

2025: A Year of Impact, Insight and Momentum

In 2025, the 21st Century China Center strengthened its role as a national leader in research, policy engagement and public education on China and U.S.-China relations. With support from our community and donors, we delivered robust and ambitious programming, from policy discussions in Washington and La Jolla to new research initiatives and expanded student opportunities.



In November, Victor Shih and Lei Guang visited four universities in China and met with potential partners to build fieldwork and exchange programs. Their conversations underscored a simple truth: To understand China today, our students need to be on the ground – in its cities and villages, classrooms and factories, think tanks and government offices. We are committed to making China research and study more accessible for our students and scholars.

Policy Convening and Research

Our policy work brought the center to the heart of national debates. The [Task Force on U.S.-China Policy](#), co-chaired by



The center's programs rely upon philanthropic support.

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the center's emeritus director, Susan Shirk, released a [policy memo](#) for the incoming administration and convened two working groups on allies and partners and the regulation of FDI from China. We also convened the most important voices shaping America's China strategy through our two major [China Forums](#): one in Washington, D.C., with the Council on Foreign Relations' China Strategy Initiative, and the other in La Jolla.



The gatherings drew record attendance and featured senior members of the new Trump administration's national security team; Senator Andy Kim; national security veterans Jake Sullivan and Stephen Hadley; and Lael Brainard, the former vice chair of the Federal Reserve and director of the National Economic Council.

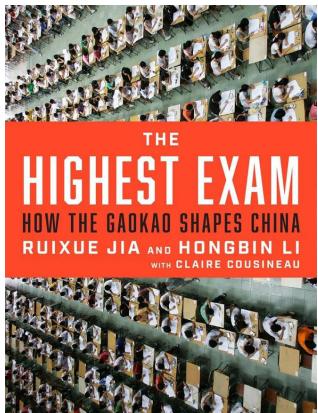
For the first time, we also brought together leading China research and policy centers across the U.S. for a special strategy session in January to map knowledge gaps and strengthen collective impact.

The center advanced policy research on multiple fronts. Michael Davidson continued our U.S.-China Climate Dialogue series; Peter Cowhey launched a Task Force working group on

China's investment in the United States; and our collaboration with the IGCC produced the [China Policy Document Navigator](#).

Across the year, the center released seven major [policy analyses](#), which reached thousands of readers and reinforced our commitment to nonpartisan, actionable policy guidance.

Academic Research

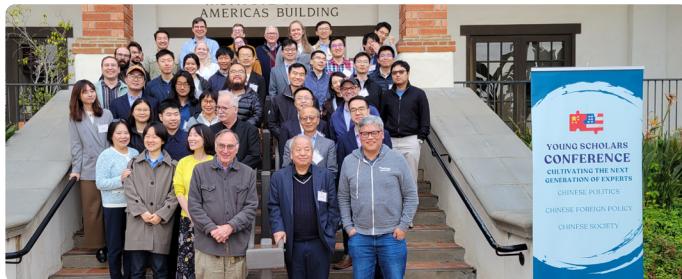


Our scholarly output reflected the same momentum. The center's researchers published more than 18 academic papers, including Victor Shih's work on the political logic of repression. Ruixue Jia's book on China's *gaokao*, ["The Highest Exam"](#), was released to critical acclaim.

To bring our scholars' work to the public, we produced [data visualizations](#) on tariffs, supply chains and economic trends,

and we distributed 11 issues of [China 360°](#), our signature analysis digest. With four new surveys, the China Data Lab continued to illuminate the views held by ordinary Chinese on the ground.

The center also grew as a hub of intellectual exchange. Together with the Fudan-UC Center, we hosted 15 [research](#)



[workshops](#) and five major academic conferences. Additionally, history and social scientific methods were covered in our [Young Scholars Conference](#). We celebrated two postdoctoral fellows who accepted academic positions, and we welcomed a new postdoc.

Outreach

Our public programs engaged audiences across the country and around the world. In 2025, we organized 19 [public lectures](#), which drew thousands of in-person participants and hundreds of thousands of online viewers. We also hosted five Chinese-language cultural salons that strengthened community ties across San Diego.

Highlights included the [Susan Shirk Lecture](#), delivered by Lael Brainard during the UC San Diego China Forum, and the

[Bob Ellsworth Lecture](#), delivered by Sarah Beran. We were also proud to welcome Sarah Beran and Rick Waters as senior fellows, deepening our practitioner-scholar connection.



Exchange

The center's global footprint continued to widen. Fourteen [visiting scholars](#) from top universities across China, Europe and Canada enriched our academic community, shared new research and launched fresh collaborations. Our digital programming expanded as well, making lectures and forums more accessible to public audiences.

Student Engagement

Students remained an important part of our work. This year we funded 11 summer research projects, supported an average of 17 research assistants each quarter and awarded fellowships that will shape the next generation of China scholars and practitioners.

A screenshot of the China Focus website. The header includes the 'CHINA FOCUS' logo, a search bar, and navigation links for 'HOME', 'SUBMIT', 'BLOG TOPICS', 'ABOUT', and 'ESSAY CONTEST'. Below the header, a section titled 'LATEST ARTICLES' displays five news items with images and titles. The articles are: 'China's Green Belt and Road Initiative: From Classical to Modern Silk Road' (September 6, 2025), 'The Jimmy Carter Prize Runner-Ups - Trump vs. Biden in the U.S.-China Trade War' (September 2, 2025), 'Strategic Competition on Tracks: Railway Infrastructure and Regional Influence in Southeast Asia' (October 15, 2025), 'The 1990 Institute Prize Runner-Ups - Mexico in the Middle: Trump vs. Biden's Front Line in the U.S.-China Contest' (August 24, 2025), and 'The 1990 Institute Prize Runner-Ups - On Drones and Deterrence: Comparing Distinct Outcomes of Made in China 2025 through a Comparison of UAV and Passenger Aircraft Industries' (August 21, 2025).

China Focus, a student-run, online international affairs magazine, has a new, energetic editorial team that is ready to launch a new podcast series, in addition to their work of publishing articles featuring young voices.

A Final Word

None of this progress would have been possible without the vision and generosity of our supporters. You fueled our research, amplified our policy impact, and opened doors for young scholars who will shape the future of U.S.-China relations. As we move toward an even more ambitious 2026, we warmly invite you to stay engaged, stay curious and continue the journey with us.