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CONFUCIAN BELIEF-SYSTEM TOWARDS POLITICAL WELL-BEING: THE FOUNDATION OF LEGITIMACY IN REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

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Abstract: In the legitimation of government, the beliefs of the people are essential. A belief system, distinct from authority, government, or power, is a collection of shared convictions. Without the people's recognition of the political relationship grounded in these belief systems, government becomes untenable. Since every government must secure political legitimacy, a belief system rooted in culture, morality, and religion is necessary. Confucianism, from its inception, serves as such a belief system, bridging religion, moral principles, and social-political norms. Within Confucianism, the right to govern is granted by the 'Mandate of Heaven.' Even today, many South Korean politicians often refer to Mencius' words during election campaigns: "The mind of Heaven is the mind of the people". The idea that "Heaven only hears the voice of the people" reflects the sentiment of limited government within Korea's representative system.

Keywords: Belief-System, Confucianism, Cultural Diversity, Democracy, Legitimacy, Mandate of Heaven, Political Well-being.

1. Introduction

The most fundamental element of political legitimacy is the belief system. Every government requires the belief among its people that it is legitimate, and this belief constitutes the core of political legitimacy. Such belief systems must inherently accommodate cultural diversity, as legitimacy depends not only on descriptive features but also on normative values that reflect the people's

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agreement with the government. In East Asia, this is evident in the relationship between Confucianism and representative government. This article explores why and how secular political legitimacy is shaped by cultural, moral, and religious traditions, specifically through the lens of Confucianism. Every belief system used in political legitimacy ultimately aims to promote collective well-being, referred to in this article as political well-being. This well-being is achievable only through engagement with cultural diversity and the dual components of political legitimacy: descriptive and normative legitimacy. Confucianism, through the concept of the 'Mandate of Heaven,' shaped belief systems over a long history of representative governance, laying the groundwork for modern democracies.

2. Conceptual Analysis on Belief-System in Political Legitimacy

In the justification of government, the beliefs held by the people are fundamental. Max Weber defines legitimacy as the people's belief in power, positioning the main task of social science as reporting on these beliefs. In this context, David Beetham argues that legitimacy is grounded in shared beliefs, regulated by common conventions, and confirmed through the expression of consent (Beetham, 31). A historical analysis enhances this understanding of legitimacy. In his monumental work The History of Government, Samuel Finer demonstrates that almost all governments, from the Sumerian city-states to modern European nations, require legitimacy. He strongly emphasizes the connection between belief systems and political legitimacy. "Rulers cannot maintain their authority unless they are legitimated, and they are legitimated by belief-systems" (Finer 1999, 28-9).

According to Finer, every government requires a certain congruence between social stratification and political institutions as a precondition for regime stability and the survival of the political community, with belief systems serving as the binding force. Such belief systems often begin with an unproven and unprovable axiom, like the maxim "all men are created equal" (Finer 1999, 29). Unfortunately, Finer does not provide a clear

definition of belief systems in his work. However, it seems possible to reconstruct this historical concept using political theories.

A belief system is a set of convictions distinct from authority, government, or power. These political concepts and institutions derive their existence and practical utility from the deeper foundation of belief systems that connect them to the people. Authority, government, and political power cannot be established or sustained without the people's beliefs. It is these beliefs that make possible the political relationship between the right to rule and the obligation to obey. For example, the existence of a government implies that the people hold certain beliefs, specifically that the ruler has the right to govern, and that they, in turn, have an obligation to follow. In relation to legitimacy: first, political order relies on the shared beliefs of the people; second, we can refer to this set of shared beliefs as a 'belief system'; third, these belief systems form the basis of legitimacy within each political community, even though their origins may vary, stemming from religion, ideology, or even mythology.

Without the people's recognition of the political relationship based on belief systems, any form of politics is indeed impossible. In this context, theorists like Weber, Beetham, and others who study legitimacy view the people's beliefs as the foundation of legitimacy. However, these beliefs must be organized into a coherent system within each political community. Without this systematization, mere beliefs cannot serve as the foundation for a political system, as they would be indistinguishable from individual religions, ideas, and emotions. Without a structured belief system, there can be no stability or continuity in governance.

In contrast, as a system, these beliefs are not meant to be short-lived; they must endure over long periods, often across generations. Belief systems are more enduring and powerful than the ruling authorities themselves, as it is upon these systems that authorities rely. Historically, in regions like Africa, the Middle East, and Europe, belief systems were often grounded in religious foundations, connecting human beings to the cosmos or the sublunary world. Before Luther's assertion that "every man is his

own priest," belief systems in the West typically depended on hierarchical religious faith. Rulers acted as intermediaries in these cosmic relationships. In these belief systems, particularly during pre-modern times, inequality and social stratification were widely accepted and legitimized within political communities.

However, the concept of 'belief systems' extends beyond mere religion in the context of Confucianism. Finer argues that while it is uncertain whether Confucianism qualifies as a religion from a Western perspective, it undeniably functioned as a comprehensive belief system, akin to the medieval Roman Catholicism (Finer 1999, 28-30). In this regard, Confucianism has served as a robust belief system in East Asia for thousands of years, continuing to wield significant influence over moral and political authority in countries such as China, Vietnam, and Korea. In other words, in East Asia, Confucianism transcends the notion of a medieval religion; it is a vital political resource of belief system in modern representative governments, contributing to the foundation of legitimacy.

As a meaningful foundation for legitimacy in a political context, belief systems should adopt a secular hierarchy, even if they originate from religious traditions. In other words, the belief system in a political context serves as a secular interpretation of legitimacy, distinct from its religious roots. In the case of Confucianism, it exists at the intersection of religion, moral values, and social and political norms from the very beginning. Therefore, we can understand legitimacy as grounded in shared beliefs, which are confirmed through the recognition of specific human activities (Beetham, 1991), and in relation to belief systems (Finer, 1999). This highlights the utility and importance of the concepts of legitimacy and belief systems, distinguishing them from power, social stratification, and government itself. Based on the concepts of legitimacy and belief systems as foundational elements, we can identify three key components of the relationship between political power and obedience.

3. Belief-System and Cultural Diversity

In the relationship between political power and obedience,

legitimacy is intrinsically tied to the beliefs of the people and can be understood through two dimensions: descriptive and normative. According to Fabienne Peter, the first dimension, descriptive legitimacy, qualifies political authority as the right to rule. In this context, legitimacy reflects the people's beliefs about how this right is exercised. Consequently, legitimacy exists only if the people support the institutions and decisions in place. The second dimension, normative legitimacy, serves as the foundation of government, providing the binding force and rationale for the people to support specific political powers and their decisions. From this perspective, legitimacy is constituted by a set of conditions that the decision-making process must fulfill in a normative sense (Peter, 56-59).

According to Beetham and Peter, many modern theorists have conflated the descriptive and normative dimensions of legitimacy. In the descriptive dimension, legitimacy exists if and only if the people support the institutions and decisions (Peter, 56). In this context, legitimacy is viewed as the capacity to engender and sustain beliefs (Beetham, 9), leaving no room for a distinction between normative and empirical resources. This perspective aligns with the Weberian approach to legitimacy, which has faced criticism from Beetham. He interprets Weberians' stance as suggesting that social scientists should be skeptical about the potential for any rational grounding of normative ideas or value systems. Beetham argues that Weberians often neglect to inquire into why and how people hold their beliefs, instead focusing solely on the results and presence of these beliefs.

Following Weber, some social scientists have assumed that making judgments about the normative relationship between political power and legitimacy is either impossible or unnecessary. Their primary focus is on reporting the beliefs of the people in relation to power. From this perspective, it becomes irrelevant to assess whether these beliefs are just or if the processes by which they are established are morally appropriate. Legitimacy is viewed as a matter of substantive power as exercised in the real world, leaving no space for moral considerations. Instead, the capacity to engender and sustain these beliefs takes precedence.

In this context, there may be reasons for accepting certain beliefs, but they are often neither sufficient (Raz, 1986) nor good (Hart, 2012 [1961]; Weale, 2017). Beetham more radically argues that this perspective effectively divorces people's beliefs about legitimacy from the reasons behind those beliefs. Consequently, Weberian ideas can be interpreted to suggest that a given power relationship is considered legitimate (Beetham, 6-11).

However, this raises the question of the potential for manipulation by those in power. Indeed, such concerns are typically not addressed by Weberian social scientists. There exists a clear tension regarding whether legitimacy should incorporate morality. Beetham explains this tension by contrasting the perspectives of social scientists and philosophers. He argues that the Weberian view represents a misinterpretation or misunderstanding of legitimacy. According to Beetham, legitimacy inherently possesses a normative character (Beetham, 6-10). In this context, legitimacy is constituted by a set of conditions that the decision-making process must fulfill. This framework implies that judgment is both possible and necessary for achieving legitimacy (Peter, 56-57). As Peter Winch states, the focus of social scientists should extend beyond merely identifying a set of causes and effects; they should also consider whether those actions are reasonable (Winch, 81). Specifically, regarding legitimacy and its foundation, we require not just any reasons but good reasons. Belief systems must operate on the basis of good reasons rather than merely accepted reasons. While the question of what constitutes reasonableness may require further exploration, it is evident that legitimacy grounded in good reasons is stronger, more effective, and more sustainable than that based solely on arbitrary or insufficient reasons.

Indeed, it is not always easy to observe these theoretical explanations reflected in the real world. Despite the conceptual distinction between imposed agreement and voluntary compliance, there are many instances where it is challenging to differentiate oppressive imposition from genuine voluntary obedience. Unfortunately, the normative character of legitimacy becomes even more complex in the historical context of

government. For instance, in Finer's exploration of legitimacy in relation to belief systems, he identifies various political formulas. He categorizes religious types of belief systems into five distinct features: primitive religion, archaic religion, historic religion, early modern types (such as the European Reformation), and modern types (characterized by a separation from formal politics) (Finer, 1999, 23). In these cases, it remains unclear at what stages reasonable and plausible agreements exist without coercive imposition being acceptable in each period. In the context of Asian medieval ages, Confucianism can be understood as a unique belief system that straddles the line between religion and moral norms. It served as an intellectual belief system that relied heavily on the educational framework of the time.

Normative conceptions of legitimacy bring forth controversial issues concerning cultural diversity, as legitimacy often encompasses only certain types of social values, religions, and moral frameworks. While the empirical distinctiveness among culturally different societies is readily apparent, this distinctiveness relates not only to empirical dimensions but also to diverse values and ways of thinking. This raises the issue of the diversity of legitimacy in a normative sense. If political legitimation does not embrace 'moral monism' (Parekh, 1996; 2000) or 'moral objectivism' (Bunting, 1996), then values and morality must rest upon the diverse cultures, customs, and conventions found in different societies. As Bhikhu Parekh notes, culturally embedded human beings cannot entirely escape their cultural context, which implies that the belief systems for legitimation are also influenced by culture (Parekh, 134). To clarify the role of culture in relation to legitimacy, Beetham's categorization is particularly useful (Beetham, 72).

On one hand, there exists a framework of justifiable content for the legitimacy of rule; on the other hand, the principles and common interests that underpin this legitimacy can vary significantly depending on the characteristics of each society. If political legitimacy incorporates a ruler's moral qualifications as a necessary or sufficient normative resource, the expectations and interpretations of legitimacy will differ between a Christian

society and a Confucian society. In Korea, for example, the virtue of filial piety is one of the most significant moral standards used to evaluate a person's character and extends to the consideration of whether an individual is a suitable political representative. If filial piety is considered as a virtue of a good representative as well as a good person, or if there is a prevalent belief that a good son is more likely to be a good representative, candidates who exemplify filial piety may have a better chance of winning elections in the political community. In contrast, while filial piety may hold some importance in Christian societies, it occupies a different level and role within the moral framework. The emphasis on individual virtues and the moral qualifications of leaders may differ, reflecting the unique cultural and religious contexts that shape the understanding of political legitimacy in each society.

More broadly, there exists a diverse range of moral contents, particularly when comparing individualistic and communitarian societies. While every society may uphold certain values as essential goals to be pursued collectively, this does not resolve the underlying tensions. In some societies, individual freedom may be prioritized as the highest value, while in others, equality may be seen as more crucial than liberty. Additionally, in multicultural societies, values such as diversity, tolerance, and reciprocity may be regarded as fundamental. The pathways to achieving these goals can also vary significantly. Different societies may adopt distinct approaches to fostering their core values, resulting in a rich variety of moral frameworks and political expectations. This complexity highlights the challenges in establishing a universal standard of legitimacy that resonates across diverse cultural contexts.

4. Confucianism as a Belief-System

According to Finer, all historical governments are forms of representative government, as they represent both the people and the state. Consequently, rulers must serve as genuine representatives; failure to do so undermines their legitimacy. In other words, for a representative government to be considered a

legitimate regime, it must meet certain conditions (Finer, 1999). In modern democracies, these conditions typically include having a representative constitution and ensuring equal and substantive participation in elections. However, these aspects focus primarily on the form of democracy and representation rather than the foundational element of political legitimacy. It is in this context that we bring forth the concept of 'mandate' which serves as the most fundamental resource for legitimizing political representation.

The concept of 'mandate' is understood as a specific type of political framework that grants authority within a representative system. This notion encompasses two critical aspects of representation: first, the procedure of authorization, and second, the actions involved in representation. More precisely, the mandate exists at the intersection of these two elements, as the authorization process establishes the guidelines for how representatives act. Furthermore, the political mandate inherently requires certain conditions that govern the activities of those who are representing, ensuring that their actions remain aligned with the principles and expectations set forth by the mandate itself.

However, the concept of 'mandate' is distinct from mere representation, authority, and politics itself, as it transcends the secular realm to encompass a core idea of religious faith. Mandate is the most symbolic and sacred procedure, and it is essential for political representation to form political legitimacy. It functions as a belief system that can be widely accepted across political and religious arena. The procedures and acts involved in delegating divine authority and power are crucial for transforming a religion into a comprehensive belief system. Similarly, this dynamic is mirrored in political representation; if representation is viewed as a system of governance, there must be established procedures for transferring the right or power to rule from the represented to the representative. This process of granting authority generates political legitimacy within a representative system, creating a foundation for the exercise of power and governance.

The idea of representation in political theory is nuanced, particularly when examining the concept of mandate. As noted,

not all forms of representation require authorization or accountability to those being represented, indicating that not every act of authorization necessarily entails a mandate (Weale 2007, 133). For instance, in Hobbesian thought, while sovereignty is portrayed as a representative authority—embodying the dual concepts of 'standing for' and 'acting for'—it lacks a viable procedural framework for mandate. This absence leads theorist Hanna Pitkin to argue against the classification of Hobbesian sovereignty as a true representation of the people. She contends that without a mechanism for the removal of the ruler based on mandate theory, Hobbes's conception fails to meet the necessary criteria for legitimate representation (Pitkin, 1967). Consequently, as David Runciman summarizes, Pitkin asserts that Hobbes was fundamentally 'wrong' about the nature of representation (Runciman 2009, 16). This critique highlights the importance of establishing robust procedures of mandate in ensuring that representatives remain accountable and authorized by those they govern, reinforcing the essential connection between belief systems and political legitimacy.

Andrew Rehfeld's offers an interesting perspective on the nature of representation, particularly in the context of Hobbesian sovereignty. He posits that labeling the sovereign as a representative is not inherently hypocritical, despite the limitations imposed by legitimacy. In this view, even if the ruler's authority is characterized as authoritarian, it can still be seen as authoritative (Rehfeld 2005, 185; Runciman 2009, 16). This perspective emphasizes that the sovereign may fulfill certain representative functions, such as providing security and protection of property, which are essential to the social contract that Hobbes outlines. While these activities do not conform to a strong sense of democratic understanding of mandate, they nonetheless confer a form of legitimacy to the ruler's authority. In this sense of representation, the ruler is seen as acting in the interests of the people, thereby maintaining a semblance of representation even in the absence of a formal mandate. Rehfeld's analysis encourages a re-examination of the relationship between authority and representation, suggesting that legitimacy can exist

in complex forms, allowing for a broader interpretation of what it means to be a representative authority.

This argument finds support in historical practices. Historically, and in many contemporary contexts, male adults have often been viewed as the leaders within families. This perception of legitimacy does not arise from a formal mandate granted by other family members. Nevertheless, the rights and responsibilities of parents toward their children, or of certain adults toward other family members, are generally accepted as valid, even in the absence of explicit consent or a formalized mandate. This phenomenon extends beyond domestic spheres. In today's world, many organizations can justify their authority without a formal mandate. Numerous international and domestic associations assert that they represent groups who are inadequately represented. These organizations advocate for values that are considered reasonable or just, not only on behalf of their members but also for a wider array of individuals and entities. For instance, it is widely acknowledged that Greenpeace represents not just its members but also the broader concept of environmental preservation and the general public who support this cause, even if they are not members. In such instances of representation, while a clear mandate may be lacking, the activities of these associations are often seen as legitimate if they genuinely reflect the interests or will of those they represent.

Representation by mandate is generally regarded as having greater normative legitimacy. In the modern context, political authorization must link with legitimate representation and incorporate a legitimate mandate. While there are various forms of legitimate representation that may lack a clear mandate, most representative governments strive to enhance their legitimacy through such mandates. Thus, it can be argued that legitimate representation inherently requires a mandate. Every representative government necessitates a justification for the relationship between the representative and the represented, with the mandate serving as the fundamental procedure for this justification. In contemporary politics, a legitimate government must be validated by mandate as a crucial political process in

representative theory. Historically, the concept of mandate has been central to the understanding of legitimate representative government, particularly since the works of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, who recognized the complexities of this relationship and emphasized the importance of mandate in their theories on party politics and electoral systems.

In general, the concept of mandate has been viewed as a sub-concept of representation, merely reflecting different aspects of it. Unlike thinkers like Finer, who link government to political legitimacy and frame it as a belief system, most theorists do not recognize mandate as a foundational procedure of representation. While many scholars focus on the history of representation, the characteristics of representatives, and institutions like elections or government organization, there is often no clear differentiation between representation and mandate. In this context, mandate is seen as relevant to current forms of representation rather than as a foundational element of representation itself.

Mandate is fundamentally distinct from representation; it serves as the authorization procedure that underpins representative government. This characteristic makes representation conditional. While not all legitimate representation relies on a mandate, those representations that do are considered legitimate because of their conditional nature. Thus, if representation is conditional, it is inherently limited due to the conditional nature of the mandate. This perspective associates with the idea that nearly all political representation functions within the bounds of limited government. Historical studies by Finer, Pitkin, and Urbinati support this fact. For instance, even the absolute power of the French monarchy in the 16th century was constrained by various religious and cultural conditions, despite its conservative nature (Finer, 1999). Thus, all political representation is inherently conditional, as it is governed by specific conditions that stem from the prior authorization procedure known as mandate.

5. 'Mandate of Heaven' and Political Well Being

Mandate is the process through which the majority confers the

authority to govern upon a minority within a political community. When a person or group is designated as representative, it signifies their right to govern all members of that community. Pitkin (1967) clarifies that 'representing' cannot be equated with 'presenting'; if everyone were to govern themselves directly, it would undermine the notion of a representative system. As Bernard Manin (1997) notes, representation inherently involves a minority governing the majority. This fundamental aspect remains unchanged, despite Nadia Urbinati and Mark Warren's (2008) emphasis on the normative democratic characteristics of representation. Thus, it is the procedure of mandate that differentiates representation from mere presentation.

For a mandate to be perceived as legitimate, there must be strong beliefs among the populace, akin to religious faith, that recognize the mandate and the governing authority as valid. While mandate serves as the foundation of legitimacy in representative government, the methods of legitimation vary across societies. Although electoral systems and constitutions are often viewed as valid institutions for establishing legitimate mandates, there is no absolute criterion to universally apply to these diverse approaches. Historical belief systems from pre-modern times have significantly influenced contemporary processes of representative government and mandates. Thus, institutions like elections or constitutions cannot serve as the radical foundation for mandate; rather, they function as processes to reaffirm the mandate, which must exist prior to these follow-up measures. This highlights the essential role of belief systems and delegation in modern representative frameworks.

South Korea, being a modern representative democracy, is significantly shaped by Confucianism, especially in its understanding of representation and mandate. Within the Confucian belief system, the ancient concept known as the "Mandate of Heaven" asserts that the authority to govern is bestowed by a higher moral order. Mencius, a key figure in Confucian thought, further interpreted this mandate as something that is fundamentally rooted in the will of the people, suggesting that Heaven's approval is contingent upon the

people's voice and their well-being. This connection between divine authority and popular consent continues to influence South Korea's political culture today.

When Confucius asserts that legitimate political power derives from the Mandate of Heaven, it elevates political authority to a divine status, as this authority is believed to be granted by a higher moral order. This establishes a binding relationship among Heaven, the ruler, and the people. Within this framework, political authority transcends mere governance; it embodies a moral obligation. Consequently, the existence of physical or material force alone is insufficient to fulfill the requirements of the Mandate of Heaven; the ruler must also embody moral integrity and the welfare of the people to maintain legitimate authority.

Governments operate under specific conditions tied to the will of the people, as Heaven is believed to listen to their voices. If the populace withdraws support from a regime, the Mandate of Heaven is considered revoked. Thus, in Confucian thought, political power is both divine and conditional, creating a dynamic of respect and fear for Heaven among rulers, who serve as intermediaries between Heaven and the people. Historically, this notion has fueled revolutions in East Asia, with movements invoking the Mandate of Heaven—from the earliest Chinese governance to the Dong-hak movement, the last peasant rebellion in late 19th-century Korea. However, the concept of the Mandate of Heaven has evolved and does not hold the same significance in contemporary governance. In modern South Korea, few individuals view the Mandate of Heaven as the basis for the current government's legitimacy. The National Constitution explicitly states that sovereignty resides with the people, not with Heaven, reflecting a shift towards democratic principles.

Nonetheless, many South Korean politicians frequently invoke Mencius's phrase, "the mind of Heaven is the mind of the people," during electoral campaigns. This is especially prevalent among opposition parties advocating for a regime change against the ruling party. The phrase serves as a powerful reminder of the concept of limited government. In this context, Heaven is no

longer viewed as a divine entity but rather as a metaphor for the ultimate source of political legitimacy in a representative democracy.

In this regard, the theory of government serves a practical function by reminding the people that their government is always conditional based on the concept of mandate, which also contributes to political well-being. This conditionality existed even within monarchical systems through the idea of the Mandate of Heaven. The belief that Heaven only hears the voice of the people underlines the practicality of this concept as a foundation for limited government in a representative system. Thus, it can be said that the idea of a limited representative government grounded in the Mandate of Heaven has become an integral aspect of political practice in Confucian East Asia.

The concept of the 'Mandate of Heaven' thus underlines the belief that legitimate political authority is derived from the consent and will of the people, promoting a sense of accountability among rulers. By emphasizing that Heaven hears the voices of the populace, this principle fosters a political environment where governance is seen as conditional, enhancing political well-being. In Confucian thought, this idea encourages rulers to act justly and in the best interests of their subjects, reinforcing moral governance and ethical leadership. The 'Mandate of Heaven' serves as a reminder that authority is not absolute, thereby empowering citizens to advocate for their rights and responsibilities within the political system. Ultimately, this historical framework contributes to a culture of political participation and engagement, essential for the overall well-being of society.

Confucian representation theory aims to achieve two primary political goals: the welfare and cultivation of the people, with the former serving as a prerequisite for the latter. To ensure the welfare of the people, it is essential to listen to their needs and opinions, which involves three key functions: reflecting their needs, selecting officials through recommendations, and fostering positive cooperation to achieve collective welfare. As a result, Confucian political theory must be grounded in legitimate

representation that encompasses both ‘standing for’ and ‘acting for’ the people. Furthermore, Confucian representation is characterized by responsiveness in the relationship between representatives and the represented, requiring respect for the people's interests and reflection of their will. Although Confucian representation may not emphasize equal participation in political decision-making, it aligns with the principles of modern representative democracy by prioritizing public opinion and the needs of the community.

6. Conclusion

Critics of the Confucian concept of mandate argue that it conflicts with democratic principles, often viewing it as authoritarian and hierarchical, despite its similarities to representative theory. However, both Eastern and Western traditions exhibit a significant anti-populist understanding of democracy, which challenges the notion that democracy is solely defined by broad or equal participation. If we expand our definition of democracy to encompass not only participatory procedures but also the achievement of reasonable and just outcomes, then there is room for a legitimate representation that links with democratic ideals. This perspective allows for a nuanced understanding of representation that incorporates the essential role of authority and governance while maintaining democratic legitimacy. Ultimately, recognizing the complexities of representation can lead to a more inclusive conception of democracy that values both the process and its outcomes.

In reality, this reflects the kind of democracy that shapes our daily lives. From this perspective, the exclusion of individuals deemed insufficiently cultivated in Confucian representation does not inherently contradict democratic principles, particularly if the mandate remains conditional upon the people's mindset. Thus, we can assert that Confucian representation is rooted in legitimate authority, positioning it as authoritative rather than authoritarian. It’s important to note that not all forms of authoritative power equate to authoritarianism. Confucian representation embodies legitimate authority as long as it is

anchored in the belief system of conditional governance by mandate, reflecting the will of the people.

Confucian representative theory operates on the principle of governance by "qualified individuals." The key issue lies not in this principle itself, but in how these qualifications are defined in relation to modern representative democracy. If Confucian representatives are seen as technocrats within an elitist framework—where their role involves acting independently of the people's will—then such a model may struggle to be considered truly democratic. However, the foundational tenet of the Confucian mandate emphasizes the importance of listening to the people's voice. For both the welfare and ultimate cultivation of the populace, mutual cooperation is essential. This understanding of representative government is deeply rooted in Confucian delegation and serves as a political foundation that can effectively function as a belief system within modern democracies.

The Confucian belief system of representative government remains profoundly influential in contemporary democracies. In modern South Korean politics, the concept of the 'Mandate of Heaven' is rhetorically interpreted as the mandate of the people, demonstrating a significant evolution in understanding governance. Moreover, the virtues expected of a good representative are still shaped by Confucian ideals, indicating a continuity between pre-modern and modern representative systems. This also highlights how belief systems with religious and cultural attributes persist in impacting both political and secular institutions today. Consequently, the interplay between these traditional beliefs and modern democratic practices reflects the complex nature of governance in South Korea.

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