
RUNNING A PRIVATE THINK TANK IN CHINA

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01/22/2019

Last week on the “Behind the Markets” podcast, Jeremy Schwartz and Liqian Ren spoke with Dingding Chen, professor of International Relations and associate dean of the Institute for 21st Century Silk Road Studies at Jinan University, in Guangzhou, China. He is also the founding director of Intellisla Institute, a newly established independent think tank focused on international affairs in China. In our conversation, Chen explained how he formed his prediction on President Trump’s win from China and his experience in running a private think tank.

Chen mentioned that while both were students at the University of Chicago, he and Liqian Ren, WisdomTree’s Director of Modern Alpha, led the student organization COSA, which promotes mutual understanding of China and the U.S. through academic research. It was the initial seed that inspired him to fund his own private think tank after he returned to China to teach. The think tank name, Intellisla, is inspired by a book title from 1800s by Chinese author Wei Yuan, who wrote about Western technology, geography and history to increase Chinese understanding of the outside world.’

Chen said that China and the U.S. will settle on a trade war deal in 2019 with domestic politics bolstering both leaders’ willingness to act, and he agreed that small-scale trade disputes will continue. He said that companies with substantial operations in China are still mostly assessing whether or not to diversify from China on a large scale. Ren mentioned that Chinese tax reform and how ordinary Chinese citizens welcome some aspects of a trade war have been under-reported in Western media.

Chen recently translated the Chinese edition of Graham Allison’s book *Destined for War* and mentioned that he had deep discussions with Graham on history and the present. He said that Graham’s next book was likely to offer ways for the U.S. and China to avoid the Thucydides trap.

Please listen to our full conversation with Dingding Chen below.

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