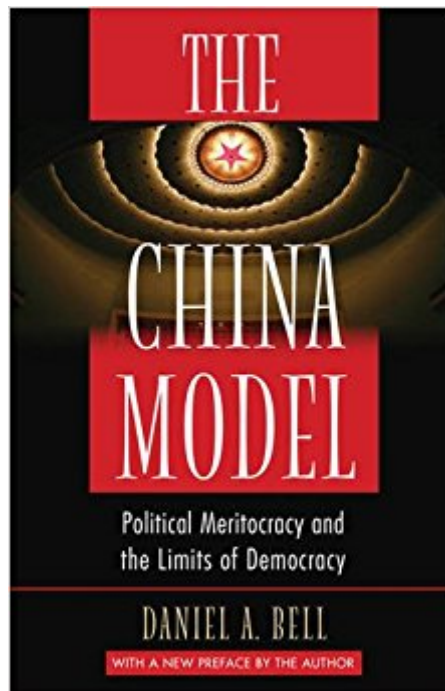




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# The China Model: Political Meritocracy And The Limits Of Democracy



## Synopsis

Westerners tend to divide the political world into "good" democracies and "bad" authoritarian regimes. But the Chinese political model does not fit neatly in either category. Over the past three decades, China has evolved a political system that can best be described as "political meritocracy." The China Model seeks to understand the ideals and the reality of this unique political system. How do the ideals of political meritocracy set the standard for evaluating political progress (and regress) in China? How can China avoid the disadvantages of political meritocracy? And how can political meritocracy best be combined with democracy? Daniel Bell answers these questions and more. Opening with a critique of "one person, one vote" as a way of choosing top leaders, Bell argues that Chinese-style political meritocracy can help to remedy the key flaws of electoral democracy. He discusses the advantages and pitfalls of political meritocracy, distinguishes between different ways of combining meritocracy and democracy, and argues that China has evolved a model of democratic meritocracy that is morally desirable and politically stable. Bell summarizes and evaluates the "China model" – meritocracy at the top, experimentation in the middle, and democracy at the bottom – and its implications for the rest of the world. A timely and original book that will stir up interest and debate, *The China Model* looks at a political system that not only has had a long history in China, but could prove to be the most important political development of the twenty-first century.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A Financial Times Summer Books Selection  
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A Guardian Best Holiday Reads of 2015 selection

"[I]t is part of the job of academics to ask fundamental questions that challenge conventional thinking. Bell performs this role admirably in lucid, jargon-free prose that leads the reader back to some of the most fundamental questions in political philosophy - refracted through the experience of contemporary China . . . I found the questions that Bell raised consistently stimulating."--Gideon Rachman, Financial Times

"Bell . . . has written a fascinating study. Open-minded readers will find it equips them with a more intelligent understanding of Chinese politics and, no less valuable, forces them to examine their devotion to democracy. . . . [The China Model] isn't just for those who want to better understand China. More than anything I've read for a while, it also forced me to think about what's good and bad about Western systems of government. From start to finish the book is a pleasure and an education."--Clive Crook, Bloomberg View

"Bell makes a solid and worthy case for why the outside world might want to think about the Chinese experiment in governance a bit more deeply. . . . This is a very clearly written book."--Kerry Brown, Asian Review of Books

"The China Model . . . is as important for us as it is for China. If the book brings us some humility about the ways in which an undemocratic model like China's can be deeply rooted in history and culture, it will have done good work. But it will do something better if it can remind us that our own history isn't over."--Rob Goodman, POLITICO

"In careful, clear and measured prose, [Bell] works hard to overcome prejudice, defuse emotions and discuss the pros and cons in the cool language of political philosophy. This, perhaps, is the book's greatest contribution."--James Miller, Literary Review of Canada

"Serious re-evaluations of democracy are inhibited by two factors: fears about the alternatives turning sour and a century of educational indoctrination that makes imagining the alternatives a frightful exercise. Bell's book should be read as an antidote (or if you prefer, an elixir) to overcome these doubts."--Siddharth Singh, Mint

"This book is a welcome addition to the expanding literature on the emerging 'China model'. . . . Bell's argument, based on his long-term observation of China's political development, provides a nuanced, thought-provoking view of the meritocratic aspects of the Chinese system that have been obscured by the broad label 'authoritarianism.' It offers an original explanation for the resilience of the Chinese regime and essentially challenges the widely held notion that liberal democracy is the universally desirable political outcome for modern societies."--Choice

"Bell is not an apologist for China but someone who teaches us to ask different questions. And these questions are fascinating."--Mariana Mazzucato, Financial Times, a FT Best Book of 2015

"A must-read scholarly account of China's political

development with stimulating questions, powerful analysis as well as theoretically relevant arguments."--Bingdao Zheng, Chinese Political Science Review

"This book is a must-read text for all political scientists, in particular, for those who study democracy and democratization. It can open their eyes and help them to move out of their comfort zone to examine the tough and pressing issues in the real world in which democracy and meritocracy must be combined to improve democratic government and solve many practical issues."--He Baogang, Perspectives in Politics

"A deeply stimulating contribution to normative political theory."--Thomas Pangle, Perspectives in Politics

"In conclusion, Bell's book is interesting and intriguing. It argues convincingly that every political system is a trade-off, and asks important questions about the US (electoral) democracy and Chinese (communist) meritocracy. Bell also develops his own model, combining elements from both."--Dao

"A must-read scholarly account of China's political development with stimulating questions, powerful analysis as well as theoretically relevant arguments. The discussion of political elite-recruiting system impressively spans thousands of years, from ages of empires to nowadays, and a number of countries and regions including United States, China, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan among others. One has to admire the comparative perspective the author puts in various historical periods and social contexts."--Bingdao Zheng, Chinese Political Science Review

"A very well-written book that presents original scholarship."--Zhiming Cheng, Political Studies Review

"Reading Bell is rewarding. . . . This book is more than a bold challenge to democracy: it serves as a sincere invitation to a sober and less ideologically loaded dialogue between East and West."--Tao Wang, Asian Journal of Comparative Politics

"For many Western readers, Daniel Bell's book will be hard to digest because it calls into question 'fundamental truths.' For Chinese readers, Bell's book will assure them that at least some Westerners understand them. Over many centuries, right down to the present, the institution that Chinese people have held in highest regard is their examination system, because it is meritocratic and objective. This regard for individual achievement has always been coupled to a moral obligation to serve one's community. The China Model explains how this duality continues to operate at the heart of modern China."--George Yeo, former foreign affairs minister of Singapore

"Rarely is there a book so powerful in its analysis, timely in its topic, and relevant in its thinking. Combining his intellectual training in the West and teaching and research experience in China, Daniel Bell explains the development of China's hybrid political regime--an integration of Chinese meritocracy with components of Western democracy. This illuminating book should be read by those who are interested in China and by those who care about the future of Western democracies."--Zheng

Yongnian, director of the East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore"Whether China has found a genuinely new approach to governance, and how well that model works, are crucial questions. Daniel Bell's assessment will be surprisingly positive for many readers, and is more upbeat than my own--but it is carefully argued and must be considered by any serious student of today's China."--James Fallows, author of *China Airborne*"In Western countries it would normally be anathema even to question the one-personâ "one-vote rule. But Daniel Bell does just that. In a Confucian spirit, he argues vigorously for meritocratic governance, and believes that popular democracies cannot solve our most vexing problems. There is much to learn from this deeply provocative book."--Mathias Risse, Harvard University"This is a highly provocative book from a Western scholar who, in his own words, derives his intellectual inspiration from Confucianism. I am, without apology, from a radically different political tradition. But there is real merit in understanding how the modern Chinese Communist Party theorizes about its own tradition of â "political meritocracy' within what it describes as the â "China model.'"--Kevin Rudd, former prime minister of Australia"The China Model is a timely, highly original, and hugely important book. Based on excellent knowledge of current political theories and a deep understanding of manifold peculiarities regarding China's constantly evolving political system, this book will be widely read by political science students, sinologists, and all those who are interested in the rise of China."--Yuri Pines, author of *The Everlasting Empire*

## CHINESE DAO IN 21ST CENTURY ACCORDING TO FUNG EXPLAINED THE RISE OF CHINA AS A POLITICAL MERITOCRACY AND CIVILIZATION STATE BY FRANCIS C W FUNG, PH.

D.Fung's essay of Chinese Dao (Ways) in 21st century is a five part Dao story of the rise of China as a meritocracy and civilization state. China is the only ancient civilization that has a continuous uninterrupted five thousand years history in the world. The Chinese Confucian philosophy extended to the world and heavily influenced the governance of South Eastern Asian nations to this day. The economic success of the Asian nations during the 20th century globalization is largely credited to the Confucian emphasis of education and hard work. But what has escaped the West's global dialogue is the most important tradition of meritocracy governance of China as a civilization state. This is because the West is blinded by our liberal democratic ideology as not to see the most important Chinese contribution of meritocracy governance system to the world. The success of Singapore and China in the 20th century globalization as outstanding examples of meritocracy governed nations now proved the utter failure of the arrogant and premature Francis Fukuyama's theory of the end of civilization. Throughout

China's five thousand years of rich civilization there were numerous outstanding philosophers such as Confucius, Mencius and Laozi etc. These and other famous philosophers created school of thoughts that are holistic and dedicated to serve all mankind for the good. These began with the Confucian governance system of Huang Dao (Grand Way) for the ultimate emperor. Confucian teachings of the grand way (Huang Dao) are; good governance must be based on the well-being of the people (Yi ren wei ben), to walk the grand way, the world works for the interest of all people (Da Dao zhi xing, Tien xia wei gong), select the outstanding and appoint the capable (Xuan xian yu neng) and unity of mankind (Sei jie da tong). Inspired by these grand holistic visions Chinese people are more inclined to think globally and holistically compared to the West that highly value individualism. These holistic inspirations will lead China to the 21st century to strive for win win cooperation and global community of common destiny as exemplified by the five Chinese Dao (ways) stories in Fung's essay. The five Dao stories of the rise of China as a meritocracy and civilization state are:

(I) CHINA AS THE CIVILIZATION STATE WITH THE GRAND WAY (HUANG DAO) China as a civilization state of long tradition with a predominant Confucian philosophy has practiced meritocracy throughout history. During the emperor days, the power of the emperors was constrained by the advice of their mandarin court. The mandarins in the court were selected through imperial examinations that were open to the whole population. The standard of the examinations were set by Confucian teachings of the grand way (Huang Dao), such as good governance must be based on the well-being of the people (Yi ren wei ben), the world works for the interest of all people (Tien xia wei gong), select the outstanding and appoint the capable (Xuan xian yu neng) and unity of mankind (Sei jie da tong). With this Confucian high ideal of the grand way (Huang Dao) to guide China's meritocracy governance China remain the highest civilization state of the world for most world history. During the last two thousand years except for the last two hundred years China was the most advanced and prosperous empire in the world. China was behind in the European industrial revolution but guided by her civilization state meritocracy China rapidly caught up with the West during the last four decades. Today China is the second largest economy and the world's number one trading nation again.

(II) VERTICAL POLITICAL MERITOCRACY DEMOCRACY AS DAO PRACTICED IN CHINA After many years of extensive research, Daniel Bell, chair professor of the Schwarzman Scholars Program at Tsinghua University, in "The China Model" reported that China has a long tradition of meritocracy practice. The Chinese Communist Party (CPC) has a very large Organization Department which tests and trains the cadres for promotion. The tests and programs are rigorous and also include nominations by peers and superiors. Periodic skill trainings are conducted with

sophisticated party school courses. Chinese political meritocracy is firmly implemented at top level of government and election at lower village level, not unlike the Bahai system of governance. Chinese top leaders at the politburo level need at least three terms of duty at large city or provincial level with hundreds of millions of citizens. This is called a vertical system of meritocracy democracy by Professor Daniel Bell. That we in the U.S. totally missed China's development of the Dao of the political meritocracy democracy as legitimate governance system is because of our preoccupation to spread our liberal democracy ideology to maintain hegemony. The risks that we missed this China Dao of development cannot be overestimated. This is of paramount importance that the new Trump government now be informed of China's vertical political meritocracy democracy so we can remain engaged with important development and stay competitive. (III)

#### CHINESE DAO OF HARMONY CULTURE IS SOCIALISM WITH CHINESE

CHARACTERISTICS HARMONY culture is the Chinese harmony philosophy of Confucian and Daoism teaching. According to Professor Daniel Bell, the eminent Western Confucian scholar at Tsinghua University, Confucians emphasize that a good life is characterized, first and foremost, by rich and diverse social relations. Harmony, at a minimum, means peaceful order in the absence of violence. Conflict is unavoidable; harmony is the result of dynamic balance of contending forces. The Confucian idea of harmony also values diversity (Hai na bei chuan, you yon na da). Under the grand Dao of harmony, Xi Jinping, the president of China, is travelling the world to promote win win cooperation, mutual development, and community of common destiny. Hope is high that the newly elected U.S. president will accept the new major power relation proposed by Xi and not confront China. Please refer to my published essay "Why Xi Jinping, the president of China is good for China and world harmony". (Please google [worldharmonyforum.blogspot.com/](http://worldharmonyforum.blogspot.com/) under harmony renaissance).

#### (IV) THE CHINESE DAO OF INTERNET CULTURE IS ABOUT GOOD FOR

THE LARGEST DENOMINATION (YI REN WEI BEN) The Chinese belief is holistic, good for the largest denomination. American highly value individualism and freedom. Confucian philosophy teaches the grand way for the world (Huang Dao), such as good governance must be based on the well-being of all the people (Yi ren wei ben), the world works for the interest of all people (Tien xia wei gong) not just one nation, select the outstanding and appoint the capable (Xuan xian yu neng) and unity of mankind (Sei jie da tong). Because individualism is highly valued, the U.S. government uses the internet to promote identity politics and political correctness, by so doing sets a limit to its internet growth to the largest denomination. On the contrary Chinese internet sets its sight on good for the largest demonization. As a result Chinese internet is more pervasive and far reaching. That is why even China is an internet late comer it's internet is fast surpassing America. Of the

ten largest internet enterprise five of them are in China and continue to grow. Today Nov 11 is the singles day Alibaba internet sale in China. In one day the sale of one trillion RMB sales surpassed the combined America total sales of Thanksgiving, Christmas and black Friday.(V) THE CHINESE DAO OF "ONE BELT ONE ROAD" INITIATIVE The ancient Silk Road that connects Europe with China through Central Asia is more than just a road of commerce. It is also a road of exchange for people, culture, technology and civilization. The four great inventions of China were transmitted to Europe through the Silk Road. Without those important inventions the European renaissance may not have happened or would be drastically reduced in scale or delayed. In 2003 President Xi Jinping of China announced the grand initiative of the Economic Development Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (abbreviated as One Belt one Road). Since launching the initiative China has set up the Silk Road fund and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to finance infrastructures all over the world. China also built many highways, bridges, ports and railways through many difficult terrains connecting China with Europe through Central Asia. Many nations on the strategic route including Central, Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Arab countries are now embracing the One Belt One Road Initiative. For more information on the fast growth of One belt One Road initiative, google the subject and specific essays such as "Europe Finally Wakes Up To The New Silk Road, And This Could Be Big". March 31, 2015 is a historic moment. China successfully launched the Asian Infrastructure Bank to fund the New Silk Road Initiative to provide connectivity for the world. Japan the last U.S. major military alliance country announced today that it would join the China infrastructure bank! By now all U.S. allies have all broke from their military alliance with America and join the peaceful mutual development initiative. The only redeeming grace for America is to join as observer country at a later day. It is natural for China to launch the New Silk Road Initiative, because of all the historical, technological, financial capability and infrastructure building experience reasons. China in the last 39 years has built 20 trillion dollars of infrastructure in her own country. This super scale of construction in such a short time has no historical precedence!

Francis C W Fung, Ph.D. Director General World Harmony Organization, San Francisco, CA

In contrast to many similar books with shocking titles and propositions, Daniel A Bell has succeed in injecting a rare sense of intellectual rigor into an often neglected, albeit possibly one of the most consequential topics of our time. You may disagree with his critical review of democracy, his optimistic case of a refined meritocracy cemented by democratic mandate via a referendum, you may even question whether the "meritocracy" he professed can even be characterized as a political



system (rather than a political practice) in the first place, but you must truly admire his efforts in assembling an extensive amount of data and sources to support his arguments ( ranging from cognitive science to classical Confucian texts) as well as his well-balanced approach in postulating his views. As a Chinese, I must confess that it is rather disappointing to see such a rare book dedicated to a sobering and scholarly assessment of our political system has to come from a foreigner in a different language. Across our political spectrum, most public figures have indulged in ideological mud-slinging rather than focusing on what is really unfolding in our society. Unlike Daniel A Bell, China's public intellectuals are increasingly resorting to polemics that have negligible values. The result is a vast amount of literatures dedicated to either painting a rosy picture of the West and suggest complete adoption or proclaiming the superiority of the Chinese political system over liberal democracy. They have shown little interest in making intellectual innovations that can truly contribute to a constructive debate on our future. I believe this book can set a good precedent for similar works to come. For non-Chinese and particularly western readers, I highly recommend this book to you as a balanced and intellectually stimulating account on China's political system. Daniel A Bell draws political wisdoms from traditional Chinese Culture, introducing many classical Chinese thoughts on statecraft and organizational management and systematically analysed them in the context of modern China. As a Chinese who welcomes alternative views and criticisms on China's political system, I believe Daniel A Bell has shown that the most relevant and realistic critiques and recommendations on China's development have to come with a deep understanding of the Chinese civilization itself. In an era where narratives professed by the West in assessing China are becoming increasingly detached from reality, books like this is indeed timely in promoting a more accurate and nuanced understanding of China.

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