
[View in your browser](#)



December 2025

This month, the Trustee Chair closed out 2025 with several media appearances and new announcements.

Trustee Chair Scott Kennedy shares insights in a recent [video explainer](#) from his research, as well as his recent trip to China, to explain why China's economy is best described as a "slow tech dragon" and why it is likely to remain one for the foreseeable future.

The China Field Notes podcast also released a [new episode](#) this month featuring Harvard's Michael Szonyi. In this episode, Szonyi speaks about why fieldwork matters to social historians and trends in U.S.-China relations. He unpacks the concept of "history from below" and how doing fieldwork in localities helps social historians understand history from the perspective of everyday people, their practices, and community dynamics that are less visible when looking through the lens of the country's leaders or international politics.

Lastly, the Trustee Chair is pleased to announce a [new collaborative project](#) funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, "Made in America: Unpacking the Drivers and Impacts of Domestic Clean Energy Manufacturing." In partnership with several U.S. research institutions and universities, this project will examine how domestic manufacturing policies intersect with energy system decarbonization, supply chain resilience, and the achievement of climate goals.

Featured Analysis

The Slow Tech Dragon: Is It Here To Stay?

Video Explainer, December 12, 2025

[Watch Here](#)



In this presentation, **Scott Kennedy** shares insights from his research as well as his recent trip to China to explain why China's economy is best described as a "slow tech dragon" and why it is likely to remain one for the foreseeable future. Although China's leadership has signaled that it recognizes the economy has significant challenges, including "involution" and insufficient domestic demand, he found that many economists and businesspeople are skeptical that the country's economic policies will effectively tackle these problems.

Why the Rest of the World Is Buying Chinese EVs

Shift Key with Robinson Meyer and Jesse Jenkins Podcast, December 10, 2025

[Listen Here](#)

SHIFT KEY

Robinson Meyer & Jesse Jenkins



On this week's episode of Shift Key, Robinson Meyer talks to **Ilaria Mazzocco** about her new report on how six countries around the world are dealing with the rise of Chinese EVs. Why do countries welcome Chinese-made EVs, and why do countries resist them? How do domestic carmakers act when Chinese EVs come to town? And are climate concerns still driving uptake?

Events

Governing by Numbers: Understanding China's Exam-Centric Education System
November 24, 2025

[Watch Here](#)

Scott Kennedy hosted a virtual event with **Ruixue Jia** (UC San Diego) and **Hongbin Li** (Stanford University) alongside a panel of experts to discuss their new book, "The Highest Exam: How the Gaokao Shapes China," on China's exam-centric education system and its effects on society.

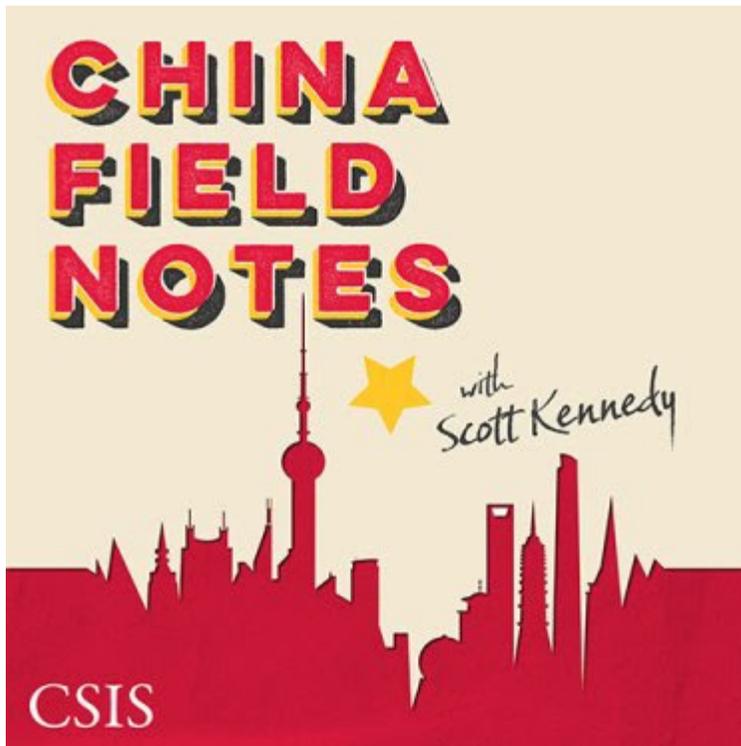
Big Data China

BIG DATA CHINA

[Visit Our Microsite](#)

Big Data China bridges the gap between cutting-edge quantitative academic research and the Washington policy community. Interactive features and analysis from Big Data China on topics such as significant shifts in popular sentiment in China regarding the causes of economic inequality, China's post-Reform Era trajectory, and the expansion of Chinese state sector influence over private firms are all available on our microsite [here](#).

China Field Notes Podcast



[Subscribe](#)

Catch up on the current episodes of our podcast *China Field Notes with Scott Kennedy*. Understanding China has become more difficult than ever, yet also more important than ever. Hardening geopolitics has made travel to China more difficult, but not impossible. In this podcast, Scott Kennedy offers an on-the-ground look at China, featuring insights from those shaping the country and scholars studying it firsthand.

History from Below: Harvard's Michael Szonyi on Fieldwork, History, and U.S.-China Relations

December 11, 2025

[Listen Here](#)

In this episode of China Field Notes, **Scott Kennedy** speaks with historian **Michael Szonyi** about why fieldwork matters to social historians and trends in U.S.-China relations. Szonyi unpacks the concept of “history from below” and how doing fieldwork in localities helps social historians understand history from the perspective of everyday people, their practices, and community dynamics that are less visible when looking through the lens of the country’s leaders or international politics. Drawing on years of research in places such as Quemoy and Yongtai (Fujian), he describes how local records, such as land deeds and genealogies, complicate familiar national narratives and reveal how ordinary communities experienced major political and geopolitical shifts. Kennedy and Szonyi conclude by discussing the role of historians as public intellectuals, the risks of scholarly decoupling, and why first-hand knowledge of China remains essential for navigating the future of U.S.-China relations.

In The News

[China’s Economy: Rightsizing 2025, Looking Ahead to 2026](#)

Rhodium Group, December 22, 2025

In this report, **Daniel Rosen**, **Logan Wright**, **Oliver Melton**, and **Jeremy Smith** examine China’s economic growth in 2025, finding that actual GDP growth fell short of 3 percent, and explain that for domestic demand to lift China above 2 percent GDP growth in 2026, Beijing must reverse the systemic causes of household and business malaise or pile on costly demand subsidies. [Read here.](#)

[Malign Indifference: China’s Currency and the Threat to Europe](#)

Rhodium Group, December 18, 2025

In this report, **Camille Boullenois**, **Gregor Sebastian**, and **Logan Wright** explain why China’s real exchange rate is likely to continue falling over the next two to three years, eroding the effectiveness of the EU’s trade defense and economic security toolbox. [Read here.](#)

[European Union rethinks EV mandate](#)

The World, December 16, 2025

The European Union’s ambitious plans to pivot to electric vehicles may be unraveling. Brussels has announced it will backtrack on its 2035 combustion engine ban, and allow carmakers to continue producing a small number of petrol and diesel vehicles. **Iaria Mazzocco**, a senior fellow focusing on energy and sustainability at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), talks with Host Carolyn Beeler about the decision and the future of the global EV market. [Listen here.](#)

[China leads research in 90% of crucial technologies — a dramatic shift this century](#)

Nature, December 12, 2025

“China has made incredible progress on science and technology that is reflected in research and development, as well as in publications,” says **Iaria Mazzocco**, who researches China’s industrial policy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a non-profit research organization based in Washington DC. [Read here.](#)

France to Receive New Pandas from China After Macron-Xi Meeting

Bloomberg, December 5, 2025

Europe is wrestling with how to handle Chinese investment more broadly. Governments want the economic benefits but also worry about strategic dependencies and uneven gains. Countries fear missing out if they don't compete for Chinese investment, even as they share concerns about the risks, said **Ilaria Mazzocco**, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "It's a bit of a prisoner's dilemma," she said. [Read here.](#)

Trustee Chair in Chinese Business & Economics

Scott Kennedy, *Senior Adviser and Trustee Chair in Chinese Business & Economics*

Ilaria Mazzocco, *Deputy Director and Senior Fellow*

Ryan Featherston, *Associate Fellow*

Isabella McCallum, *Program Manager*

Andy Yang, *Intern*

Qingfeng Yu, *Intern*

Jeannette L. Chu, *Senior Associate (Non-resident)*

Michael Davidson, *Senior Associate (Non-resident)*

John L. Holden, *Senior Associate (Non-resident)*

Margaret Jackson, *Senior Associate (Non-resident)*

Claire Reade, *Senior Associate (Non-resident)*

Daniel H. Rosen, *Senior Associate (Non-resident)*

Deborah Seligsohn, *Senior Associate (Non-resident)*

Logan Wright, *Senior Associate (Non-resident)*



Copyright © 2025 CSIS, All rights reserved.

You expressed an interest in CSIS's work.

Our mailing address is:

Center for Strategic & International Studies

1616 Rhode Island Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20036

Email us at cbe@csis.org

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can update your preferences or unsubscribe from all CSIS emails.