the world.⁸ The book begins with an examination of the four tyrannies of electoral democracy (chapter one), followed by a discussion of an alternative model of political meritocracy (chapter two), and the problems associated with political meritocracy (chapter three). After arguing that both electoral democracy and political meritocracy alone are deeply problematic, chapter four recommends a hybrid model of democratic meritocracy. (The author believes that Bell should write a new chapter five to further examine the internal tensions of democratic meritocracy.) The book is extremely radical in that it revives the Confucian tradition of political meritocracy and develops an ideal model of democratic meritocracy, against which the current political system and practice can be measured and criticized. Bell's book provides a culturally rooted resource with which to condemn the current regime, and in this sense it is more radical than liberal. The great strength of this book in comparison to current mainstream political thought is that it articulates an ideal model of democratic meritocracy, using political imagination that is not constrained by reality. It is full of political wisdom, insights, and valuable judgment. However, its weakness lies in its lack of first-hand empirical studies.

In contrast to Bell's elitist model of Confucian democratic meritocracy, Sungmoon Kim argues strongly against "meritocratic elitism" because it is based on a cynical view of the ability of citizens to choose their leaders wisely. For him, pluralist societies not only need to know how to establish moral leadership, but also how to accommodate "multiple moral goods."⁹

The Culturalist Approach

Jiang Qing develops a strong defense of Confucianism as a mission, criterion, and principle. He sees democracy as a set of problems rather than an ideal which Confucianism should adopt. In this line of thinking, democracy is perceived as something that has corrupted Confucianism as it did Christianity. So, for a Confucian culturalist, the matter is to defend, maintain, and develop Confucianism rather than sacrifice Confucianism for the sake of democracy. Moreover, Confucianism is presented as a counterbalance to excessive individualism and narrowly defined electoral democracy.

The Text-based Approach

Tongdong Bai has used and interpreted some key passages in *Mencius* to show the compatibility between a "thin" version of liberal democracy and Confucianism. Mencius's ideas of the responsibility of government for the physical and moral well-being of the people, the respectability of the government

⁸ Daniel Bell, *The China Model: Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

⁹ Kim, *Confucian Democracy in East Asia*, 126.

and the ruling elite, and competence-based limited political participation are all compatible with democracy. At the same time, Bai develops the Mencian criticisms of some “thick” democratic ideas.¹⁰

Institutional and Empirical Approaches

Institutional and empirical approaches are adopted in this essay to examine all four models, that is, to test them against empirical facts, including historical and institutional practices, connections, and tensions. While each model is valuable, each must address actual issues in the real world. I strongly believe that any model ought to be empirically based; any idea must have an institutional mechanism; and any proposal must have an institution-based force. Therefore, I think that an institutional- and empirical-based approach must have a primary place in normative political theory. An empirical test is of great merit to social science. No matter how nicely one idea presents itself, it must be subject to empirical testing. Sometimes an attractive idea is merely a reflection of wishful thinking, passion, fear, or desire. While creative ideas are sometimes needed to develop new imagination ahead of the empirical world, in the end, they still need empirical testing to find out whether they are feasible in real life. The philosophical, culturalist, and text approaches discussed above contain too much subjective judgment and self-closeness, and risk irrelevance to real life. Below, I use an institutional approach by comparing the two concrete methods.

There are two methods of addressing the compatibility question. One is soft, something like color matching. This is subject to normative and individual variation. Often, it is easy to identify Confucian terms that seemingly look like the notion of liberty or social contract in order to argue that there is a Confucian source for democracy. Take the idea of equality, for example. Confucianism can be interpreted as an equality enterprise because everyone has equal opportunity to be wise and to be educated to become a sage. This is moral equality according to Confucian principles of teaching. However, this moral equality is not an institutionalized form of equality similar to the right to vote and, subsequently, the one person, one value (or vote) principle.

Color-matching is widely used in both the compatibility and hybrid model schools. In the compatibility model, “compatibility” often refers to the coexistence or mutual support of different cultural values and traditions; in the hybrid model, “compatibility” refers to the creatively and orderly integration of different values and traditions. While the term, “compatibility,” has different analytical meanings, so far the method used by both the compatibility and hybrid schools is largely a sort of color matching.

The color-match method is problematic in the sense that it ignores the whole structure in which different ideas operate and develop their argumentation.

¹⁰ Tongdong Bai, “A Mencian Version of Limited Democracy,” *Res Publica* 14, no. 1 (2008): 19-34.

The Confucian tradition of *Minben* indeed contains some democratic elements. *Minben*, however, lacks democratic institutions and methods such as elections and a party system to articulate the voice and views of the people. *Minben* is only “for the people” with concern for well-being, security, and prosperity. It is not “by the people.” As Liang Qichao has said, “Our ancestors knew that the will of the people ought to be respected, they did not make a serious study of the method by which the ideal might be realized.”¹¹ Therein lies the weakness of Confucian thinking on political institutions.

The other method asks an institutional question of whether there is a fit between a particular key and a particular lock; it is therefore objective and focuses on institutions. It can be argued that Confucian institutions such as elite bureaucratic divisions of power are much less compatible with democracy than Confucian ideas. The fact that the positive, not negative, liberty of Confucianism has been mentioned and stressed indicates a lack of institutionalized liberty in the Confucian tradition. In other words, there are many more conflicts and tensions between liberal democracy and Confucianism in the area of institutions than in the sphere of abstract ideas. Continuing with the key and lock metaphor, there are two ways of approaching this dilemma—to make democracy and Confucianism institutionally compatible, it is necessary either to change the “lock” or cut a new “key.”

The Comparative Approach

To carry out an empirical test, it is necessary to employ a comparative method. Comparative methods can help to go beyond a one-country case study, and, in particular, beyond the narrow view generated by one-country case studies. The more cases that are compared, the more valid the claims that are made.

One striking fact is that East Asia does not have any political party using the term Confucianism. In contrast, there are many parties using the adjectives “Islamic” and “Christian.” Without a political party, Confucianism has a limited role in political life. Moreover, unlike Iranian constitutionalism in which the religious leaders hold ultimate authority over the elected president, Confucianism does not enjoy a privileged place in any constitution in China, Taiwan, South Korea, or Japan. The hybrid model of Iranian democracy is a combination of spiritual authority with elected secular authority. Such a pattern of political hybridity does not exist in Northeast Asia. The hybrid model of Confucian democracy has its different features and characteristics.

To understand the relationship between democracy and Confucianism, we need a historical comparison, too. The common trend is that, while increasingly democracy has been established as a fundamental political principle in East

¹¹ Liang Chi-Chao, “The Confucian School,” in his *History of Chinese Political Thoughts: During the Early Tsin Period* (London: Kegan Pal Ltd., 1930), 150-152. See also, David Elstein, “Why Early Confucianism Cannot Generate Democracy,” *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 9, no. 4 (2010): 427-443.

Asia, Confucianism has retreated from constitutional and political areas into social and private realms. In Taiwan, Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) promoted Confucianism in the 1960s and 1970s, but Lee Deng Hui turned to Japanese culture in the late 1990s. Confucianism has been associated with mainland culture, so when the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) came to power, it emphasized indigenous culture and deliberately played down Confucian culture. In Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew promoted Confucianism actively in the 1980s and 1990s, yet now the official promotion of Confucianism has declined. In the early days, Singapore promoted the Confucian idea of the philosophical sage who is capable of ruling. Now, Singapore follows market principles to recruit top political leaders by offering the highest salaries to public leaders. In China, Mao Zedong rejected Confucianism; even today, Confucianism is not an official ideology, despite many advocating Confucianism. Vietnam also gave up Confucianism, and even abolished the use of Chinese characters under French colonization. Neo-Confucianism developed in Hong Kong in the 1960s-1970s, but now its followers are only a few. Moreover, a new intellectual movement might be developing in Hong Kong, by means of which the young generation is keen to develop its own unique Hong Kong identity so as to play down Confucianism, as it is associated with mainland culture.

The Conflict Model

Scholars committed to the conflict model hold the view that all of the ideological structures of Confucianism and democracy are in conflict. In this model, Confucianism is seen as a product of an agricultural society which constructs a political order to meet its specific social and economic conditions, while liberal democracy is seen as the political construct of an industrial society seeking to meet modern conditions such as the rise of commerce and individual interests. Theorists who work from the conflict model hold that the original ideas of Confucius do not harmonize with liberal ideas.

According to Huntington, the core values of Confucianism, such as hierarchy, elitism, and sage-ruling, are not compatible with liberal democracy.¹² This view stresses the negative and inhibiting factors of Confucianism, including orientations of authoritarian statecraft, collectivist hierarchical behavioral traits, and the unequal distribution of power.

Three key concepts from Confucius's original doctrine—*Ren* (benevolence, or humaneness, or simply goodness), ritual, and the gentleman—indicate a political order in which the rule of the gentleman prevails, duty is central, political inequality is taken for granted, moral concern overrides the political bargaining process, and harmony prevails over conflict. This, it is argued,

¹² Samuel P. Huntington, "Will More Countries Become Democratic?" *Political Science Quarterly* 9, no. 2 (1984): 193-218.

conflicts with a democratic order in which the rule of law prevails, rights are central, political equality is taken for granted, the political bargaining process overrides moral consensus, and conflict is seen necessarily as a normal condition of political life. The Confucian notion of the sage undermines the idea of equality. The Confucian idea of harmony undermines the necessity of conflicts. The Confucian ideal of *Ren* is incompatible with utilitarian calculation.¹³

In Confucian culture, the government has to proceed on the basis of harmony rather than conflict (which leads to suppression of dissidents and renders compromise morally repugnant); the interests of the collective must not be challenged by lesser groups and individuals (which is less favorable to the action of individual citizens); and, finally, rights must be treated as something granted by the state, not inherent in the person (which is less favorable to the institutional protection of individual rights).

According to Confucianism, a political party should embody moral correctness. The *Jiuzhidang* (gentleman party) is concerned with moral principles and public interests, while the *xiaorendang* (villain party) cares for material interests. (Similarly, Edmund Burke drew a line between factions and honorable connections). This moralized notion of party precludes competitive intraparty politics and effectively bans factions.

Empirical Testing

The conflict model has been confirmed by the histories of East Asia in different Confucian societies. Japan's moral culture was pre-eminently Confucian in 1890, when Tani Kanjo and Torio Koyata, conservative nationalists, thought that the constitution and the Imperial Diet would give rise to an unhealthy sense of individualism among the Japanese, making each of them think only of himself or herself. As a result, the development of Japanese parliamentary institutions was to some extent limited by these ultra-conservative attitudes.¹⁴

In modern China, Yuan Shikai (袁世凱) used Confucianism to suppress democratic movements in the 1910s and restored the imperial system. Chiang Kai-shek also employed Confucianism to contain the trend toward democratization in mainland China in the 1930s-1940s and in Taiwan in the 1970s.

In South Korea, Confucianism was actively promoted by military leaders such as Park Chung-hee. As Kim Kyong-dong demonstrates, two negative elements of Confucianism—orientations of authoritarian statecraft and collectivist hierarchical behavioral traits—have been used by the political

¹³ Guy S. Alitto, *The Last Confucian: Liang Shuming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

¹⁴ R. H. Mason, *Japan's First General Election* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 122-123.

elite in their effort to maintain authoritarian rule and arrest the process of democratization.¹⁵ The East Asia Barometer Survey conducted in South Korea during February 2003 revealed that attachment to Confucian values makes it harder to reject authoritarian rule than to embrace democracy.¹⁶

The conflict model was further established in Singapore in the 1980s and 1990s when Confucianism was used to argue for Asian values and against Western democracy. Confucian respect for authority is seen not to favor an opposition movement, which is interpreted as an attempt to undermine authority in Singapore. It is believed that Confucianism operates in politics as an overriding ideology and a set of moral codes to regulate political behavior and ensure discipline and loyalty.

In contemporary China, the Confucian idea of *Ren* is openly used by Kang Xiaoguang (康曉光) to justify what he calls the Chinese “benevolent authoritarian polity.”¹⁷ Chen Ming endorsed new authoritarianism in order to secure some sort of funding and political patronage for *ruxue*.¹⁸ Xi Jinping often has used the terms and phrases of Confucianism in his speeches. Confucianism has become a source of cultural conservatism and has played out the same “Beijing Opera” of inhibiting democratic movement in contemporary China.

Take an example of the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP’s) ban on “factional” activities. This denies the existence of any form of factionalism, and in elite politics is related to Confucian philosophical reasoning that politicians represent the interests of the whole community while factions seek to articulate only their own narrow interests at the expense of the broader general interest. In addition, the Confucian-inspired aversion to competition makes the Chinese hierarchy even more distrustful of factionalism. This leads to a concern for removing the causes of factionalism, which leads to the inexorable destruction of liberty.

The Compatibility Model

Those who adopt this model hold the view that some elements of Confucianism are compatible with democratic ideas and institutions.¹⁹ Chinese scholars

¹⁵ Kim Kyong-dong, “Social and Cultural Developments in the Republic of Korea,” in *Democracy and Development in East Asia*, ed. Thomas W. Robinson (Washington, DC: AEI Press, 1991), 137-154.

¹⁶ Chong-Min Park Shin and Doh Chull, “So Asian Values Deter Popular Support for Democracy in South Korea,” *Asian Survey* 46, no. 3 (2006): 341-361.

¹⁷ Kang Xiaoguang, “Confucianization: A Future in the Tradition,” *Social Research* 73, no. 1 (2006): 77-120.

¹⁸ Makeham, *Lost Soul*, 197.

¹⁹ See Albert H. Y. Chen, “Is Confucianism Compatible with Liberal Constitutional Democracy,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 34, no. 2 (2007): 195-216.

such as Liang Shuming, Yu Yingshi, Chung-ying Cheng, and Lin Yusheng have emphasized some aspects of compatibility between Confucianism and liberalism.²⁰

The Confucian idea of *Minben* and the idea of heaven in relation to the idea of people are seen as supporting democratic institutions. It is the principle of people, in particular, that can be used to support democratic ideas such as votes, parliament, and parties. The tradition of local gentry (*shenshi* class) can be interpreted as a self-governing local community, a sort of local autonomy, and even a primitive form of local democracy. The very idea of leaders coming from and representing the local community facilitated the development of local-level democracy in China.²¹

The Confucian institution of *Xuetang* (學堂) is a public forum in which the intellectual elite discuss and debate moral, social, and political issues, and this can be transformed into a modern civil society. Other Confucian political institutions can be transformed into something to support democratic development as well. The Confucian tradition of scholarly criticism could be transformed into a formal opposition force, if the practice of criticism were afforded genuine political significance. Confucian tolerance of plural religions could promote liberal toleration. As Daniel Bell argues well, it would be possible to take the Confucian idea of gentry and institutionalize it as a Confucian chamber in a democratic assembly.²² The Confucian balance-check system could be transformed into a modern power-check system. The Confucian examination system could be developed into a system of equal access to public office and as a way of ensuring a meritocracy. Confucianism allows for equal opportunity for political positions open to all scholars through an open examination system. All these elements of Confucianism could be compatible with liberal democracy.

Both Confucianism and liberalism recognize and respect the self and the idea of dignity. *Ren* as a form of love and a psychological principle is inherently rooted in each individual. If *Ren* plays its role, it opposes tyranny and supports democracy. *Ren* is concerned with individuality and the equality of individual moral value. *Ren* could be a theoretical basis for the idea of human rights.²³

²⁰ Chung-Ying Cheng, "Transforming Confucian Virtues into Human Rights," in *Confucianism and Human Rights*, ed. William Theodore de Bary and Tu Weiming (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 142-153, and Lin Yusheng, *Zhongguo chuntong de chuanzaoxing zhuanhua* [The crisis of Chinese consciousness: Radical antitraditionalism in the May Fourth era] (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1988).

²¹ John Fincher, *Chinese Democracy: Statist Reform, the Self-Government Movement and Republican Revolution* (Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1989), 231.

²² Daniel A. Bell, *Beyond Liberal Democracy: Political Thinking for an East Context* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

²³ Cheng, "Transforming Confucian Virtues," and Lin, *Zhongguo chuantong*.

Japanese scholars such as Itagaki Taisuke have argued for liberty according to these neo-Confucian forms.²⁴

Empirical Testing

De Bary notes that individualist and liberal elements exist in the Confucian tradition²⁵ and Nathan argues that tradition-based Chinese values, such as the morally autonomous individual, the absolutely just ruler, the government's responsibility for the people's welfare, and the ordinary person's responsibility for the fate of the nation, serve as the main justification for the growth of a pressure movement demanding democratization in a Schumpeterian direction.²⁶ With its emphases on the selection of government administrative servants through civil service exams, the duty to protest unjust policies, disapproval of benighted government, decentralization, and openness to all religions, China has been extraordinarily replete with traditional tendencies favorable to democratization.²⁷ Fukuyama argues that the Confucian examination system, education, fairly egalitarian income distribution, relative tolerance, tradition of dissent and protest, and tendency toward egalitarianism are not only compatible with, but also actually promote, liberal democracy.²⁸

In real life, the contemporary development of Confucianism in Boston, Hong Kong, and South Korea is associated with the liberal tradition. Friedman argues strongly that the democratic transition and consolidation of democracy in South Korea and Taiwan have proved the validity of the thesis of compatibility between Confucianism and democracy.²⁹ Certainly, democracy can be established in Confucian societies; but the argument about this compatibility based on the existence of democracy in Confucian societies needs qualification and interpretation. The success of democratic transition and consolidation in Confucian societies depends on the separation of Confucianism from politics (this means that Confucianism does not openly interfere in politics) and the mixed cultures of Confucianism, Buddhism, Western Christianity, and democratic culture in South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan. It is critical to ask which part of these mixed cultures plays a role in facilitating democratic transition and consolidation in East Asia.

In addition, a new interpretation of this seeming compatibility reveals the complex and subtle relationship between democracy and Confucianism.

²⁴ Mason, *Japan's First General Election*, 24.

²⁵ De Bary, *The Liberal Tradition in China*.

²⁶ Andrew J. Nathan, *China's Crisis: Dilemmas of Reform and Prospects for Democracy* (New York: Studies of the East Asian Institute, Columbia University, 1990), 308-311, 384.

²⁷ Friedman, "Democratization," 11-12.

²⁸ Francis Fukuyama, "Confucianism and Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 2 (1995): 20-33.

²⁹ Friedman, "Democratization."

At least three factors explain their apparent compatibility. First, Confucian society has undertaken a dramatic transformation. In 2005, only 0.2 percent of contemporary South Koreans identified themselves as adherents of Confucianism, but 29.2 percent considered themselves to be Christian, according to the 2005 census. During the democratic transition, Christian groups were more active than Confucian groups in demanding democracy in the 1980s. Moreover, liberal intellectuals who pushed democratization in both South Korea and Taiwan received their education in the West.

Second, one significant, but less emphasized transformation is the retreat of Confucianism as a state ideology from political life. One of the reasons why contemporary Confucianism can co-exist with democracy in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan is that Confucianism has retreated from politics and become a doctrine of private life, as demonstrated by the Confucian heart-mind doctrine developed in Hong Kong and Taiwan in the 1980s. When the core value of Confucianism receded, a Confucian personal ethic and customs indeed helped to build democratic institutions. In this way, Confucianism does not conflict with liberal democracy directly and the transformation of Confucianism has converged toward democracy. Contemporary Confucianism constitutes less of an obstacle to democracy than Islam because the former retreated from politics, while the latter is still very much part of the political machinery.

Third, center-peripheral relations come into play. The South Korean and Japanese version of peripheral Confucianism found it much easier to adapt to and then adopt the cultural and political changes than Chinese indigenous Confucianism. This is because, in South Korea and Japan, Confucianism can be more easily given up and discarded for such abandonment does not carry with it issues of national pride, Confucianism having been “borrowed” from China in the first place. Thus, Korea was the first to abandon the examination system in East Asia and now is taking the lead in synthesizing liberalism and Confucianism in East Asia. It was likewise easy for Japan to borrow democratic institutions from the West because some elements of Confucianism could be abandoned quickly, without a sense of intellectual guilt. It has been much harder and slower for indigenous and orthodox Confucianism in China to accommodate democratic institutions than it was for the peripheral Confucianism of Korea and Japan.

In summary, the compatibility argument does not disprove the conflict model. Instead, one may argue that the seeming compatibility is plausible simply because the core areas of conflict between democracy and Confucianism have been overcome by cultural transformation and the retreat of Confucianism into private life. Therefore, the compatibility model supports some aspects of the conflict model at a deeper level.

The Hybrid Model

Empirically, Confucianism has been and is playing a greater role in economic and social life in East Asia. Varieties of social rituals, clan and kinship, education, and family life are all influenced by, and exhibit strongly, Confucian characteristics.³⁰ In this context, we can witness an amazing but understandable phenomenon, that is, each generation in different East Asian societies undertakes the imperative task of offering varying versions or proposals of why and how Confucianism should be combined with democracy in modern times. Within the last decade, the processes of Chinese local democratization and the development of village elections, the struggle for human rights, deliberative forums, and intra-party democracy reveal that there is, in practice, a mixing of Chinese traditions and new democratic institutions. This gives rise to a mixed model for rethinking the relationship between democracy and Confucianism in China.

Normatively, it seems that neither Confucianism nor democracy alone can offer a desirable solution to the complex problems East Asia faces. A better solution may be found by combining the best of each into a mixed system, striking a balance between authority and liberty, and effectively coping with the complexities of modernity and the challenge of democracy, while maintaining and developing Confucianism.

Intellectually, the hybrid model itself is plural. Each generation from different political and academic backgrounds has developed different ideas of political hybridity. To blend Confucianism and democracy, one easily can imagine the different combinations leading to Confucian communitarian democracy, Confucian elite democracy, Confucian consultative democracy, and Confucian electoral democracy, although this list is not exhaustive.

China has made persistent efforts to combine Confucianism with democratic values and systems in the past.³¹ Based on the Western idea of three divisions of power and drawing on Confucian traditions, Sun Yat-sen in the 1920s developed the idea of five divisions of power in his constitutional design, adding the Examination Yuan, which is responsible for the nation's civil service system, and the Control Yuan, which is the highest watchdog organization of the state, exercising powers of impeachment, censure, and audit. Liang Shuming in the 1920s-1940s attempted to integrate democracy into the program of village reconstruction and advocated the neo-Confucian model of democracy. This model was characterized by the combinations of Western notions of rights and liberty with the Chinese emphasis on responsibility and

³⁰ Anna Sun, *Confucianism as a World Religion: Contested Histories and Contemporary Realities* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

³¹ Baogang He, *Rural Democracy in China* (New York: Palgrave, 2007), 222-227.

ethical education, and of Western majority rule with Chinese ethical rationality, while criticizing Western individualism and substituting it with advocacy of communitarianism.³²

In Japan, Itagaki devised the terms “patriot” and “public” to revise the Confucian ideal of a disinterested public service so as to combat individualist attempts to advance personal ambitions or sectional interests.³³ In Hong Kong, Mou Zongsan, a new Confucian scholar, developed the doctrine of “Self-Generation of Democracy” that attempts to overcome the weakness of Confucian representation. According to Mou, *Ren* does not directly require sages or statesmen, but first institutionalizes itself through a constitution. This is an indirect way for neo-Confucianism to use its own internal logic to generate democracy.³⁴

Sungmoon Kim, a Korean scholar now teaching in Hong Kong, has developed his idea of Confucian democracy which advocates “moral criticism and rectification of government” and is based upon a set of Confucian public reasons such as “filiality (*xiaoti* 孝悌), trustworthiness (*xin* 信), social harmony (*he* 和), respect of the elderly (*jinglao* 敬老), and respectful deference (*cirang* 辭讓).”³⁵

In Singapore, Sor-hoon Tan, a female philosopher, blends Confucius and Dewey, two great philosophers separated by more than 2,500 years, and injects Dewey’s ideas of government by the people, participation, and collective inquiry into Confucianism. Tan’s ideal Confucian democracy is a “harmonious community in which every member contributes, participates, and benefits according to his or her abilities and needs.”³⁶

Daniel Bell also proposes a modern Confucian democracy characterized by a parliament of scholar-officials, and a house of scholars selected on the basis of competitive examinations.³⁷ Chung-Ying Cheng outlines a Confucian way of democratization, that is, democratization via government for the people who are “ruled with their ends and needs satisfied by a ruler,” and a Confucian philosophy of virtue is seen as “a dynamic agency of democratization that is also bidirectional: virtues to become powers and powers to become virtues.”³⁸

³² Hung-yok Ip, “Liang Shuming and the Idea of Democracy in Modern China,” *Modern China* 17, no. 4 (1991): 481-487.

³³ Mason, *Japan’s First General Election*, 76.

³⁴ Mou Zongsan, *Zhengdao yu zhidao* (政道與治道) [The law of politics and the law of governance] (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1974). Lin Anwei criticized Mou for failing to demonstrate how democracy could be developed out of Confucianism. See Makeham, *Lost Soul*, 179.

³⁵ Kim, *Confucian Democracy in East Asia*, 90, 284.

³⁶ Sor-Hoon Tan, *Confucian Democracy: A Deweyan Reconstruction* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 201.

³⁷ Bell, *Beyond Liberal Democracy*.

³⁸ Chung-Ying Cheng, “Preface: The Inner and the Outer for Democracy and Confucian Tradition,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 34, no. 2 (2007): 152, 154.

Empirical Testing

The core idea of the necessity of hybridity is valid; Islamic and Buddhist democracies are highly hybrid. There is a variety of hybridity and how to evaluate such diversity is a challenging intellectual enterprise. Take the example of Confucian electoral democracy: the vote is seen as a method for selecting a good leader or electing a moral and able person in rural China, Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. By contrast, the liberal interpretation of voting stresses a method of controlling officials by subjecting their tenure to periodic electoral tests, while a populist interpretation emphasizes a method for citizens to participate directly in making law.³⁹

Within modern representative institutions, there are Nominated Members of Parliament (NMP) in Singapore, and nonelected functional representatives in Hong Kong and in China. In particular, the NMP system can be seen as a modern revised version of Confucian remonstrance crafted onto a modern parliamentary system.

There is also hybridity in national and local politics. In China, Bell articulates a model of Confucian democratic meritocracy, that is, “democracy at the local” and “meritocracy at the top.”⁴⁰ By contrast, in South Korea, national democracy co-exists with a strong local Confucian culture in Andong, which has been the center of Confucianism since the ascent of the Joseon Dynasty.

On the surface, the existence of a variety of hybrids in real life confirms the validity of the hybrid model. Yet, through a deeper examination, the school of hybridity is not impressive. At the intellectual level, many writings have just repeated what has been said before, such as the major theme of the necessity and feasibility of hybridity. Very few have designed experiments to test which kind of hybridity is workable or unworkable. What is required is to study how democracy and Confucianism are blended to promote hybrid rigor and to avoid hybrid degeneration.

The author has been personally involved in deliberative democracy experiments in China for the last twelve years, which has provided a unique opportunity to reflect on the role of Confucianism in the hybrid model of Confucian consultative or deliberative democracy. The development of Chinese deliberative democracy in the last decade has drawn heavily on the Confucian tradition of public consultation, blended with Western theories of deliberative democracy and social science methodology for deliberative polling.⁴¹ Take the example of Wenling city, in which, from 1996 to 2000, more than 1,190 deliberative and consultative meetings were held at the village level, 190 at the township level, and 150 in governmental organizations, schools, and business

³⁹ He, *Rural Democracy in China*.

⁴⁰ Bell, *The China Model*, 168.

⁴¹ Chen Shengyong, “The Native Resources of Deliberative Politics in China,” in *The Search for Deliberative Democracy in China*, ed. Ethan Leib and Baogang He (New York: Palgrave, 2006).

sectors. In particular, from 2005 to 2009, Zeguo township of Wenling city, Zhejiang Province, held a series of public consultations, utilizing deliberative polling techniques whose results had direct input into the township budgeting process.⁴² Such meetings are called *kentan*, meaning “sincere heart-to-heart discussions,” imbued with a special local flavor drawn from Confucian tradition. In this mixed practice, Western deliberative democracy and Chinese Confucian elements are present and make their own distinct and unique contributions. It is difficult to claim that this practice of local deliberative democracy is purely a Chinese local phenomenon or that it is merely the result of Western influence.⁴³

While it is a hybrid practice, the proportion of Confucian elements, however, is smaller. When the author helped the local officials to facilitate a deliberative forum on rural women’s demands for equal payment,⁴⁴ the author was struck by the absence of Confucian language, the domination of individualist thinking among citizens, and the language of rights and equality in the official document. Often, a few individuals have demanded high compensation by using the language of rights, while refusing to pay their contribution. This has led to the postponement of some public projects at the expense of others and even has made it difficult to make embryonic democratic institutions viable. At the same time, however, the resolution mechanism through villages’ elders, families, and close social relations is still implemented in traditional ways.

In Wenling, villages have promoted Confucian principles through a public display of Confucian values and stories. However, at the institutional level, apart from the elders’ forum or committee, most deliberative institutions are related to the socialist system. Confucian deliberative democracy has not been fully established as a form of institutional hybridity; this means that Confucianism has not played a significant role in the hybrid model.

Now, let me focus on Bell’s hybrid model of Confucian meritocratic democracy through an empirical examination of China’s political experiments in this area. Chinese local officials are searching for political meritocracy, and modifying the electoral system by introducing a watered-down style of elections or so-called democratic evaluation. Take the example of the three-vote system. This system was invented by Chinese local officials in Zhengzhou city and involves a public nomination vote, a quality assessment ballot, and a final competitive election.⁴⁵ This three-vote system applies to all Zhengzhou city cadres above the departmental level. The first step of the selection process

⁴² Baogang He, *Deliberative Democracy: Theory, Method and Practice* (Beijing: China’s Social Science Publishers, 2008).

⁴³ Baogang He, “Deliberative Culture and Politics: The Persistence of Authoritarian Deliberation in China,” *Political Theory* 42, no. 1 (February 2014): 58-81.

⁴⁴ Baogang He, “Deliberative Democracy and Deliberative Governance: Towards Constructing a Rational and Mature Civil Society,” *Open Times*, no. 4 (2012): 23-36.

⁴⁵ Wang Zhang, *Three Tickets System Elects Officials* (Beijing: Central Party School Press, 2007).

is a democratic recommendation meeting, in which the public nominates ten candidates from a field of sixty-four by anonymous ballot. The second step is the quality assessment ballot, which involves the candidates being assigned grades for a test of knowledge and a question and answer session to assess the overall quality of the individual candidates. After this test, there is a clear score that determines which candidates will make the shortlist for the final vote. For the final step, the party standing committee (which can be understood as a sort of “electoral college”) votes for two candidates from the final short-listed candidates, who then face a vote of the whole party committee to decide the winner. These two rounds of voting are by secret ballot.

A similar experiment is the “public nomination direct election system” (*gongtuai zhixuan*).⁴⁶ This system has two key elements. First, public nomination offers people an opportunity to nominate candidates. The methods vary and range from casting votes to filling in a democratic evaluation form with a scale of scores. The function of this public recommendation is to screen out unpopular leaders if they cannot obtain sufficient “votes,” but it does not decide who gains the position.⁴⁷ Second, direct elections permit party members to elect the party secretaries of local governments. In some experiments, there are two rounds of direct elections, ordinary party members cast votes to narrow a list of candidates, and then the standing committee of local party organizations, a small group of local elites, casts a final vote.

New Sets of Problems

The political hybridity discussed above can be seen as a form of *authoritarian meritocracy with some democratic characteristics*. Essentially, the Chinese Communist Party aims at a combination of Leninist principles, discipline with meritocracy, and limited democracy. Yet, Bell would reject the term authoritarianism. However, “authoritarian meritocracy” is a more accurate term to describe China’s experiments than Bell’s term of Confucian meritocracy. While the CCP tries its best to become a modern organization reflecting a human resource department, its operation is still authoritarian in that political loyalty is ultimately valued more than merit. Often, the results of “public nomination” are not final, which creates the perception that the party still controls and manipulates the whole process.⁴⁸ The results of the examination are not final either; that is, those who gain the highest scores on the examination may not obtain the positions they seek. Authoritarian meritocracy is too flexible to be

⁴⁶ Wen-Hsuan Tsai and Peng-Hsiang Kao, “Public Nomination and Direct Election in China: An Adaptive Mechanism for Party Recruitment and Regime Perpetuation,” *Asian Survey* 52, no. 3 (May/June 2012): 484-503.

⁴⁷ An interview with the author on April 3, 2013, in Beijing.

⁴⁸ In 2003, Ya’An party organization officials informed the author that, at the end of day, the party had a unique weapon, namely “party discipline,” to coordinate the intraparty election activities.

blended, and the results of democratic evaluation are not open to the public.⁴⁹ Authoritarian meritocracy is also too complex, as there are three competing criteria: talent determined by examinations, popular opinion, and the vote of the party committee members. The process even can hurt people's feelings and human dignity, as one top scholar complained that he was not shortlisted for a position for which he applied, despite gaining the highest score on the exam. For people in such cases, the system is not fair. The system is very costly in terms of time, preparation, and process, and it is often subject to manipulation. Moreover, such political hybridity is likely to maintain power relations; for example, the three-ticket system dilutes the influence of direct elections, as it presents "democracy," but not genuinely enough. One may hope that further experimentation will address the problem of official manipulation and thereby generate further improvement through the design of a better decision-making rule. In summary, China's hybrid model still reveals a deep tension between Confucian examination and democratic sovereignty. Surprisingly, the operation of the hybrid model, in the case of the three-ticket system, lends itself to further confirmation of the validity of the conflict model.

The Critical Model

The last two decades have witnessed the development of post-, critical, or new Confucianism and this can be understood as a manifestation of a post-colonial discourse in East Asia.⁵⁰ With the revival of Confucianism in the 1990s⁵¹ and, in particular, in the context of the rise of China, some Chinese have become more confident in their tradition of Confucianism than previously. They have criticized electoral democracy and developed a new critical model for rethinking the relationship between democracy and Confucianism.

In addition, the marketization of politics has caused the degeneration of the moral dimension of political and social life, in particular, regarding concern for the public good. In this context, Confucian ethics were used to combat individualistic egoism, and to strike a balance between the individual and the collective and between rights and duties. Contrary to the conflict model in which Pye sees Confucianism as an obstacle to bargaining politics and democratic institutions, this neo-critical Confucianism attempts to return to classic Confucian principles, and to find a new type of moral politics to enhance the quality of democratic life. The Confucian ideal of politics denies

⁴⁹ In 2004, Taizhou party organization officials informed the author that the release of the result damaged the reputation of the party secretary, as he did not win the highest number of votes; subsequently, all results became "internal documents" only.

⁵⁰ For a critical model, see Shu-Hsien Liu, "Democratic Idea and Practice: A Critical Reflection," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 34, no. 2 (2007): 257-275.

⁵¹ Makeham, *Lost Soul*.

the trade of politics, attempts to remedy the extreme excesses of individualism, and seeks the perfectionism of political life.⁵²

Blueprint of Confucian Democracy

The critical school adopts a Confucian-centric approach in that it uses the criterion of Confucianism to judge and evaluate democracy. This Confucian approach has varying attitudes toward democracy. It has at least three options: abandoning some democratic principles if they are not compatible with Confucianism; absorbing or mixing democratic elements if they are compatible; and improving and enhancing democracy through Confucianism. The first two confirm the conflict or hybrid model, respectively. The third option is innovative and must be tested empirically.

Confucianism can offer a package of democracy reform programs including duty-based rights; communitarian care; the promotion of a public spirit; the introduction of a remonstrance system into parliament so as to improve the two-party system; and the promotion of scholarly rulings, which is relatively better than the ruling power of the wealthy. Below, I briefly summarize the literature on the Confucian proposals for democracy reform.

There has been a great liberal tradition of Confucianism as stressed by de Bary. Some key concepts which express “Confucian liberalism” are “learning for the sake of one’s self,” “getting it oneself,” or “finding [the Way in] oneself,” and “taking responsibility [the Way] oneself.”⁵³ A Confucian notion of liberty is perfect liberty or positive liberty, which is not decided by material conditions. The sage is an ideal self who has the highest liberty, or an inner freedom, which combines moral autonomy with happiness and peace. One can draw on the Confucian notion of positive liberty to launch a critique of an individualistic theory of rights.

The first criticism is about the individualistic basis of rights. According to Confucianism, individuals are social beings and have duties to their communities and societies. An individualistic starting-point for rights has serious problems in achieving a balance between rights and duties. Nonrelational individual rights, for example, one’s right to private property, the right to drink intoxicants, and the right to watch pornography at home, overlook a duty to others. In addition, the rights of others, say, the right to self-determination in East Timor, are a *weak* basis upon which to ground a duty, the duty to defend the rights of others. Instead, it is the Kantian duty *per se* that constitutes a moral basis to support the rights of others. Indeed, Amnesty International promotes the development of our duty to protect human rights.

⁵² Joseph Chan, “Legitimacy, Unanimity and Perfectionism,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 29, no. 1 (2000): 5-42.

⁵³ William Theodore de Bary, *Ch’ien Mu Lectures: The Liberal Tradition in China* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1983), 9.

The second criticism targets the priority of rights over goods. Confucianism emphasizes the priority of *Ren* (compassion) over rights.⁵⁴ Rights, according to Joseph Chan, are seen as supplementary or auxiliary: when virtues do not result in the desired outcomes, or human relationships clearly break down, rights are a fall-back auxiliary apparatus.⁵⁵ Rights ought to promote *Ren*. As Hsieh argues, “Whatever freedom you want, you should not violate this ethical principle of freedom to choose the good.”⁵⁶ The integration of Confucian goodness with rights discourse has the capacity to promote human rights enterprises.

Third, an individualist rights theory contains the idea of the right to do wrong. Jeremy Waldron articulates this well: P has a moral right to do wrong; P doing A is morally wrong; and it is morally wrong for anyone to interfere with P doing A.⁵⁷ Of course, Waldron notes that it is morally permissible for someone to interfere with P doing A. Confucian criticism of a right to do wrong is based on the concept of the priority of goodness over rights. The Confucian *communitarian* idea of a political community necessitates order and authority, and justifies paternalistic intervention. The existence and development of community has priority over an individualistic emphasis on the right to do wrong. The problem with the idea of the right to do wrong is its emphasis on rights as entitlements; as a result, the very ancient distinction between right and wrong loses importance.

Confucianism rejects the idea of the neutrality of the state. In liberal theory, states have a neutral position to set up rules and procedures and punish those who break those rules. Liberal states, however, have no right to impose a particular moral life on individuals. Asian countries challenge the idea of the neutrality of the state in that substantial concern about the good life is a moral issue, and substantial justice is a principle of how to organize a society. This argument allows and justifies the right to interfere in and to dictate the moral life of individuals. It is justifiable in East Asia to impose moral education. Confucianism emphasizes the state’s educative role in promoting a moral life. The state, with the aid of intellectuals, has a role in providing a moral example. For instance, the department of education in Singapore organized and produced a textbook for the Confucian moral code. Zhejiang Province in China has a law to punish those who do not save the life of a person who is in danger. In China, the politics of example tend to set a good standard in the

⁵⁴ Lin Yusheng, “The Evolution of the Pre-Confucian Meaning of Jen and the Confucian Concept of Moral Autonomy,” *Monumenta Serica* 31 (1974-1975): 172-204.

⁵⁵ Joseph Chan, “Asian Values and Human Rights: An Alternative View,” in *Democracy in East Asia*, ed. Larry Diamond and Marc Plattner (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

⁵⁶ Yu-wei Hsieh, “The Status of the Individual in Chinese Ethics,” in *The Chinese Mind*, ed. Charles A. Moore (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1967), 313.

⁵⁷ Jeremy Waldron, “A Right to Do Wrong,” *Ethics* 92 (1981): 21-39.

mass media, talking more about the success of how employees find a new job through self-effort than about the unemployment rate. The moralist approach to politics may improve the quality of politics, but in so doing, it may well constrict the bargaining power of politics, and thus repress negative liberty.

Confucianism challenges the liberal neutrality principle on the grounds that it does not allow for the moral significance of supererogation. Acts are said to be supererogatory if their performance is praiseworthy and yet it is not morally wrong to omit them. There is no obligation to act in a supererogatory way in the framework of rights-based morality. As Joseph Chan asserts, rights constitute neither human virtues nor virtuous relations. In a healthy close relationship, parties should best ignore rights and focus on the norms of mutual caring and loving. Even if there are problems in a relationship, it still would be best to repair the relationship by refreshing the partner's commitments to the ideal of mutual caring, rather than by introducing or invoking rights.⁵⁸

There is a link between the egalitarian ideal and the forms of the state. If the function of the state is to reduce the unequal distribution among provinces and regions and to help poor regions (*fupin* 扶貧), the state has the right to redistribute resources to help these regions. In the age of globalization, Confucian humanism should entail the invocation of a care-ethic that looks after alienated neighbors, on the one hand, and promotes an eco-friendly worldview, on the other.⁵⁹

Empirical Testing

The empirical evidence that Confucianism plays a role in enhancing and improving democratic life is lacking or is not substantive in East Asia. The idea that Confucianism can improve democratic life is nothing new. Japanese Confucian scholars advocated such an idea when Japan introduced Western-style elections and parliament in 1890. Similarly, Taiwanese Confucian scholars held the same view in the 1980s when Taiwan embarked upon democratization. However, there is very little empirical evidence to support the claim that Confucianism has played a significant role in improving and enhancing democratic life. Ironically, with democratization aided by the independence movement, Confucianism has been marginalized and even regarded by some radical DPP members as belonging to the culture of outsiders.

Take another example of Sun Yatsen's theory of the five powers. To improve democratic institutions, Sun institutionalized the Confucian examination and control system in the modern democratic constitution. However, this mix of a Western division of powers with Confucian practice did not pass the test of history. Eventually, while the three divisions of power operate in Taiwan,

⁵⁸ Joseph Chan, "An Alternative View," *Journal of Democracy* 8 (1997): 35-48.

⁵⁹ Young-Bae Song, "Crisis of Cultural Identity in East Asia: On the Meaning of Confucian Ethics in the Age of Globalisation," *Asian Philosophy* 12, no. 2 (2002): 109-125.

the Examination Yuan and Control Yuan have become less important and marginalized.

Perhaps the introduction of a Nominated Member of Parliament (NMP) in Singapore can be regarded as evidence to support the claim that Confucianism can improve democratic life, as the NMP proposed a nonpartisan proposal and engage in debate in a purely deliberative manner. However, it is also debatable whether this NMP institution can be considered a Confucian or modern practice, or whether an NMP helps to improve party politics empirically. A cynical view is that the NMP was first used by the ruling party in 1990 to deal with an embarrassing image, as very few opposition party members were elected (two in 1984, one in 1988, and four in 1991) and the government needed a modicum of opposition voice to show that Singaporean democracy was working.

The rich Chinese traditions of positive liberty discussed above are similar to the French and German traditions of positive liberty, but China lacks the English tradition of negative liberty. If one accepts Isaiah Berlin's praise for negative liberty, it may be argued that a Confucian account of positive liberty is a great weakness. So far, empirically, it is hard to establish the fact that positive liberty can defend individual rights powerfully; instead, it can be used by authoritarian leaders to suppress freedom of speech in terms of "positive liberty."

Confucian democratic perfectionism and public reason Confucianism⁶⁰ must be institutionalized and their institutional designs must pass the knavery test, that is, they can survive and operate successfully if everyone is assumed to be knavish.⁶¹ Confucian perfectionism might overestimate the good aspects of human nature, and overlook bargaining and material exchange in real politics. So-called "public reason Confucianism" is merely an ideal version; in the practice of public consultation or deliberation in Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and China, the traditional Confucian hierarchical culture inhibited the development of genuine deliberation, and the way in which ordinary people engage in public discussion is far from a normative prescription of Confucian public reasoning.

Kang Xiaoguang questions the effectiveness and legitimacy of electoral democracy, and advocates benevolent government and Confucian mechanisms for the expression of public opinion.⁶² Jiang Qing rejects the will of the people as the source of political legitimacy and seeks legitimacy being "established on transcendent sacred origins" and "extolling unification" (*dayitong*,

⁶⁰ Joseph Chan, *Confucian Perfectionism: A Political Philosophy for Modern Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), and Sungmoon Kim, *Public Reason Confucianism: Democratic Perfectionism and Constitutionalism in East Asia* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

⁶¹ Baogang He, "Knavery and Virtue in Human Institutional Design," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 37, no. 4 (2003): 543-553.

⁶² Kang, "Confucianization," 86-94.

大一統).⁶³ Jiang Qiang has advocated a nonelected body for Confucian scholars in Confucian constitutionalism, but the proposal appears to be a nonstarter. Empirically, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore all have conducted regular elections as a way to gain regime legitimacy. Even Vietnam and China do not challenge elections as a source of legitimacy. Jiang Qiang's critique might be sharp and Confucian-centric, but is flawed in that it fails to address the need for an institutional form of modern legitimacy. The traditional form of legitimacy through Confucian scholarly interpretation (道統) will not work in the modern world.

In the near future, there should be a test of whether the Confucian-centric approach might be a source of a "civilizational clash." East Asia has a better record than Islamic countries in developing coexistence with Western civilization. Among many reasons, perhaps, one is the retreat of Confucianism from political life into private life. In addition, Confucianism does not pose a political challenge to the Western order. However, some Confucian activists might push the Confucian-centric approach into an extreme position, arguing that the refusal of democracy is necessary to defend a Confucian way of political life. If China not only promotes its self-realization and appreciation of Confucian civilization, but also promotes a new political order which is largely based upon a nonelected legislative body of Confucian scholars and upon the contested notion of Way (道) as an alternate source of legitimacy, this might constitute a new source of civilizational conflict. If this happens, it only will provide further evidence of the conflict model, rather than prove the validity of the critical model.

Conclusion

Each model reveals one particular relationship between Confucianism and democracy. Which model is adopted and how it is used depends first on the attitudes of political actors and scholars toward Confucianism, second on the selection of key elements of Confucianism, and third on different conceptualizations of Confucianism and democracy. Each model plays different roles in the process of democratization, and there are advantages and disadvantages of each one.

Empirically, the conflict model is much more accurate than the other models. It is largely true and relevant today, and it can even apply to the other three models, that is, all three models have some element of conflict or tension between Confucianism and democracy. Use of the conflict model emphasizes the tension, causing the rejection of Confucianism, and defense of Western standards of democracy. The drive is to implement Western democratic ideas and institutions without compromise and distortion.

⁶³ Jiang, *Zhengzhi ruxue*.

Nevertheless, the conflict model overstates the negative role of Confucianism and overlooks the option of compatibility, consequently downplaying the likelihood of a Confucian contribution to democratization, and blinding one's eyes to the prospect of a hybrid model. It is unproductive if one insists on conflict and argues for "giving up on" Confucianism. It could be productive if one treats conflict as a source of creation to find ways to manage and reduce the number and intensity of conflicts.

The compatibility model has its strengths: it leads us to look at the rich resource of Confucianism in favor of democratic enterprise, helps us to create a constructive transformation of Confucianism, and lays fertile ground for the hybrid model. However, it may "distort" both Western and Chinese democratic ideas in terms of subjective interpretations. While the compatibility model celebrates the seeming congruence, it takes for granted the assumption that Confucian culture will converge with Western democracy. It overlooks the fact that the whole structure of Confucianism is in conflict with democracy, despite the possibility that some elements of Confucian ideas and institutions could be reformed to promote democracy. Also, the co-existence of democracy and Confucian society in Taiwan and South Korea has depended on the condition that Confucianism has retreated into the private sphere. In addition, under the seemingly smooth combination of democratic and Confucian elements, there are still subtle tensions.

The hybrid model goes beyond the conflict and compatibility models by examining the mixed practices occurring in the real world. It catches and reflects the complex reality. The hybrid model aims to combine different elements of Confucianism and democracy to produce something suitable to national or local conditions. In this model, actors often interpret how best to devise and choose institutional embodiments for democracy according to national or local conditions. This is the creative aspect of this approach.

However, despite many scholars having pursued a variety of hybrids between Confucianism and democracy, most remain at the point of intellectual advocacy and many repeat what has been said earlier (the core argument is the same with variation of language, terms, source, argumentation, and style), and most have not engaged yet in political experiments. Moreover, the hybrid model lacks clarity with respect to what dominates in the mixed model and how different elements operate in reality. It does not provide strong empirical evidence of working mechanisms. Behind the hybrid, there are still some tensions between democracy and Confucianism.

The critical model goes beyond the conflict and compatibility models. It offers a fresh perspective by reversing the conventional wisdom about the negative or secondary role of Confucianism and reconstructing Confucian democracy. The critical model can play dual and conflicting roles: on the one hand, it can develop and promote a desirable Confucian democracy, yet, on the other, it may be used to inhibit democracy if it is co-opted as a narrow definitive feature of Chinese nationalism.

The practical construction and application of the idealized critical model of Confucian democracy in the real world is much more complex than theoretical constructs might imply. One dangerous possibility is that a simplistic understanding of the critical model may well be co-opted to suit the predilections of the authoritarian state. If this were to happen, the validity of the conflict model would be enhanced. How the critical model will unfold remains to be seen. Whether it will develop into innovative institutions is dependent upon the hard work of practical Chinese intellectuals and practitioners. They should not talk about Confucian democracy alone, but rather engage in a series of social experiments, such as combining deliberative polling techniques with Confucian traditions. The ultimate test will be whether the critical model can be institutionalized in a way that supports the development of true democratization in China.

Finally, the development of a “Confucian democracy” must involve a process of doing away with the term “Confucianism.” Confucian democracy must prove that its workable mechanisms can be accepted by non-Confucian societies, that is, some universal elements or tendencies must be developed. While some democratic innovations are rooted in Confucian ideas, in the end, one must abandon the term “Confucian” to allow for universality. This is the great irony of Confucian democracy: democracy in the end must undermine the concept of “Confucianism” itself. Only then can Confucianism make a great contribution to world civilization.