# Democracy, Meritocracy, or Both? The Case of China

## Abstract

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 developed a genuinely new approach to governance, rooted in its long history and at odds with the "Western" idea that electoral democracy is the only legitimate form of government. This political model can best be described as "political meritocracy" although there remains a large gap between the theory and the practice and a large democratic deficit. 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? How can political meritocracy best be combined with democracy? And what can the West learn from the Chinese approach to governance? Drawing on the new book *The China Model: Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy* (Princeton, 2015), Professor Bell will discuss one of the most important political developments of the twenty-first century.