
AI translation · View original & related papers at
chinaxiv.org/items/chinaxiv-201710.00037

Operational Mechanisms and Development Trends of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) [Postprint]

Authors: Qin Xiaoyan

Date: 2017-10-27T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

Abstract: [Purpose/Significance] This study provides reference for the theory and practice of constructing new types of think tanks with Chinese characteristics through interpreting and analyzing the development philosophy, management model, operational mechanism, and influence network of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). [Method/Process] Adopting literature research and case study methodology, this paper investigates the operational characteristics, development trends, status, and influence of the IISS by collecting data and materials from its official website, referencing the Institute's annual reports, and citing authoritative international think tank ranking reports. [Results/Conclusion] After 60 years of development, the IISS has become a world-leading think tank in the fields of international politics and military conflict. Its clear development philosophy, well-established management model and operational mechanism, and robust influence network serve as an important reference for China in building new types of international strategic think tanks.

Full Text

The Operational Mechanism and Development Trends of the International Institute for Strategic Studies

Qin Xiaoyan^{1,2,3}

¹ National Science Library, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing 100190, China

² University of Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing 100049, China

³ Library of Beihang University, Beijing 100191, China

Abstract

[Objective/Significance] By interpreting and analyzing the development philosophy, management model, operational mechanism, and influence network of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), this study provides reference for the theoretical and practical construction of new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics. **[Methodology/Process]** Using literature research and case study methods, this paper examines the operational characteristics, development trends, status, and influence of IISS by collecting data and materials from its official website, referencing its annual reports, and citing authoritative international think tank ranking reports. **[Results/Conclusion]** After 60 years of development, IISS has become a world-leading think tank in international politics and military conflict. Its clear development philosophy, sound management model and operational mechanism, and powerful influence network offer important reference value for China in building new-type international strategic think tanks.

Keywords: International Institute for Strategic Studies; think tank; operational mechanism; influence

Classification Number: C932

The great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is the grand goal proposed at the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. Error! Reference source not found. How to address international political and military issues encountered during development under the global trend of “peace, development, cooperation, and win-win” is a challenge that China’s national rejuvenation must confront. “Strengthening the construction of new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics and establishing a sound decision-making consultation system” represents important guarantees for solving this problem in the new era [1]. Currently, China has numerous think tank institutions with varying quality levels. Think tanks specializing in international politics and strategy lag somewhat in serving decision-making, and their systems and mechanisms cannot well adapt to the demands of modern decision-making, nor can they effectively aggregate more high-end talent. Error! Reference source not found. Strengthening the construction of new-type international strategic think tanks with Chinese characteristics and enhancing ideological and decision-making capacity in national security and military fields has become a pressing priority. Building new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics requires a global vision and theoretical foundation, as well as drawing on beneficial experiences from outstanding foreign think tanks. This paper selects the influential International Institute for Strategic Studies in the field of international political and military research as its case study. Through in-depth analysis of its development overview, management model, operational mechanism, and influence network, this study provides reference for the construction and development of China’s international strategic think tanks.

1.1 Basic Overview

The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) is an authoritative institution in international politics and military conflict research, renowned for its outstanding achievements in global security, political risk, and military conflict issues, and often referred to as the “World Strategic Think Tank.” Founded in 1958 by British figures from academia, politics, religion, and journalism, it is an independent, non-profit organization. Error! Reference source not found. Headquartered in London, UK, it maintains offices in Washington, Singapore, and Manama, Bahrain, with members spanning over 80 countries worldwide. The scholars and experts cultivated by IISS are recognized as leaders in international relations research, laying a solid foundation for IISS’ s position as a world-leading strategic think tank.

In the late 1950s, the international situation underwent major changes with escalating crises and conflicts. As Western European countries’ economic strength continued to grow, they increasingly faced threats from Soviet nuclear capabilities. Some visionaries strongly realized that Western Europe should also assume greater responsibility for its own security and urgently needed to work with American scholars to study strategic issues in response to Soviet military threats. Error! Reference source not found. Against this backdrop, British military historian Michael Howard, former Labour MP and Defense Minister Denis Healey, and journalist Alastair Buchan jointly established this research and consulting institution in 1958, initially called the Brighton Association. Error! Reference source not found. At that time, the international community was shrouded in the shadow of nuclear weapons, and how to address the risks posed by nuclear competition during the Cold War became its most urgent concern, as evident from the naming of IISS’ s first flagship publication *Survival*. Error! Reference source not found. In 1964, the association underwent restructuring. With a grant from the Ford Foundation, it was formally established as an institute, continuously strengthening its organization by recruiting large numbers of foreign members and inviting internationally renowned scholars, military authorities, and government officials. It transformed from a British scholar-dominated civil research group into an international research institution and was officially renamed the “International Institute for Strategic Studies” in 1971. As IISS’ s international reputation grew, the institute’ s scale and activities expanded globally. In 1997, its office relocated to Arundel House in the heart of London, and it subsequently established offices in Washington, Singapore, and Manama, Bahrain. This transnational composition and global influence have endowed IISS with unique capabilities to actively shape international relations.

Undoubtedly, the role of “force” and “threat of force” in international relations has always been IISS’ s research focus. However, as the international situation evolves and “types of conflict” change with each passing day, IISS has gradually expanded its research scope on strategic issues from a single military dimension to political, economic, and social aspects, including factors that may lead to instability or conditions that promote further international cooperation. Its

geographical research scope has expanded from the NATO region to the Middle East, Africa, and other global hotspots, while consistently maintaining military strategy as its research specialty, particularly focusing on military thought and defense policy. Its membership has also grown from being primarily European and American to including more participants from Asia and other regions. IISS's early series of survey reports on nuclear weapons issues have exerted considerable influence on international strategy and military control policies. Today, it is better known for its annual military balance assessments of national armed forces and its high-level security summits, with influence and reach extending far beyond the UK and even Europe to become an important think tank worldwide.

1.3 Development Goals

In its mission statement and vision statement, IISS explicitly states that the institute aims to “promote sound policies to further global peace and security and maintain civilized international relations.” Error! Reference source not found. To achieve this development goal, IISS has gradually formed core values of “independence, excellence, objectivity, internationalization, innovation, intellectual freedom, and respect” throughout its years of operation and development. These values further clarify the goals and priorities for the institute and its partners: 1) Track important international military and political conflicts throughout their entire process. Through numerous publications and over a hundred academic activities annually, provide IISS members and the general public with the best objective information on military and political developments; 2) Serve decision-making. Through in-depth analysis of relevant issues, provide policy recommendations to governments and other strategic actors on measures to promote and maintain international peace and security; 3) Multi-level and comprehensive information exchange. Political, military, technical, commercial, economic, environmental, social, religious, and other factors profoundly influence the emergence, development, and consequences of military conflicts. Therefore, it is necessary to regularly or irregularly convene government ministers, officials, international researchers, business people, and journalists in various forms for multi-field communication. By continuously maintaining, nurturing, and expanding international networks, IISS ensures effective information dissemination and enhances its influence, enabling the general public, enterprises, governments, and other institutions to better understand the institute's work and activities and participate more in public affairs discussions, thereby striving to fulfill IISS's mission.

2.1 Management Model

IISS is both a registered charity organization and a private company limited by guarantee, managed in accordance with the memorandum and articles of association of the Companies Registry and the Charity Commission for England and Wales. Error! Reference source not found. With a sound governance system and clear definition of responsibilities and authority, its unique, standardized, and

efficient internal management mechanism serves as the fundamental guarantee for enhancing the think tank' s influence.

2.1.1 Management Structure IISS' s highest governing body is the Board of Directors, which serves as the institute' s independent and impartial guarantor, responsible for upholding institutional values, formulating comprehensive development strategies and directions, supervising the entire institution and management team' s operations, and appointing the Council Chair and Institute Director. Error! Reference source not found. The Board fulfills its responsibilities through Investment, Audit, and Remuneration Committees. The Board currently comprises 11 members, all prominent figures from political, business, academic, and other social sectors. The Board Chair is the institute' s core leader, whose personal vision and influence largely determine the think tank' s development direction and influence scope. Error! Reference source not found. The current Board Chair, Ms. Fleur de Villiers, possesses profound expertise and rich strategic experience in international public affairs research. Error! Reference source not found.

IISS also has a Council that serves as the institute' s advisory body, composed of distinguished individuals from IISS' s international membership. Its main functions include providing policy advice to the IISS Board and Director, scientifically evaluating the institute' s products through annual reports, and communicating the institute' s ideas and perspectives at the highest domestic and international levels. This professional advisory group reflects specialization and internationalization characteristics. The Council currently consists of 24 members, including government officials, university professors, and corporate presidents, serving three-year terms with a maximum of two consecutive terms. Error! Reference source not found. The current Council Chair, Mr. François Heisbourg, is an expert in international relations and strategic affairs who served as IISS President from 1987-1992. Error! Reference source not found.

The President' s Office is the institute' s executive management department, fully responsible for daily management and operations, determining IISS' s strategic planning, planning fundraising activities, and maintaining high-level contacts with governments, private sectors, and international commentators worldwide. The current President and Chief Executive Officer (i.e., Institute Director) is Dr. John Chipman, who planned and established IISS' s two renowned regional security dialogue mechanisms. The President' s Office includes one Office Director and one Special Projects Manager, who assist and support the President in connecting with various IISS departments and external networks. Error! Reference source not found.

2.1.2 Organizational Structure Under the overall management of the Institute Director, IISS mainly has two types of departments: academic research and support services. Academic research constitutes the core of the institute. According to overall development goals and strategic planning, project groups

are established based on themes and regions, each comprising a project director and several research assistants. Support services departments are primarily responsible for internal affairs management and external liaison, including personnel recruitment, performance management, logistics support, conference and event organization, research output publication, press releases, and library knowledge information services. As shown in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper], the institute's organizational structure is highly flat and flexible, minimizing management levels to achieve full communication between decision-making and operational levels and among various operational levels. This ensures timely assignment of research tasks, accurate understanding of research objectives by researchers, and effective coordination from support departments. The institute has a lean structure with high operational and research efficiency, currently employing 145 staff members from 29 countries across its four offices in London, Singapore, Washington, and Manama. Error! Reference source not found.

2.1.3 Membership System The International Institute for Strategic Studies operates on a membership mechanism. Since its establishment in 1958, the institute has built a strong global membership network with members possessing diverse professions and expertise, including professionals from political, business, diplomatic, academic, journalism, and military circles (see Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]). Members play important roles in fundraising, topic planning, promoting policy implementation, and enhancing influence. The institute holds one annual general meeting where members from around the world discuss major strategic issues affecting future policy and the public. Error! Reference source not found.

IISS members are typically divided into two categories: individual members and corporate members, who are active contributors and participants in the institute's work and activities. Individual members refer to individuals with certain expertise in strategy, defense, or security issues and deep interest in international security. Corporate members primarily target collective organizations worldwide, including government agencies, schools, embassies, companies, research institutions, and newspapers, to establish high-level strategic partnerships with IISS. They enjoy priority participation in important IISS activities, including invitations to regularly held high-level events. These informal meetings, typically held over dinner or breakfast, provide important opportunities for senior executives and government leaders and strategists to exchange views, understand key issues, forecast strategic trends, and expand global networks. Membership fees and qualifications vary according to membership level (see Table 1) [2]. According to IISS' s 2016 annual report statistics, to date there are 2,167 individual members and 165 corporate members from over 80 countries or regions, distributed across 12 sectors as shown in Figure 2.

2.2 Funding Acquisition and Management

Adequate funding is the fundamental guarantee for a think tank's normal operation and development. As a non-profit institution, fundraising is one of the think tank's most important tasks, and it must strive for diversified funding sources, which is the basis for ensuring research independence and impartiality of results. Error! Reference source not found. IISS supports its research and business operations by continuously broadening and deepening funding sources. Each fiscal year, it publishes its main income from relevant governments, companies, foundations, and individuals on its official website. According to the financial data in IISS' s 2016 annual report, total income in 2016 reached £17.486 million. Error! Reference source not found. The income structure is shown in Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper], demonstrating diversified income sources. Most funding comes from sponsorship by host countries of large international conferences, donations from foundations, enterprises, and groups from the US, UK, and other countries, plus publication income, membership fees, and commercial trading income. Error! Reference source not found. The institute also has strict restrictions on fund usage, resolutely adhering to principles of intellectual and political independence to ensure independent ideas and policy recommendations. All research content, conference agendas, research results, and conclusions are free from intervention by project sponsors. IISS' s transparent, credible, and effective financial system ensures the institute's effectiveness as a strategic actor in the complex international environment.

2.3.1 Research System Architecture

To maintain an international perspective and authority in its research, IISS vigorously develops international pathways. With its international headquarters in London as the core, it has successively established the IISS-Americas in Washington, IISS-Asia in Singapore, and IISS-Middle East in Manama, Bahrain. Through transnational composition and regional collaboration, IISS actively enhances its unique ability to shape international relations and provides various institutions with intelligence materials and original research on international strategy. IISS maintains close contact with government agencies worldwide and frequently invites political leaders to the institute for academic exchanges and seminars.

(1) IISS-Americas

Established in Washington in July 2001, IISS-Americas conducts research on regional security and related policy issues from its US base. Its main activities include maintaining close contact with US government departments, strategic research institutions, and business representatives; organizing high-level, valuable conferences and forums to attract high-level decision-makers to exchange views and discuss pressing international security issues; and sharing the institute's research results and expert perspectives with relevant US stakeholders to support more informed decision-making processes. IISS-Americas also serves

as an important platform for members to discuss business and conduct research. Another important responsibility is fundraising for the institute through “US Friends of the IISS” to support new and ongoing research and outreach activities, ensuring IISS remains a key force in global security. Error! Reference source not found.

(2) IISS-Asia

Established in Singapore in September 2001, IISS-Asia is responsible for the institute’s work in Asia and has strengthened IISS’ s closer relations with Asia-Pacific member countries, with nearly one-third of IISS members distributed in this region. From the institute’s perspective, as regional powers rise, the Asia-Pacific region faces enormous and complex security challenges while maintaining economic vitality and prosperity, which has become an increasingly important research focus for IISS-Asia. As a research center for Asia-Pacific programs, it has performed outstandingly in research projects and publications over the years, continuously expanding its research areas and actively establishing research projects closely related to the institute’s overall research and publication priorities. Its vision extends to strategic and security issues in other regions beyond the Asia-Pacific, including Asia-Pacific issues related to the Middle East, nuclear proliferation, maritime affairs, and energy security. Additionally, IISS-Asia bears important responsibilities in planning and convening activities such as the Asian Security Summit “Shangri-La Dialogue” and the coordinating conference “Fullerton Forum.” Error! Reference source not found.

(3) IISS-Middle East

As early as 2004, IISS hosted the high-level Middle East security conference “Manama Dialogue” in Bahrain, which later developed into the most important annual platform for defense ministers and military chiefs from Middle Eastern countries to exchange views. The renowned geoeconomic strategy summit “Bahrain Global Forum” was subsequently held. On this basis, IISS established the IISS-Middle East center in Bahrain in May 2010, providing independent, high-quality research and analysis that serves as a significant reference for foreign ministries, government agencies, academic institutions, and public thinking on geopolitical and strategic issues in Bahrain and other countries. The center also hosts the forum “Global Perspective Series,” which utilizes the authoritative analytical capabilities of IISS experts to explore the impact of global integration trends on the interests of governments, enterprises, and societies in the Gulf and Middle East regions. Error! Reference source not found.

2.3.2 Research Team and Talent Development

Talent is the core competitiveness of a think tank, and the quality of researchers determines the quality of research output. As an authoritative research institution in international security, IISS attracts and employs first-class professionals worldwide, including individuals from political, academic, media, and military circles. These include both world-class senior strategists and young analysts

with active minds. Regardless of identity or background, anyone with ideas on research topics and able to propose unique insights is absorbed into the research team. IISS' s research team reflects specialization and internationalization, with members possessing rich research experience, most having worked in research institutes or universities or served as institutional consultants, and some having extensive experience in government departments or the financial industry. The research team has three levels: 1) Directing Staff, including the Institute Director, Executive Directors of each office, and Directors of each research department; 2) Senior Staff, referring to experts with profound expertise in defense security and military strategy, such as in aerospace defense, land warfare, naval and maritime security, missile defense, and regional security; 3) Research Staff or analysts, most having joined IISS relatively recently, including recent PhD graduates. Error! Reference source not found.

The institute emphasizes personnel training and exchange. It frequently holds researcher meetings on hot topics, inviting internal and external experts to deliver keynote speeches and engage in discussions. Several internal report meetings are organized monthly, with presenters being officials, generals, renowned professors, journalists, and other qualified individuals. Researchers express their views and discuss based on their own positions and perspectives, stimulating collisions of diverse ideas. This not only helps broaden thinking but also facilitates the organic integration of research themes with the overall situation, making the institute an international club for international security researchers and attracting scholars from various countries to conduct research.

Furthermore, IISS pays great attention to cultivating young talent, establishing long-term connections with King' s College London to cultivate professional talents in international relations and defense security from the undergraduate level; Error! Reference source not found. through interdisciplinary and cross-regional internship programs, it provides young talents from relevant organizations with practical opportunities in project research, event planning, and high-level forums to enhance research and work capabilities; Error! Reference source not found. it actively conducts series of "Future Leaders" programs, such as "Southeast Asian Young Leaders Programme (SEAYLP)" and "NATO Young Professionals," convening young talents from different professional and academic backgrounds to participate in the institute' s high-level strategic affairs. Error! Reference source not found. These initiatives not only cultivate future strategic researchers and thinkers but also inject fresh blood into IISS' s research capabilities.

2.3.3 Research Areas and Priorities

IISS primarily conducts research on national defense security and conflicts in various countries, proposing and developing new strategic concepts. Its research areas have gradually expanded from the initial focus on nuclear weapons security and arms control to social, economic, environmental issues, and the political and moral impacts of the existence and use of armed forces. Currently, the institute establishes project groups around seven key research themes and five research

regions of focus [3], with specific research content detailed in Table 2 .

Table 2 The research areas and priorities of IISS

Theme/Region Name	Research Focus
Future Conflict and Cybersecurity	Studies the evolution of future conflicts and the impact of information and communication technology developments (such as robotics, autonomous systems, and artificial intelligence) on conflicts, as well as assessments of national military cyber capabilities.
Defense and Military Analysis	Analyzes global defense and security affairs, focusing on national military capabilities and security policies, reform and modernization of armed forces, impact of new technologies, defense expenditure and procurement, effects of austerity policies and rising expenditures on defense policy and acquisition, equipment design and utility trends, and defense industrial base.
Economics and Energy Security	Studies international energy strategy and geopolitics, Indo-Pacific maritime energy trade and maritime security, energy subsidy policies and macroeconomic costs in Southeast Asia, US energy independence and Middle East security, and the impact of the Ukraine crisis on European energy security.

Theme/Region Name	Research Focus
Goeconomics and Strategy	Analyzes the mutual influence between global goeconomics and geopolitics, including global economic issues and their impact on international security and diplomacy, dynamics between existing and emerging economic growth centers, shifts in consumption, production, and innovation patterns, demographic changes in developed and developing countries and their impact on national strategy, resource scarcity and competition, different responses to economic challenges, and the rise of regionalism.
Non-Proliferation and Nuclear Policy	Nuclear policy analysis has always been a core task of IISS, providing objective assessment of challenges posed by nuclear dangers and proliferation, including missile delivery systems, chemical and biological weapons, preventing nuclear terrorism, nuclear disarmament measures, and nuclear deterrence policies.
Security and Development	Focuses on insecurity factors endangering social and economic development, including insurgency, terrorism, and crime; hybrid forms of conflict, armed violence in central cities; proposes policy recommendations to reduce the impact of insecurity factors; and assesses the effectiveness of military and non-military strategies to address hybrid threats.

Theme/Region Name	Research Focus
Middle East and Gulf	Based at IISS-Middle East, analyzes strategic and political trends and crises affecting the Middle East and North Africa, focusing on regional security and conflicts, investigating the emergence of various political Islamisms, and studying the ideologies, contexts, and political and security factors of Sunni and Shia Islam.
Russia and Eurasia	Based at IISS-Americas, studies post-Soviet political, political-economic, and international relations issues in Russia and other Eurasian countries, including the impact of the Ukraine crisis on the future development of Russian foreign, security, and domestic policies.
South Asia	Researches South Asian regional security issues, publishes policy analysis and assessments, convenes senior officials from Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan to study relevant issues, promotes counter-terrorism cooperation, seeks stability in nuclear weapons theory and policy, and assesses India' s regional diplomatic and security policy objectives and impacts.
US Foreign Policy and Transatlantic Affairs	Explores the impact of changes in economic and military strength on US global status and analyzes US policy objectives toward allies and competitors.

Analysis shows that IISS' s research system presents the following characteristics: 1) Research themes are distinctive and keep pace with the times. Whether focusing on policy research or regional security analysis, the core is solving urgent problems in defense security. Based on “non-proliferation and nuclear policy” research, it timely adjusts research programs and derives emerging re-

search themes as the international situation develops, such as the impact of geostrategy on the nature of future armed conflicts, cyber information security, and economic and energy security. 2) Research programs established by region clearly define research issues in international political relations and defense security. With four core regional offices serving as research centers, active engagement and close relationships are established with government groups, research institutions, and universities in local and neighboring countries. This facilitates understanding actual conditions, obtaining first-hand materials, exploring different strategic cultures and their policy impacts, and provides a foundation for expanding the regional membership network and offering academic exchange opportunities for researchers. 3) Thematic and regional programs are organically combined, closely linked, and complementary, leveraging respective strengths. For example, many Asia-Pacific research programs are effectively organized by IISS-Asia, drawing on expertise from IISS researchers worldwide and working closely with South Asia, Economics and Energy Security, Non-Proliferation and Nuclear Policy, and Defense and Military Analysis project groups. IISS-Middle East also collaborates closely with other offices on thematic research such as Iran's nuclear program and the Arab Spring.

3 Institutional Influence Network

Think tanks do not possess “power” but rather “influence.” Any think tank attaches great importance to enhancing institutional influence to strengthen society's sense of identity with and trust in its mission. IISS is no exception. It builds influence networks through multiple channels, raises public awareness, and achieves its development goal of “promoting sound policies to further global peace and security.”

3.1 Status and Influence

IISS holds important status and considerable influence in Europe and globally, consistently demonstrating excellence in the think tank field worldwide in recent years. Table 3 reflects IISS's ranking in the *2016 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report* and changes compared to 2015 [4]. In the ranking of top think tanks outside the US, IISS steadily ranks 4th, and has risen to 7th among top Western European think tanks. In rankings of top think tanks by research area, IISS ranks among the top three, making it a first-class think tank in defense and national security, and it also holds considerable influence in foreign policy and international affairs. Among think tanks with special achievements, IISS has made remarkable progress and outstanding achievements in institutional cooperation and independent operation.

Table 3 The ranking of the IISS in 2016 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report

Category	IISS Ranking	Change from 2015	Top 3 in Category
Top Think Tanks Worldwide	13	-	Brookings Institution (US), Chatham House (UK), French Institute of International Relations
Top Think Tanks Outside the US	4	-	Chatham House (UK), French Institute of International Relations, Bruegel (Belgium)
Top Think Tanks in Western Europe	7	↑	Chatham House (UK), French Institute of International Relations, Bruegel (Belgium)
Top Defense and National Security Think Tanks	3	↑	Center for Strategic and International Studies (US), RAND Corporation (US), IISS
Top Foreign Policy and International Affairs Think Tanks	13	↑	Brookings Institution (US), Chatham House (UK), French Institute of International Relations
Best Think Tank Network (2+ institutions)	2	↑	Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (US)
Best Managed Think Tank	29	-	Bruegel (Belgium), Brookings Institution (US), Fundação Getulio Vargas (Brazil)

Category	ISS Ranking	Change from 2015	Top 3 in Category
Best Think Tank for Social Media and Internet Use	13	↑	Amnesty International (UK), Brookings Institution (US), Center for Strategic and International Studies (US)
Best External Relations/Public Engagement Program	13	↑	Center for Strategic and International Studies (US), Amnesty International (UK), Brookings Institution (US)
Best Use of Media (Electronic Version)	13	↑	Amnesty International (UK), Center for American Progress (US), Heritage Foundation (US)
Think Tank with Most Significant Impact on Public Policy	13	↑	Center for Strategic and International Studies (US), Chatham House (UK), Brookings Institution (US)
Best Policy-Oriented Research Projects	13	↑	Brookings Institution (US), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (US), Council on Foreign Relations (US)
Best Independent Think Tank	13	↑	RAND Corporation (US), Chatham House (UK), Brookings Institution (US)

Category	IISS Ranking	Change from 2015	Top 3 in Category
Best Think Tank with Outstanding Policy-Oriented Research Programs	13	↑	Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (US), Adam Smith Institute (UK), Brookings Institution (US)

3.2.1 Promotion of High-Quality Research Output

IISS has always regarded high-quality research output as the foundation of its survival and development, recruiting first-class research talent and continuously improving research quality to further expand its influence. IISS strongly emphasizes scientific, empirical research methods to ensure the authority and accuracy of policy research. Upholding a rich cultural and intellectual tradition, IISS has published many excellent books and research reports that reflect the institute's outstanding and authoritative analysis and research on global political risk and military conflict.

Currently, the institute regularly publishes up to eight periodicals. In addition to general newsletters and conference reports, its research results are mainly published in: *Survival*, *Adelphi series*, *Strategic Survey*, *Military Balance*, *Strategic Comments*, *Armed Conflict Survey*, and *Strategic Dossiers*. Among them, *Survival* is the flagship journal founded alongside IISS, published six times annually and currently a heavyweight publication in foreign policy and strategic studies. Its content includes commentaries, research papers, case analyses, and letters to the editor, providing an influential debate forum for scholars of different nationalities and backgrounds on international political and strategic issues. Error! Reference source not found. The *Adelphi series* reports are also among the most popular books in defense and strategy, publishing 4-6 volumes annually that carry IISS' s rigorous analysis and forward-looking insights on contemporary strategic and defense themes, providing valuable references for politicians, diplomats, academic researchers, foreign affairs analysts, defense commentators, and journalists. Error! Reference source not found. *Military Balance* and *Strategic Survey* are often acclaimed as authoritative works on world military affairs. The former assesses the military capabilities and defense economics of over 170 countries, including personnel, equipment, and defense consumption; Error! Reference source not found. the latter provides annual assessments of political, economic, and foreign policy developments. Error! Reference source not found. These two annual reports together constitute IISS' s comprehensive analysis of the quantitative and qualitative aspects of global military power comparisons and serve as essential reference tools for defense workers and international security and political personnel.

In recent years, IISS has fully utilized advanced information technology and its accumulated data resources to build and launch new “Military Balance+” Error! Reference source not found. and “Armed Conflict Survey” Error! Reference source not found. databases. These enable users to timely understand global military forces and armed conflicts without time and space limitations. Their detailed and authoritative statistical data and advanced, rich visualization functions have become essential tools for governments, militaries, academia, media, and other users to make faster and more accurate decisions in the complex international environment. The production and promotion of digital products further expand the application scope of IISS research results and effectively enhance the dissemination and influence of high-end intellectual products.

3.2.2 High-End Forum Promotion Strategy

In addition to publishing high-quality research journals, conferences and forums are the most effective ways to expand international influence. The institute regularly or irregularly holds various forms of annual member meetings, academic forums, and IISS international security summits worldwide, providing space for organizations and individuals to exchange and discuss ideas, further deepening international understanding and avoiding conflicts. Conferences closely follow the pulse of the times, focusing on important strategic issues such as peace-keeping, counter-terrorism, technological development, energy environment and national security, while also exploring regional issues in the Middle East, South Africa, Europe, and America. Participants are mainly government officials, researchers, business people, and journalists from various countries. Statistics show that in 2016, IISS held 167 events in 10 countries with a total of 7,245 participants, Error! Reference source not found. demonstrating its strong convening power. Among them, the Asian Security Summit “Shangri-La Dialogue” and the Middle East Security Summit “Manama Dialogue” are masterpieces of IISS in enhancing modern influence. Since the inaugural “Shangri-La Dialogue” held in Singapore in 2002, it has been successfully held for 16 sessions and is acclaimed as the “Davos of the military world.” In addition to arranging various private bilateral talks between countries, the conference also provides space for multilateral interactions. In recent years, it has mainly focused on the following topics: US and Asia-Pacific security issues, adhering to a rules-based regional order, new challenges in Asia-Pacific crisis management, and discussions on strengthening regional security cooperation. As one of the largest and highest-level multilateral conferences in the Asia-Pacific security dialogue mechanism, it is not only regarded as an important part of Asian defense diplomacy but also the only effective mechanism in the Asia-Pacific region that can gather defense officials from various countries to discuss defense issues and regional security cooperation. Its advocacy of defense diplomacy concepts is influencing some Asian security think tanks and defense departments. Error! Reference source not found. Similarly, the Middle East regional security summit “Manama Dialogue” held in Bahrain is also gaining increasing influence. Since 2004, it has been successfully held for 12 sessions, becoming the most important platform

for Middle Eastern defense ministers and military chiefs to exchange views and a fundamental pillar of Middle Eastern regional security diplomacy.

The influence of security summits lies in their role as world-class idea exchange platforms and their impact on global public opinion. IISS' s annual security summits are growing in scale, with each conference attended by dozens of defense ministers, senior military officers, and hundreds of international security researchers, business people, media professionals, and scholars. According to IISS annual report statistics, the two “Dialogue” conferences held in 2016 attracted 1,064 delegates from 53 countries, including over 40 defense ministers, who participated in 55 hours of security debates and 159 bilateral meetings. Error! Reference source not found.

3.2.3 Rich Information-Based Marketing Methods

In today' s internet era, to enhance its visibility and influence, IISS fully utilizes multimedia network platforms and social tools to release relevant information to the general public and media, promoting its research areas and viewpoints. First, the official IISS website plays an extremely important role in publicizing and promoting the institute. Its interface is simple and clear, with real-time updates, allowing users to download and browse most publications or activity-related information in text, images, audio, and video formats. Second, IISS is active on popular social media such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn to better reach younger audiences. It also publishes the blog “IISS Voices” to speak to the public, releasing timely announcements or in-depth analyses by institute staff or experts on various international affairs and security issues. Additionally, IISS has established a press office to release research results and activity reports to media and the public, with a dedicated outreach department maintaining media relations and uniting multiple forces to achieve the intention of widely guiding public opinion and influencing policy decisions.

4 Conclusion

Through 60 years of construction, the International Institute for Strategic Studies has developed into a world-leading think tank in defense and national security, enjoying significant international influence. This is inseparable from its clear development positioning, sound management model and operational mechanism, and powerful influence network. Since its founding, it has unwaveringly maintained its military strategy research characteristics, centered on the development mission of “promoting sound policies to further global peace and security and maintain civilized international relations,” pursuing an international development path, recruiting high-end talent, expanding its membership, keenly grasping the pulse of international situation changes, and continuously expanding and deepening research areas to contribute excellent intellectual products to global politics and security.

Currently, as China' s influence and capacity for action on the world stage

rapidly increase, the strategic decision-making situation in national security and military fields is also undergoing profound changes. Faced with a complex international environment, influential strategic think tanks are urgently needed to support decision-making, speak to the world, and influence international public opinion, thereby enhancing China's military soft power and even national soft power. The successful development of the International Institute for Strategic Studies provides the following enlightenment and reference for China's strategic think tank construction: (1) Rational planning and clear positioning. As a strategic think tank, it is necessary to select strategic issues that have major impacts on national security and are most urgent in the current and future periods for research based on its own advantages and expertise, combined with China's national and military conditions, to strengthen research relevance and effectiveness. Both long-term planning and short-term priorities should be clarified. (2) Strengthen characteristics and emphasize innovation. Ideas and viewpoints are the primary elements of think tank development. Only by creating domain characteristics and brand advantages can a think tank gain industry recognition and enhance its discourse power. High-quality research results ultimately stem from innovation, timely grasping new situations and problems, cultivating forward-looking thinking, and innovating think tank research theories and methods. (3) Build a high-end talent team. Think tank talents are required to possess rich domain knowledge and practical experience, strategic thinking, and innovative spirit. By improving talent cultivation and management mechanisms and uniting multiple forces, training and exchange should be carried out with focus and steps to build an optimized and dynamic talent support system. (4) Strengthen international communication capabilities. From global organizational expansion to research content and talent structure, an international vision is required. Through multiple channels for international exchange and cooperation, participation in international and global affairs research should be emphasized. Attention should be paid to cooperation with internationally renowned think tanks to build one's own think tank network. Additionally, the application of information technology and media publicity should be emphasized to comprehensively build the capacity of think tanks to go abroad and internationalize, thereby better realizing think tank value.

[1] General Office of the CPC Central Committee, General Office of the State Council. *Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of New-Type Think Tanks with Chinese Characteristics* [EB/OL]. [2017-07-01]. <http://theory.people.com.cn/n/2014/1029/c148980-25928251.html>.

[2] IISS. Membership Code [EB/OL]. [2017-07-05]. <http://www.iiss.org/en/membership/membership-s-code>.

[3] IISS. Research and Analysis [EB/OL]. [2017-07-06]. <http://www.iiss.org/en/research>.

[4] TTCSP. 2016 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report [R/OL]. [2017-07-01]. http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1011&context=think_tanks.

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

Source: ChinaXiv – Machine translation. Verify with original.