**Harding 1984**

The first generation of Chinese politics (1960s): Notable for its breadth.

1. Wide-ranged: The studies are normally general and descriptive, not very much comparison.
2. Formalism: Due to their reliance on the official data, they representing China in the same terms as did the Chinese communist leadership. Therefore, they are better in describing the Communist doctrine, policy, and organizational tables than to analyze the actual operation of the state and the party. The accounts are mostly speculative and tentative.
3. Over-generalization: They tend to overlook the variations between different organizations and provinces (so they concluded more unity and consensus among China's leaders).  Any case represents a microcosm of China.
4. Underconceptualization: They tend to examine China as a unique case without applying more general concepts and models from the broader field of comparative politics. (*Maybe it is caused by the traditions of area studies, but why did Latin American studies not fall into this trap?*)

The second generation of Chinese politics (1970s): Challenges of former paradigms (becomes more disaggregated with more depth and specialization) and new puzzles (Why Cultural Revolution occurred?)

1. Scholars are disposed to formalism, and they will be self-consciously conceptual, if not, necessarily truly comparative. More concepts and methods from the social sciences are applied.
2. They mainly rely on Red Guard materials: Some behind-the-scene (insightful) information, maybe untrustworthy. More fragments within the central leadership is revealed, which moved the study of Chinese politics from formal to the informal (central work conferences and the flow of information within the Chinese political system from the center to the local), and from the general to the specific.
   * Different areas of public policy.
   * Different regions, provinces, and areas (successor of E. Vogel's work on Canton).
   * Different time periods (smaller and more specific).
3. They go beyond the accumulation of historical, ideological and organizational data to construct more general models that could explain the changes in policy and leadership between the establishment of the PRC and the onset of Cultural Revolution.
4. Misuse of western political concept in China: Social scientists tend to less likely to delve deeply into classical Sinology. But it may be because the process of integrating China studies and comparative politics has not gone far enough. Testing the proposed propositions and hypotheses is simply not possible. Studying the case of China still does not provide much help. The remaining Sinologist traditions is still influential: "China is China is China."
5. Over-reliance on the materials of the Cultural Revolution (also applicable for first-generation scholars who adopted the Maoist terms to analyze Chinese history).
6. Idealism about the Cultural Revolution.
7. Many models brought this field too much analytical diversity.

The third generation of Chinese politics: Taking the assignment to weight the relative merits of the competing theories and models and seeking a synthesis among them. What else is new?

1. More reminiscence of the first-generation: Wide-ranging and ambitious.
2. Attempt to systematically compare, test, and construct a synthesis of the competing models of Chinese politics (either reject them all except for factionalism or evaluate the validity of them in each period). Question: *What explanations do we desire as a comparative political scientist?*
   * Pye: Factional politics as the enduring feature/essence of Chinese politics (factionalism).
   * Teiwes: Chinese politics changes and transforms over time (models of bureaucratic and geographic politics). Therefore, different models are applicable to different time periods.
3. An explanandum to follow: The reforms proposed by Deng Xiaoping is another puzzle for the third generation scholars.
4. New materials are available now to improve our knowledge on Chinese politics for the present and the past (*Really?*) and to further the process of dissection initiated by the second generation to produce more in-depth studies of different localities, institutions, individuals, and policies.
5. Continuing the work of intellectual synthesizing and generalization.
6. The coming studies should better integrate Chinese politics into comparative politics.
7. Interdisciplinary effort is necessary (political economy & political sociology).