

CHINA CROSSROADS

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Confucian Alternatives to Liberal Democracy

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In [Against Political Equality: The Confucian Case](#), Bai argues that domestic governance influenced by Confucianism can embrace the liberal aspects of democracy along with the democratic ideas of equal opportunities and governmental accountability to the people. But Confucianism would give more political decision-making power to those with the moral, practical, and intellectual capacities of caring for the people. While most democratic thinkers still focus on strengthening equality to cure the ills of democracy, the proposed hybrid regime—combining Confucian-inspired meritocratic qualities with democratic elements and a quasi-liberal system of laws and rights—recognizes that egalitarian qualities sometimes conflict with good governance and the protection of liberties, and defends liberal aspects by restricting democratic ones. Bai applies his views to the international realm by supporting a hierarchical order based on how humane each state is toward its own and other peoples, and on the principle of international interventions whereby humane responsibilities override sovereignty.

[Bai Tongdong](#) is Professor of Philosophy at Fudan University and Global Professor of Law at NYU Shanghai. His research interests include Chinese philosophy and political philosophy. He has published two books in English, [China: The Political Philosophy of the Middle Kingdom](#) (Zed Books, 2012), and [Against Political Equality: The Confucian Case](#) (Princeton University Press, 2019). He holds a bachelors degree in Nuclear Physics and a masters degree in Philosophy of Science from Peking University, and holds a PhD in Philosophy from Boston University. He was a tenured Associate Professor at Xavier University in Cincinnati before he moved to Fudan.

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