Since 1972, the People’s Republic of China has gone from being an arch enemy of the United States to being a friendly rival. Moreover, China has, since 1978, changed from a communist to a capitalist country, much to the benefit of its people and the world economy.

But it is far from clear that China will evolve into the general pattern of association between capitalist economic and democratic political systems. Alternatively, China may remain a gigantic exception to that pattern.

Daniel Bell’s recent book, The China Model: Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy, enhances the rivalry from one between competing great world powers to one between ideal systems of government. Bell critiques democracy, and especially the American variety. He defends China’s system of government not as authoritarian but as a meritocracy. This talk explores Bell’s arguments and the merits and drawbacks of each system.