

CSIS

CHINESE BUSINESS & ECONOMICS



Newsletter

May 2026

This month, Trustee Chair Scott Kennedy weighed in at several points before and after the Trump-Xi summit in Beijing, including: a **CSIS Commentary** about why China feels remarkably more confident compared to the first summit in 2017, a **Foreign Policy feature** that argues China came out ahead in the summit. He also joined the Economic Security and Technology Department's **debut installment** of its *EST Rapid Roundup* series, a **special live edition** of CSIS's *State of Play* podcast, and an **episode** of the Asia Society Policy Institute's *China's DeepSeek Moment* series.

Looking beyond the summit, intern Antonio Tintoré Vicent also published a **blog post** on Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez's visit to China in April. This visit, along with Sánchez's other frequent trips to China, points to a soft power pivot toward Beijing. However, Tintoré Vicent argues that Spain's bilateral engagement with China is unlikely to rebalance trade or secure meaningful technology transfer without a broader EU-level framework rooted in trade defense and industrial policy conditionality.

Finally, Senior Fellow and Deputy Director Ilaria Mazzocco is on leave through mid-August.

Featured Analysis

Xi Ascendant

[Read Here](#)



In this commentary, **Scott Kennedy** argues that the recent Trump-Xi summit largely benefited China, allowing Beijing to consolidate its leverage while the United States left with few meaningful gains. Despite China's domestic economic challenges, Beijing has managed the bilateral relationship effectively and is likely to retain the upper hand unless the Trump administration pursues a major reset.

A Confident Beijing Welcomes President Trump

Commentary, May 11, 2026

[Read Here](#)



In this commentary, **Scott Kennedy** lays out how China's leaders are approaching the upcoming Trump-Xi summit, and why China feels remarkably more confident compared to the first such summit in 2017.

Spain's China Bet: Engagement in Search of a European Framework

Blog Post, May 7, 2026

[Read Here](#)



In this Trustee China Hand blog post, intern **Antonio Tintoré Vicent** analyzes Spain's approach to bilateral diplomacy with China, and what it means for the EU's pursuit of strategic autonomy.

Events

EST Rapid Roundup: Unpacking the Trump-Xi Summit Pt.1 - Trade and Investment

CSIS Event, May 20, 2026

[Watch Here](#)

In this online event, **Scott Kennedy** and leading experts from CSIS's Economic Security and Technology Department break down the recent Trump-Xi summit: what both sides expected, where tariffs and export controls stand today, and what frameworks could define the road ahead for U.S.-China trade and investment.

What Did the Trump-Xi Summit Achieve?

CSIS Event, May 11, 2026

[Watch Here](#)

In this special live episode of *State of Play*, host **Will Todman** welcomed **Scott Kennedy** and a panel of CSIS experts to discuss how successful the summit was, how key global actors are likely to react, and what this all means for the future of U.S.-China relations.

Are Export Controls Working? Field Notes from China's AI Frontlines

China's DeepSeek Moment, May 8, 2026

[Watch Here](#)

In this episode of China's DeepSeek Moment series from the Asia Society Policy Institute's Center for China Analysis (CCA), guests **Scott Kennedy** (CSIS) and **Paul Triolo** (DGA) join host **Lizzi C. Lee** to examine how export controls are reshaping China's semiconductor and AI industries, drawing on fresh, on-the-ground insights from recent study trips across Beijing, Shanghai, and Silicon Valley. The discussion explores how U.S. restrictions are shaping Beijing's industrial policy, Chinese AI firms' strategies, and the broader innovation ecosystem — its strengths and weaknesses, choke points, and emerging sources of leverage — and whether these measures are working as intended.

Press Briefing: Previewing the Trump-Xi Summit

Press Briefing, May 7, 2026

[Read Here](#)

In this virtual briefing, **Scott Kennedy** joined a panel of CSIS experts to preview the anticipated Trump-Xi summit in Beijing.

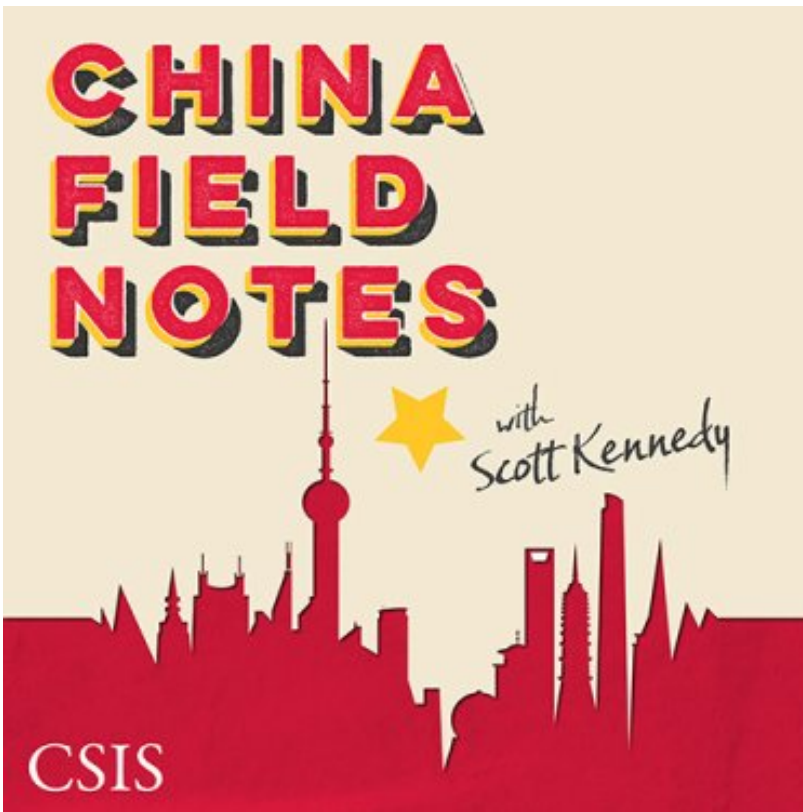
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China Field Notes Podcast



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.

In The News

Key highlights from Trump's first full day in China for Xi Jinping summit

CBS News, May 14, 2026

Scott Kennedy joins CBS News' Weijia Jiang, Ramy Inocencio and Tony Dokoupil to discuss President Trump's first full day in China during his meeting with Xi Jinping. [Watch here.](#)

Trump-Xi summit: Analyst Scott Kennedy on reset of US-China ties

Channel NewsAsia, May 14, 2026

The US and China have hailed a new era of ties, amid discussions on thorny issues like trade and Taiwan. Presidents Donald Trump and Xi Jinping wrapped up the first day of a historic summit with a lavish state banquet and a reciprocal invitation to the White House in September. **Scott Kennedy**, senior adviser and trustee chair in Chinese Business and Economics at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, shared more about the first day of the historic summit. [Watch here.](#)

Tense Taiwan warnings at Trump-Xi meeting

CBS News, May 14, 2026

Scott Kennedy joins CBS News' Anna Coren and Ramy Inocencio to discuss Chinese state media summaries highlighting apparent comments about Taiwan during the Trump-Xi meeting. [Watch here.](#)

The U.S. and China's 'mutually assured disruption' and why China wants trade stability

WBUR, May 13, 2026

In this *Here & Now* segment, host Scott Tong looks ahead at the summit with **Scott Kennedy**, who is senior adviser and trustee chair in Chinese business and economics at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. [Listen here.](#)

China's \$3 Billion US Clean Tech Exit Is an Investment Warning

Bloomberg, May 13, 2026

"The policy environment is getting more restrictive," said **Margaret Jackson**, a senior associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and previously a senior counselor for policy at US Department of Commerce during Biden's tenure. [Read here.](#)

What to expect from Trump and Xi Jinping's summit in China

Marketplace, May 13, 2026

Scott Kennedy joins Marketplace to discuss outcomes of the Trump-Xi summit. [Listen here.](#)

Iran war remains major concern as Trump visits Xi in China

Fox News, May 13, 2026

We are watching this week as President Donald Trump arrives in Beijing for a highly anticipated set of meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Xi and Trump's meeting is shaping Beijing's approach to the Iran conflict. Trump's trip to China has been planned for months and only recently has conflict surrounding Iran and the Middle East began to take center stage. This comes as Trump has recently pressured Beijing and other world leaders to use their military force to protect the Strait of Hormuz. LiveNOW's Andy Mac is learning more about the upcoming talks with **Scott Kennedy**, a senior adviser and trustee chair in Chinese Business and Economics at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). [Watch here.](#)

Wary mood to mark Xi-Trump summit with irritants aplenty on both sides: analysts

South China Morning Post, May 13, 2026

Scott Kennedy, senior adviser with the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), said that both sides had been "picking up some chits which they might be able to negotiate on during the meeting". [Read here.](#)

China enters the Trump-Xi summit with greater leverage than it had in 2017: CSIS

CNBC, May 13, 2026

Scott Kennedy from the Center for Strategic and International Studies says China is now in a much stronger position heading into talks with the U.S., driven by gains in technology and R&D spending. Still, he notes the country continues to struggle with debt, property sector weakness and softer employment conditions. [Watch here.](#)

With tariffs stalled, Trump's China policy drifts

America at Night with McGraw Milhaven, May 13, 2026

Scott Kennedy shares his thoughts on Trump's China trip on this episode of America at Night with McGraw Milhaven. [Listen here.](#)

Xi warns Trump: Mishandling Taiwan will put U.S.-China relationship in 'great jeopardy'

CNBC, May 13, 2026

“China comes into this meeting far more confident than in 2017, when it feared even a small rise in U.S. tariffs. In the last year, Xi has been able to push back and neutralize much of Trump’s actions,” said **Scott Kennedy**, senior adviser and trustee chair in Chinese Business and Economics at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. [Read here.](#)

Trump set to meet with Xi in Beijing as war and inflation weigh on his presidency

The Economic Times, May 13, 2026

Despite Trump's outward confidence, China appears to be entering the meeting from "a much stronger place," said **Scott Kennedy**, a senior adviser on Chinese business and economics at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank. [Read here.](#)

Trump heads to Beijing amid war, trade tensions and hardened rivalry

The Straits Times, May 12, 2026

Scott Kennedy, senior adviser and trustee chair in Chinese business and economics at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the US will have “five Bs” on its agenda: Boeing, beef, beans, the Board of Trade, and the Board of Investment. [Read here.](#)

Trump arrives in Beijing for talks with China's Xi on Iran war, trade and US arms sales to Taiwan

ABC News, May 12, 2026

Despite Trump’s outward confidence, China appears to be entering the meeting from “a much stronger place,” said **Scott Kennedy**, a senior adviser on Chinese business and economics at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank. [Read here.](#)

Trump’s approach on China has changed, now appears focused on getting along

The Washington Post, May 12, 2026

“The entire conversation about fairness is disappearing because, one, not only do they think they wouldn’t get the Chinese to budge on these issues, but even more so because the U.S. has decided that it will itself intervene heavily in the American economy,” said **Scott Kennedy**, senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. [Read here.](#)

Trump to meet Xi in Beijing as China steps up role in Iran diplomacy

News4Jax, May 11, 2026

Scott Kennedy, senior adviser and trustee chair in Chinese Business and

Economics at the Center for Strategic and International Studies joined News4Jax anchor Bruce Hamilton on The Morning Show to discuss the implications of the Trump-Xi meeting. [Watch here.](#)

Stung by Iran war, Trump heads to China in need of wins

Reuters, May 11, 2026

That leaves the main outcome likely to be "a superficial ceasefire that is largely to China's advantage," said **Scott Kennedy** of the Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank in Washington. [Read here.](#)

Fears of an AI breakthrough force the U.S. and China to talk

Los Angeles Times, May 11, 2026

"The Chinese believe there is no single race, but multiple races," said **Scott Kennedy**, senior advisor on Chinese business and economics at the Center for Strategic & International Studies. "The U.S. is focused on achieving AGI, while China is focused on diffusion and applications of AI into the rest of their economy — manufacturing, humanoid robotics, all aspects of the internet of things." [Read here.](#)

Iran focus at Trump-Xi summit may delay progress on tariffs, rare earths

CNBC, May 7, 2026

And some progress may still be made. Trump is expected to notch deals on Chinese purchases of U.S. soybeans and Boeing airplanes, according to **Scott Kennedy**, senior advisor and trustee chair in Chinese business and economics at the U.S.-based Center for Strategic and International Studies. [Read here.](#)

Trustee Chair in Chinese Business & Economics

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

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