Contemporary Chinese Politics

Contemporary Chinese Politics considers how new and diverse sources and methods are changing the study of Chinese politics. Contributors spanning three generations in China studies place their distinct qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches in the framework of the discipline and point to challenges or opportunities (or both) of adapting new sources and methods to the study of contemporary China. How can we more effectively use new sources and methods of data collection? How can we better integrate the study of Chinese politics into the discipline of political science, to the betterment of both? How can we more appropriately manage the logistical and ethical problems of doing political research in the challenging Chinese environment? In addressing these questions, this comprehensive methodological survey will be of immense interest to graduate students heading into the field for the first time and experienced scholars looking to keep abreast of the state of the art in the study of Chinese politics.

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Contemporary Chinese Politics

New Sources, Methods, and Field Strategies

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Abbreviations

APA	American Psychological Association
APSA	American Political Science Association
BAS	Beijing Area Study
BB	bulletin board
CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
CATA	Computer Aided Text Analysis
CC	Central Committee
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CICIR	China Institute of Contemporary International Relations
CIIS	China Institute of International Studies
CNKI	China National Knowledge Infrastructure (database)
CNNIC	China Internet Network Information Center
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
CSE	collective self-esteem
CYL	Communist Youth League
FBIS	Foreign Broadcast Information Service
FSU	Final (spatial) Sampling Unit
GPS	Global Positioning System
HSM	half-square minute
ILRC	Institutionalization of Legal Reforms in China
IQRM	Institute for Qualitative Research Methods
IRB	Internal Review Board
IWEP	Institute of World Economics and Politics
KML	Keyhole Markup Language
KMT	Guomindang
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOE	Ministry of Education
MR	military region
MVD	Ministry of the Interior (Russia)
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics

NFI	Normed Fit Index
NPC	National People's Congress
NSF	National Science Foundation
PAF	principal axis factoring
PC	party congress
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PPS	probability proportionate to size
PSC	Politburo Standing Committee
PSU	Primary Sampling Unit
RA	research assistant
RC	residents' committee
RCCC	Research Center for Contemporary China
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
RWA	right-wing authoritarianism
SASAC	State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission
SEC	State Education Commission
SIIS	Shanghai Institute of International Studies
SIM	site-intensive method
SMA	Shanghai Municipal Archives
SOE	state-owned enterprise
SSU	Secondary Sampling Units
TLI	Tucker-Lewis Index
USC	Universities Service Centre

Reflections on the Evolution of the China Field in Political Science

Kenneth Lieberthal

The current volume highlights the range and vibrancy of current studies of China by political scientists in the United States. This is a field that has become relatively mature in terms of the number and types of institutions that produce good China-related research, the array of generations of scholars engaged in that research, the variety of sources available to understand developments in China, and the methodological richness of the field overall. All of this represents a situation very different from and much better than that in the 1960s. But the changes over the past four decades have also introduced problems that require the ongoing attention of the field.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE FIELD

The world of the 1960s differed fundamentally from that of 2010 in terms of how China is studied. China studies in the earlier period were just reviving in the wake of the devastation wrought by the anti-Communist efforts most memorably associated with Senator Joseph McCarthy, who, in February 1950, asserted that he had a list of 205 Communists being protected in the State Department. The senator – along with others asking "Who lost China?" – decimated the ranks of China specialists in the State Department and questioned the loyalty of scholars such as John K. Fairbank and Owen Lattimore, arguing that they were at least Communist dupes and in some cases active secret members of the Communist Party (Fairbank, 1982). The results were such that Fairbank, generally regarded as the dean of the China field, addressed a conference of China scholars in the early 1970s and advised the younger participants to be sure to always keep a daily diary. He explained that this would prove important when they are investigated by a congressional committee and must explain what they were doing and thinking at any particular point in their past.[1]

[1] Author's personal recollection from that meeting.

The senior faculty in the 1960s generally had lived in China before 1949. Some were offspring of YMCA officials[2] or missionaries,[3] whereas others became engaged in China via their service in World War II.[4] Columbia University's A. Doak Barnett was not atypical. He had been raised in China (his father directed the YMCA in Shanghai), attended Yale University in the United States for a B.A. and later for an M.A. in International Relations, then returned to Asia in basically reportorial positions in China in the late 1940s, and in Hong Kong in the early 1950s. He then moved to the United States, where by the 1960s he had become a key member of the Columbia University faculty. This background gave him an intimate knowledge and "feel" for China, but relatively modest formal training in political science.

Those who began their studies of China in the 1960s had better formal training, virtually all studying for Ph.D.s in political science at major American universities.[5] Many came to the China field from having studied the Soviet Union and were driven by abiding interests in communism, Marxism-Leninism, and the dynamics of revolution. But the world of the China scholar at that time in many ways differed vastly from that of today.

For these young scholars, China was an abstraction – Americans were not permitted to travel to the PRC (then universally called "Communist China"). Scholars learned about China completely via sources, not from firsthand experience. Those sources were quite limited.[6]

China research initially relied primarily on U.S. government translations, along with analytical work, publications, and documents from Hong Kong and Taiwan. The U.S. government provided voluminous translation series of media broadcasts and articles in publications.[7] But these were not indexed well. For example, the most widely used source, the Foreign Broadcast Information Service *Daily Report*, provided only single entries at the beginning of each

[2] For example, A. Doak Barnett of Columbia University.

[3] For example, Lucian Pye of MIT.

[4] For example, Robert Scalapino of UC-Berkeley and Benjamin Schwartz of Harvard. John Stewart Service was both a YMCA child and a U.S. government employee in China during World War II. Harvard's John K. Fairbank also served in the State Department in China during World War II.

[5] Steven Andors, Phyllis Andors, Richard Baum, Gordon Bennett, Thomas Bernstein, Parris Chang, Edward Friedman, Steven Goldstein, Harry Harding, Ying-mao Kau, Steven Levine, Andrew Nathan, Michel Oksenberg, Susan Shirk, Richard Solomon, Frederick Teiwes, James Townsend, Lynn White, and the author, among others.

[6] Oksenberg (1970) provides an excellent overview and analysis of the English-language sources available to study China during this period.

[7] Foreign Broadcast Information Service's *China Daily Report* translated radio broadcasts and newspaper articles, producing a daily "book" five times a week that often contained over eighty single-spaced pages. Longer articles tended to be captured in the *Survey of China Mainland Press* and *Selections from China Mainland Magazines*, also U.S. government translation series. Items were selected for translation based on their potential value to U.S. government analyses. Three other series also provided translations that many scholars used: the Joint Publications Research Service (which included a far wider array of types of materials), the U.S. (Hong Kong) Consulate General's *Current Background*, and the BBC's *Summary of World Broadcasts*.

daily "book" and quarterly single-entry compendia. Researchers often allocated months in their research schedules to identifying articles that now can be located literally in seconds via readily available search engines. These early studies tended to focus on the analysis of documents, ideological framings, and newspapers/media broadcasts.

China itself published some periodicals, such as *China Pictorial*, *China Reconstructs*, *Peking Review*, and *Hong Qi*, but many of these stopped publication during the Cultural Revolution. The Cultural Revolution produced a tide of Red Guard publications, which began (albeit in extremely polemical ways) to reveal the policy debates and elite conflicts that had taken place in earlier years.[8] The U.S. government acquired many of these publications by purchase and, not surprisingly, Hong Kong-based counterfeiters quickly sensed a gold mine and began to churn out fakes.

With the Cultural Revolution, as more refugees began to appear in Hong Kong, refugee interviews became increasingly important as a source of information. Refugees, by definition, are an unrepresentative lot, though. Out of concerns about assuring personal safety, most scholars did not identify the refugees they interviewed. This could present its own set of problems. Three scholars who did important interviewing in Hong Kong one after the other, and who developed relatively compatible views of how the Chinese system was operating, only years later learned that they had been relying on the same key refugee as a source.[9]

Communications were very poor and physical materials hard to obtain. Copying technology other than microfilm and microfiche basically did not yet exist, and electronic communications beyond telephone and telegraph were still unavailable. Most young entrants to the China field went to Taiwan to study language (and perhaps do some research in the few carefully guarded rooms permitted to hold mainland "Communist bandit" materials), and then on to Hong Kong, in many cases to the Universities Service Centre (USC) in Kowloon, for their dissertation research. USC provided office space, a sense of community, a network for finding refugees to interview about conditions across the border, and good clippings files of mainland newspapers compiled by the nearby Union Research Institute.[10] Given the absence of copying facilities, protecting the physical safety of one's research notes from loss or inadvertent damage was a matter of serious concern.

[8] Many universities now have microfilm and microfiche collections of Red Guard papers and other materials. These materials provided a major basis for such studies as Chang (1978). The present author (1971) sought to evaluate the accuracy of some of these materials as they pertained to past elite debates.

[9] A. Doak Barnett (1967), not one of the three scholars mentioned in this paragraph, wrote the most detailed volume on the government system. Virtually the entire volume was based on interviews with refugees who were ex-cadres. The interviews were conducted among refugees who had left China before the Cultural Revolution.

[10] The Union Research Institute also held extensive files of notes compiled from interviews of refugees from the mainland.

Ideology and politics intruded deeply into scholarship. The Cultural Revolution in China coincided with America's escalation of the Vietnam War and the extremely bitter, in 1968 bordering on revolutionary, politics that ensued in the United States. These disputes deeply affected the China field. A number of scholars in the Asia field formed their own progressive association, called the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars, which held its own annual meeting and published a journal, the *CCAS Bulletin*, and some books. Profound political and resulting personal disagreements divided the scholarly community, with a great deal of pressure exerted by some to take a stand against "American imperialism." These political fissures ran deep, and ideological differences ripped the field apart well into the late 1970s.

Students almost without exception entered graduate school with no previous background in Chinese-language study. Acquiring the language, therefore, occupied a significant part of the graduate training program.

The study of China was concentrated at a few leading centers because of a dearth of both scholars and materials. Harvard, Columbia, University of California-Berkeley, and Stanford (especially because of the Hoover Institution collection) played especially large roles in developing the field.

Each major university took a quintessentially area studies approach to understanding China. Ph.D. students in political science who focused on China often obtained an M.A. or certificate in China area studies along the way. Their programs included courses in the history, sociology, and language of modern China, in addition to dedicated courses on Chinese politics.[11]

Despite these limitations, a great deal of very careful work produced serious analyses of developments in the PRC. These tended to be richly contextual studies of individual cases, locations, or policy developments,[12] with insights generated by careful consideration of the potential implications of the studies' empirical findings.[13] That reflected in part the way political science was taught in the 1960s and in part the almost total lack of reliable statistical information from China at the time.[14] During the Cultural Revolution, of course, even Chinese officials no longer had access to remotely reliable data.[15] Earlier

[11] Courses in economics became more important only after China moved well along its path of reform.

[12] For example, Barnett (1969), Baum and Teiwes (1968), Shirk (1982), and Vogel (1969).

[13] The brief comments in this chapter do not seek to match the depth and richness of Oksenberg's (1970) essay.

[14] The excellent series edited by Robert F. Dernberger for the Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress provided inadvertent testimony to how limited the concrete data were. Most Chinese statistics consisted of statements concerning percentage increases over the previous year in broad aggregates, where the base numbers for the series and concrete definitions of the categories were never revealed.

[15] At the height of the Cultural Revolution, the State Statistical Bureau had only fourteen people left in its central office. On the rehabilitated statistical system, see the series of articles in FBIS *Daily Report: People's Republic of China*, February 17, 1984, pp. K17–K21.

periods, such as the Great Leap Forward, produced statistical black holes of almost equally enormous scope.[16]

The field has subsequently evolved as a result of changes in virtually every parameter noted here. First, access to China has been transformed. Very limited visits by scholars began to take place as early as 1971, and these increased gradually during the 1970s. These afforded opportunities to meet with various Chinese officials from local to central levels, but those officials generally provided only carefully vetted information. Travel opportunities were so limited that in many cases pictures taken by recent visitors were of not only the same cities but also of the same rooms in the same buildings as those taken by visitors in earlier years. Visas were scarce, and the Chinese often paid all land expenses and provided the guides and entertainment. The purpose was hardly unfettered inquiry. But even these choreographed experiences began to lift the veil on the realities behind the propaganda in China.

A personal anecdote illustrates this. I was in Shanghai in 1977 at the time of the conclusion of the Eleventh Party Congress. Our minders had gathered all foreigners into a large room at the Peace Hotel to watch on TV the coverage of Hua Guofeng's Political Work Report to the congress.[17] Many Chinese hotel staffers were also with us. When Hua announced the formal conclusion of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, a spontaneous cheer went up from the Chinese present. Hua then went on to say that there would be another such movement every seven or eight years – which was met by dead silence in the room.

Deng Xiaoping's reemergence in a commanding position by the end of 1978 and normalization of diplomatic relations with the United States at the beginning of 1979 opened up new vistas. Chinese, many of whom had spent roughly twenty years in prison camps as Rightists, were now released and found themselves attending conferences at plush sites such as Airlie House in Virginia.[18]

By the early 1980s China had begun to admit American scholars to do limited research and spend real time at Chinese institutions, and Chinese scholars began to visit and study at American universities. These opportunities made scholars aware of the enormously difficult lives that their Chinese counterparts led and the extent to which bureaucracy and political oppression weighed on virtually everything they did. One often heard Chinese colleagues explain patiently that "In China, little things are difficult and difficult things are impossible," as personal dependence on bureaucrats to accomplish even the simplest things characterized every dimension of the system. In addition, during the 1980s, China began to open up to foreign businesses, and an increasing range of people grappled with trying to get things done in the

[16] See Becker (1998), which details how absurd the reported statistics became during the Great Leap Forward.

[17] Text carried by New China News Agency, August 22, 1977.

[18] Many of these were people who had learned English before 1949 and were the most "presentable" people China could produce for international conferences at the time.

Chinese context. Harry Harding captured the resulting change in perspectives in an essay of that period (Harding, 1982).

The 1980s proved to be an extremely exciting period of reforms, and various American scholars were sought out by reformers to provide advice and insights. In political science, Americans advised on the development of the field in China (political science had been disestablished as a discipline in the 1950s, and in the 1980s individuals such as Yan Jiaqi, who had no previous training in the discipline, were assigned to be political scientists and to develop the field). Organizations such as the Committee on Scholarly Communications with the PRC (of the National Academy of Sciences) and the Social Science Research Council played significant roles in these efforts. America was then held in very high repute in China, in part because it was seen as the quintessentially modern country and in part because it was viewed as an ally against the Soviet Union. Reformers of all stripes often visited American scholars in search of good counsel. American knowledge of Chinese politics and policy process began to grow. In addition, the World Bank and other international organizations began to establish ties with China, and the World Bank especially began to publish figures on the economy that previously were unavailable even to most Chinese economists. At the same time, the World Bank and others worked with China to improve the quality of economic reporting there.[19]

With some disruptions, most notably in the wake of June 4, 1989, access to China has continued to grow. By 2010, many students entering Ph.D. programs in political science with a focus on China have already lived in the PRC for a year or more and have developed a good personal feel for the country, along with significant language skills. Most academics studying the country have spent extensive time there in both academic institutions and various other units. Chinese, both in China and in the United States, talk relatively freely about their views and concerns and provide a wide variety of perspectives.

Second, changes in China and in sources have produced related changes in the topics that are studied. The 1960s and 1970s saw many volumes devoted primarily to analysis of elite politics and ideological battles.[20] The 1980s brought studies of the reforms and of bureaucratic organization,[21] in addition to ongoing analyses of personal politics at the top of the Communist Party. Toward the end of that decade, interviewing began to produce enough of a basis to permit concrete explication of policy process.[22] As access further increased and the reforms produced major changes in the way the economy functioned, attention increasingly focused on analysis of the country's evolving political economy, along with a vast array of local studies based on interviews and participant observation.[23] Most of these developments have been

[19] Oksenberg and Jacobson (1990) provide an overview of this.
[20] Two of many examples are MacFarquhar (1974, 1983, 1997) and Teiwes (1979).
[21] See, for example, Harding (1981).
[22] See, for example, Lieberthal and Oksenberg (1988) and Lieberthal and Lampton (1992).
[23] See, for example, Blecher and Shue (1996), Oi (1998a), and Gallagher (2005).

additive, with perhaps only ideological studies largely disappearing from the literature in the past decade. By 2010, moreover, studies of Chinese politics, as illustrated by the contributions to this volume, have increasingly joined the mainstream of political science literature in terms of methods and topics.

Third, sources of data have multiplied in every way. In the 1980s, former top officials began to write memoirs that were sometimes very revealing. Over the years, the volume and scope of memoir literature, both autobiographical and through various types of party publications and reportage, have continued to mushroom.[24] The Chinese media have diversified and multiplied, and they have become enormously more informative. The statistical agencies have become far more adept at collecting data (despite ongoing serious problems), and far less of what they collect is considered secret. Publications abound for all types of state units, including ministries, local governments, the Central Party School, the Central Committee Party History Office, and others. Trade associations and other groups publish specialized journals, as do foreign NGOs, businesses, and news sources. And the various research units and academic centers produce a veritable avalanche of published analytical work, especially now that publications are considered a key metric of productivity.

As Allen Carlson and Hong Duan's chapter in this volume explains in the foreign policy realm, the Internet has introduced a phenomenal additional array of sources, from personal blogs to Web sites for all types of publications and bodies. A large percentage of government units, for example, now have Web sites, from which it is possible to obtain data that in the early years of study would have been difficult, if not impossible, to access.[25]

Search engines are making information in publications available in a way that could not have been imagined in earlier years. The CNKI databases hosted by EastView (中国知识资源总库 – – CNKI 系列数据库), for example, contain full-text digital access to Chinese publications, including 7,200 journals starting from 1915 (containing over 23 million articles), nearly 4,000 academic journals dating back to 1887, and about 1,000 newspapers published since 2000. Other datasets focus on specialized areas such as laws and regulations. The Internet has also enabled regular exchanges of information among large groups of scholars of China organized through listservs.

Surveys are now feasible, and many are conducted. The authorities still impose limits on what they deem to be sensitive inquiries, but these limits are fundamentally looser than in earlier years.[26]

In-depth interviews provide far wider and deeper access to information than in earlier times. Many more officials and knowledgeable outsiders are

[24] See, for example, Jin (1989) and Zong (2008).

[25] The Congressional-Executive Commission on China provides a useful list of links to government Web sites in its PRC E-Government Directory, at http://www.cecc.gov/pages/prcEgovDir/dirEgovPRC.php.

[26] For details, see the contribution to this volume by Mingming Shen and Ming Yang, with Melanie Manion.

prepared to talk with scholars, and in this author's experience many are willing to meet informally. Access is now available to leaders and staff in vastly more units than previously, most are far more open in their discussions as rules governing secrecy have narrowed in scope enormously, and social science scholarship is now regarded with less a priori suspicion than was the case in the early days of the reforms.

In short, China has gone from being a basically inaccessible, very low-information society to being a relatively accessible, high-information society since the 1960s. The major problems now are to gain control over the primary and secondary sources. In the 1960s, a scholar could reasonably aspire to read everything published in English on China – or at a minimum all serious scholarly work – in addition to keeping up with the major Chinese-language sources. Now it is no longer feasible to do either.

Fourth, technology has transformed the study of China. Scholars communicate with each other globally and instantaneously, and that includes many scholars in China itself. Materials are now available, in many cases electronically, to far more institutions and scholars than was previously feasible. The Web, scanning technologies, and other developments have changed the situation fundamentally. And computer programs now permit automated content analysis and sophisticated data analysis that in earlier years were extremely labor-intensive exercises.[27]

Even travel has changed dramatically, becoming far less expensive and more rapid. That is true both between the United States and China and within China itself. When this author first flew to Taiwan in 1969 from New York, for example, it required two stops in the continental United States, a third in Hawaii, and a fourth in Japan before landing in Taipei. When China began to open up in the 1970s, internal flights were infrequent and equipment was primitive (typically, old Aeroflot planes). Because there were no major highways, most travel necessarily was by train. Transportation generally had to be booked via the China Travel Service, which conducted operations only in person and could take weeks to make even simple arrangements. Airplane tickets had to be reconfirmed in person or they were canceled, and this often required waiting in line for hours at the appropriate office. Getting into a city from an airport could take hours if ground transportation had not been arranged ahead of time. And major areas of every province were off limits to foreigners.

Fifth, changes in the discipline of political science have changed the scholarship on China. To put it in somewhat oversimplified terms, in the 1960s "political science" was primarily an analysis of politics in order to generate inductively insights of more general applicability – that is, it was basically the

[27] For example, Yoshikoder, which can be downloaded for free from http://www.yoshikoder.org/, can do frequency counts of terms, provide the context in which keywords appear, and do simple evaluations of content (for example, ratio of positive-to-negative references to particular terms), among other functions. See also Daniela Stockmann's contribution in the present volume.

study of politics without science. By 2010, that situation has largely reversed itself. Now the discipline privileges survey research, large-N studies, statistical analyses, game theory, and formal modeling. Highly contextualized, granular case studies do not easily lead to favorable tenure decisions in many of the most highly ranked political science departments. And issues that inherently are difficult to put into quantitative frameworks – such as cultural dimensions of issue framing, policy making, and elite politics – receive less attention.

Finally, the content of graduate education for political scientists who want to study China has changed significantly. The discipline now privileges methodology, and courses in that subfield consume substantial graduate program time. Combined with increasing pressure in many Ph.D. programs to shorten the time from matriculation to degree, the opportunity costs of taking courses in the history, sociology, economics, culture, and language of modern China have risen to the point that relatively few students put these together as part of their political science Ph.D. programs. Indeed, many graduate programs have abolished foreign language requirements in favor of requirements on methodology. As a result, one or two courses on Chinese politics/foreign policy typically suffice, with much of the rest of the learning about China relegated to dissertation proposal preparation and in-country dissertation research. Many Ph.D. programs discourage students from pursuing an area-studies M.A. on their way to obtaining a Ph.D.

CURRENT ISSUES

Overall, the above-noted changes have moved forward the America-based China field in political science enormously. Scholars generally have taken effective advantage of the facts that China itself is more open and accessible, the available data are of higher quality and greater variety, methods of analysis have become more rigorous and sophisticated, and the field itself has become more "democratic" in that serious studies are no longer confined primarily to a few leading universities and centers. Another change, that scholars who grew up in China are now important members of the American political science community studying China, has deepened the insights and broadened the perspectives available in the U.S. academy. The chapters in the present volume testify to the serious progress and types of results that have been achieved.

But all is not well. Some of the trends over the years have diminished approaches that can provide rich insights and in the process threaten to reduce the fruitful synergy between the study of China in particular and of politics more generally. Four issues warrant particular attention.

First, the data standards demanded by the discipline often still cannot be met in China. In some instances this reflects the unavailability of data series of sufficient length or the simple lack of systematic data on various issues. Scholars of the Americas or Europe who want to benefit from survey research, for example, can often count on access to existing datasets, fully documented, with which they can do their work. As Melanie Manion explains

in her contribution to this volume, the same is not true for such work on China. This reflects in part the inherent difficulties of doing research in this type of authoritarian system, where many types of data are considered sensitive, the datasets produced cannot be accessed by others, and key information is often missing concerning the sample and the Chinese partners involved in the research effort. In part, this also reflects the rapid changes in China and the lack of reliable time-series data. In addition, data quality frequently suffers from many of the problems inherent in dealing with a country that is still in transition from third world to first world institutions and capabilities.

Consequently, many graduate students who have completed courses in methodology despair when they try to develop sufficiently "rigorous" research projects on China. The overlap between available high-quality statistical data and important, interesting questions to ask is still uncomfortably small in developing countries. Where students of China must develop their data from scratch, as is most frequently the case, they must spend enormous amounts of time in questionnaire construction and pretests, gaining access to the relevant populations, developing their sample frames, implementing their surveys, and then analyzing and writing up the results. The same applies to many other types of research that require in-country data collection. In this context, there can be a lot of pressure to ask questions that are driven by data availability, rather than asking different, challenging questions that can yield significant results.

There is now tremendous focus on framing questions that can be pursued in a methodologically rigorous fashion. But framing good questions is a necessary first step in producing worthwhile outcomes. Thus, there needs to be serious focus, too, on first understanding politics and deriving from that understanding the key questions that need to be raised; then, within that universe, trying to structure the questions so as to be most amenable to formal analytical enhancements of the analysis. Otherwise, the rigor with which one can pursue an issue tends to drive what issues are pursued. Since rigor itself is not directly proportional to importance, its pursuit can weaken the field as a whole. As a colleague of the author memorably commented during a heated discussion of a tenure review case, "the most common form of 'rigor' is 'mortis.'"

Second, ideas, culture, history, and social constructs can shape outcomes in China profoundly. The ways issues are structured cognitively and how they relate to other factors in the environment are influenced significantly by culture and history. Even terminology affects intellectual constructs differently in different languages. As Lily Tsai's chapter in this volume explains, for example, there are advantages to conversational interviewing over standardized interviewing, as the former assures that survey questions are understood correctly by respondents. But these dimensions in general are not readily applicable to the types of rigorous inquiry and analysis increasingly demanded by American political science departments. And graduate programs, as noted above, train students less well to understand and analyze these types of factors than was the case for their predecessors.

Third, students of Chinese politics who still utilize more traditional approaches to understanding their topic often gravitate to think-tanks and schools of public policy instead of leading political science departments.[28] This is potentially a major loss to both the study of Chinese politics and to the development of political science as a discipline. A more hospitable posture by the discipline toward more traditional approaches to the study of China would potentially make young scholars feel more comfortable in gradually adopting more formal methods of analysis as the data from China warrant doing so.

In addition, the development of China studies in political science holds out serious opportunities for the overall development of political science. Political science developed from the study of Western historical experience, and many of its most fundamental assumptions deeply reflect that background. But things in China (and many non-Western areas) often do not fit into the conceptual categories typically employed in the West. For example, Bruce Dickson's work in this volume and elsewhere (Dickson, 2003)[29] has shown that entrepreneurs in China do not, as was the case in modern Western history, seek to challenge the regime. Rather, they tend to try to draw close to the state, viewing their capacity to deal with the state as a competitive advantage in the Chinese economy. Others have found through surveys that political trust in the authoritarian Chinese system is actually higher than that in democratic Taiwan (Shi, 2001). Thus, one of the major potential scholarly values of a more open and accessible China is that it provides opportunities to test fundamental conclusions that have grown out of years of social science work based primarily on Western developmental experience. Therefore, good studies of China may contribute real insight into areas in which the conventional wisdom in political science unknowingly reflects a more uniquely Western developmental experience than universal laws concerning political systems.

In sum, as the China field matures, it has an enormous amount to offer to the rest of the political science – and to broader social science – disciplines. But those disciplines must be able to value the reality that different parts of the world yield different types of data and pull things together in ways that may differ substantially from those in the Western experience. Therefore, the value of a maturing China field is in part that it can engage the broader discipline in a serious analysis of fundamentals. This requires that the broader discipline not impose too tight a boundary on defining the kinds of work that are valued. Only in this context can the training programs and career incentives nurture the full value of a mature scholarly community that is able to bring China's experience into the mainstream of political science.

Fourth, although things have changed enormously since John King Fairbank issued the warning to younger China scholars in the early 1970s noted earlier, there arguably is still an important need to have some students of Chinese

[28] To name but a few: Erica Downs, Elizabeth Economy, David M. Lampton, James Mulvenon, Jonathan Pollack, Anthony Saich, Michael Swaine, Murray Scot Tanner.

[29] See also Kellee Tsai (2007).

politics who have a good grasp of overall developments in China and who are able to articulate this to a broad public. Ironically, this is in part because the American public is now deluged by presentations on China in the media and by businesspeople, travelers, language teachers, and others. Too much of this coverage of China succumbs to caricature and a focus on the colorful and dramatic versus what is systematic. With the flood of coverage of things Chinese, there is an acute need for informed judgments to create context and perspective; these must be proffered in ways that reach and engage general audiences.

The pressures, both from better accessibility and data and from the demands of the discipline, however, move in the opposite direction – toward developing a particular specialty that permits increasingly sophisticated analysis over time. This is valuable and certainly should be nurtured. However, failure to develop some public intellectuals among each generation of students of Chinese politics can diminish the quality of public discourse on China; this, in turn, can reduce the resources available for ongoing development of the field. This is also a problem for policy-making purposes. The more formal the research methods used by political scientists are, the less likely it is that the results of that work will inform in any serious way the deliberations of policy makers. Public intellectuals who are able to translate such work into terms readily accessible to the policy community, and to place their presentations in outlets that command community attention, can play a vital role in making academic work on China inform better public policy.

In sum, despite the reality that a volume of this scope and substance could not possibly have been put together two decades ago, there are still troubling questions that scholars of Chinese politics and those in other areas of political science can and should address. These issues are, of course, not completely unique to China, and in many ways they reflect the tremendous advances in both the China field and the discipline of political science in the United States. The maturity of the China field, and the enormous importance and visibility of the country itself, now make the study of China a good vehicle for addressing issues that should engage the entire discipline.