

## Foreign Police Think Tank Development: Experiences and Implications (Postprint)

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### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] China's new-type public security think tank construction is in its initial stage, facing urgent issues regarding think tank positioning, management models, and operational mechanisms that require resolution. [Method/Process] Conducting case studies on foreign police think tanks to clarify the definition and classification of think tanks, their internal governance models and business operation mechanisms, as well as the interface mechanisms between internal and external brains for government decision-making, helps draw on mature experiences to address problems encountered in China's new-type public security think tank construction. [Results/Conclusions] New-type public security think tank construction must closely align with the timeliness and development needs of public security work, identify the right positioning, balance innovation and independence, focus on research, transformation, and dissemination, and leverage the talent and scientific research advantages of public security academies to provide intellectual support for public security work.

### Full Text

#### Preamble

#### Experience and Inspiration from the Construction of Foreign Police Think Tanks

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### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] The construction of China's new-type public security think tanks is still in its infancy, with urgent problems to be solved regarding think tank positioning, management models, and operational mechanisms. The

outdated disciplinary status of policeology restricts people' s recognition of police think tanks and the development of relevant research. **[Method/Process]** This paper defines and classifies foreign police think tanks, clarifying their internal governance models, business operational mechanisms, and the docking mechanisms between internal and external think tanks for government decision-making. **[Result/Conclusion]** This paper can help solve several problems occurring in the construction of our new-type public security think tanks, offering better service for public security decision-making and practice.

**Keywords:** police think-tanks; management system; operating mechanism; docking mechanism; the construction of think tanks

**Classification Number:** C24

To implement the “Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of New-Type Think Tanks with Chinese Characteristics” issued by the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council in January 2015, and to establish and improve the public security decision-making consultation system, the Ministry of Public Security issued the “Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of New-Type Think Tanks in Public Security Organs” in June 2015. In September of the same year, the first batch of two ministerial-level think tanks was approved for construction. Currently, the construction of public security think tanks in China is in its initial stage. Given that similar foreign think tanks have accumulated relatively mature experience, and considering the international exchange and cooperation functions that new-type public security think tanks should possess, it is necessary to systematically summarize relevant experiences from foreign police think tank construction to promote the development of new-type public security think tanks in China.

## 1 Definition and Classification of Foreign Police Think Tanks

Currently, domestic research on foreign police think tanks is almost non-existent. On the one hand, existing think tank research reports contain no introduction to police think tanks. For example, the University of Pennsylvania' s “2014 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report” categorizes more than 6,600 think tanks worldwide into 13 major fields based on research areas, including defense and national security, domestic economic policy, foreign policy, and international affairs, yet it does not cover any specialized police think tanks. On the other hand, books and papers on foreign police think tanks are extremely rare. Only one relevant paper can be found on CNKI, which, when discussing which police think tanks exist abroad, merely borrows the personal views of American police practitioners for relatively in-depth case studies[1], reflecting scholars' unfamiliarity with this topic. The reason why police think tank research has been neglected is probably closely related to the lagging disciplinary status of policeology. Whether as an output reservoir of ideas, achievements, or talent, think tank construction must be supported by basic theoretical research and innovation in various dis-

ciplines; otherwise, lacking a solid and profound academic foundation, it would become water without a source or a tree without roots. However, although police research is now burgeoning, the disciplinary system of policeology still needs further improvement, which undoubtedly constrains people's recognition of police think tanks and the development of relevant research.

### 1.1 Definition of Foreign Police Think Tanks

To study foreign police think tanks, the first problem to be solved is how to define and identify them. The definition of "police think tanks" involves two key concepts: "policing" and "think tanks." Current academic understanding of the concept of "policing" varies, with distinctions between public and private policing. However, from the perspective of the policy research, consultation, interpretation, and evaluation functions that think tanks undertake, "policing" should mainly be limited to various activities engaged in by state police organs or police personnel to fulfill their responsibilities of preventing and combating crime, maintaining social order, and providing police services. Regarding the definition of "think tanks," foreign scholars tend to emphasize their operational nature and research content. For example, Paul Dickson, a pioneer in American think tank research, defines think tanks as "independent, non-profit policy research organizations" [2]. Domestic scholars, however, highlight the functional positioning of think tanks. For instance, the Think Tank Research Center of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences defines them as "professional research institutions that take public policy as the research object, influencing government decision-making as the research goal, public interest as the research orientation, and social responsibility as the research criterion" [3]. The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Social Science Evaluation Center believes that think tanks are organizations that influence public policy formulation through independent knowledge products[4]. Despite different emphases, scholars agree on some basic elements that think tanks should possess: think tanks are permanent entities rather than temporary research groups or committees formed to solve problems; think tanks are organizations rather than natural persons; the purpose of think tank research is to serve policy rather than academic or technical services. These all help us judge and screen police think tanks.

Moreover, since our original intention in discussing foreign police think tanks is to provide enlightenment for the construction of new-type public security think tanks in China, we should also refer to the definition and evaluation criteria for think tanks given in the "Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of New-Type Think Tanks with Chinese Characteristics" when searching for and defining foreign police think tanks. On this basis, police think tanks can be defined as: "non-profit entity research institutions that have long been engaged in police decision-making consultation research and have an impact on it. These institutions should have a sound governance structure and organizational charter, guaranteed and sustainable funding sources, influential professional representatives and full-time researchers, multi-level academic exchange platforms and

achievement transformation channels, a fully functional information collection and analysis system, and good conditions for conducting international cooperation and exchanges.”

## 1.2 Classification of Foreign Police Think Tanks

Since there is no unified model for think tank construction[5], after defining police think tanks, they should also be classified to have a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of the symbiotic pattern of various police think tanks. Current academic classification standards for think tanks vary. In addition to classification based on think tank construction scale and research focus[6], development evolution stage[7], and business strategy model[8], more tend to classify based on organizational form and institutional attributes. For example, the Think Tank Research Center of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences divides Chinese think tanks into four categories: party, government, and military think tanks; local academies of social sciences; university think tanks; and civilian think tanks. The University of Pennsylvania divides global think tanks into seven categories: autonomous/independent, quasi-independent, government-affiliated, quasi-governmental, university-affiliated, political party-affiliated, and corporate (for-profit).

Referring to the above classification standards and the definition of police think tanks, this paper roughly divides foreign police think tanks into four categories according to their different organizational operation models, funding sources, and personnel composition: (1) **Independent professional police think tanks.** These think tanks are organizationally and operationally independent of the government, not financially supported by the government. Their funding mainly comes from large foundations, social donations, membership fees, and fees for undertaking various commissioned projects. They have distinct professional characteristics in personnel composition and goals/mission. Typical think tanks include the (U.S.) Police Foundation (non-membership), the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP, membership-based), and the (U.S.) Police Executive Research Forum (PERF, membership-based). (2) **University-affiliated/University consortium police think tanks.** These think tanks are organizationally and operationally affiliated with a university or a consortium of different universities. Their funding mainly comes from university or government appropriations, foundation or corporate sponsorships, private donations, and fees for undertaking various commissioned projects. Their personnel are mostly scholars and researchers from various disciplines within the university, with close ties to police departments. Typical think tanks include the (U.K.) Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR) and the Police Research Team of the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy at George Mason University. (3) **Internal police research departments of comprehensive think tanks.** These think tanks operate according to the rules and regulations of their parent think tanks. Their funding comes from the parent think tank's budget and fees for undertaking various commissioned projects. Their person-

nel composition is relatively flexible. Typical think tanks include the Center on Quality Policing (CQP) of the RAND Corporation, the Racial Bias in Policing Working Group of the Russell Sage Foundation, and the Crime and Justice Department of Policy Exchange (U.K.). (4) **Government-affiliated police policy research and project management agencies.** These think tanks are established through legislation or administrative organizational regulations, responsible for decision-making consultation and/or project management, and are fully funded by the government. Typical think tanks include the (U.S.) National Institute of Justice (NIJ) of the Department of Justice. It should be noted that the reason for including “internal police research departments of comprehensive think tanks” in the research scope is that some of these research departments have had a non-negligible impact on police policy and practice. For example, the Crime and Justice Department of Policy Exchange in the U.K. was the earliest think tank to advocate democratic police governance and the election of police and crime commissioners. Its policy concepts have now been adopted by the U.K. government, materialized in the 2011 Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act, and led to the election of the first batch of 41 police and crime commissioners (excluding London) in November 2012, changing the U.K.’s police governance structure that had lasted for half a century. Moreover, if “independent professional police think tanks,” “university-affiliated/university consortium police think tanks,” and “internal police research departments of comprehensive think tanks” are regarded as the “external brain” relied upon by government decision-making, then “government-affiliated police policy research and project management agencies” often undertake the role of “internal brain” for influencing government decision-making and the “bridge” connecting internal and external think tanks, and should also be included in the research scope.

## 2 Management System and Operational Mechanism of Foreign Police Think Tanks

Among the above four categories of police think tanks, except for “university-affiliated think tanks” and “internal police research departments of comprehensive think tanks” whose management systems and operational mechanisms are constrained by their parent organizations, the remaining types (including “university consortium police think tanks” ) have relatively independent management systems and operational mechanisms worthy of study and reference. In addition, since external think tanks for government decision-making are inextricably linked to the internal brain that assists government decision-making in terms of project application, funding acquisition, achievement transformation and evaluation, and exchange and cooperation, the docking mechanism between internal and external think tanks for government decision-making should also receive attention.

### 2.1.1 Organizational Management System

Although names differ, most foreign police think tanks generally include a board of directors (or board of trustees), an executive committee, and an advisory (or academic) committee in their organizational structure, managed according to institutionalized rules and regulations. The board of directors is responsible for determining the think tank's mission, goals, and value standards. The executive committee is responsible for daily operations, often subdivided into administrative, project, financial, and liaison departments. The advisory committee is responsible for grasping the foresight and direction of the think tank's research. For example, the U.S. Police Foundation is led by a board of directors whose members are elected from academia, business, law, government, law enforcement, and the medical field. The foundation's Research Advisory Committee consists of leading and emerging scholars and distinguished practitioners who meet at least twice a year to guide the foundation's research agenda. Members generally serve two-year terms and are responsible for introducing new ideas into policing by conducting or leading research. SIPR's activities are coordinated by an executive committee comprising the institute director, deputy directors of four research networks, representatives from Scottish police service agencies, representatives from the Scottish Center for Crime and Justice Research, and SIPR's business and knowledge translation manager, who are accountable to the governance board. The latter includes principals from 13 participating universities and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland. The institute's International Advisory Committee includes members from the U.K., U.S., Netherlands, Norway, and other countries, responsible for identifying global policing challenges and promoting mutual exchange and interaction. Compared with other types of think tanks, "government-affiliated police policy research and project management agencies" often have relatively complex internal institutions due to their dual identity of research and project management. For example, NIJ, 隶属于 the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, consists of the Director's Office, three scientific offices, and three support offices. The scientific offices are set up according to specific research fields, including the Office of Investigative and Forensic Sciences, the Office of Research and Evaluation (with three research divisions: Violence and Victimization, Justice Systems, and Crime and Crime Prevention), and the Office of Science and Technology (with a research division and a policy and standards division). These are collaboratively operated by scientists from specific disciplinary groups including social and behavioral sciences, forensic science, physical sciences, and engineering sciences. The support offices consist of the Office of Communication, the Office of Grant Management, and the Office of Operations. This organizational model enables NIJ's internal structure and workflow to align with research needs and management priorities in the field.

### 2.1.2 Think Tank Culture and Values

Values are uniquely important for creating organizational culture and internal operations. Many internationally renowned think tanks have their specific organizational culture and values. The RAND Corporation takes “quality and objectivity” as its core values and has formulated corresponding institutional principles: commitment to quality and objectivity; avoidance of conflicts of interest; commitment to integrity, respect, equal opportunity, and fairness; responsible management of financial resources, property, and sensitive information; and respect for and compliance with legal and regulatory obligations. These institutional principles regulate the core ethical behavioral standards that RAND employees must abide by and form the basis for interaction among researchers and between RAND and its clients, principals, stakeholders, and the public, earning it a world reputation for providing rigorous, objective, non-partisan research and analysis. RAND’s Center on Quality Policing has also inherited these values and concepts, making non-negligible contributions in the industry. Many other foreign police think tanks also focus on creating values that members jointly abide by and practice. PERF stipulates the following organizational guiding principles in its charter: research, experimentation, and exchanging ideas through public discussion and debate are paths to developing police expertise; substantive, purposeful academic research is a prerequisite for obtaining, understanding, and increasing professional knowledge of police management; maintaining the highest standards of ethics and integrity is necessary for improving policing; police must be accountable to citizens and accept their accountability under legal constraints, with citizens being the ultimate source of police authority; and principles embodied in the constitution are the foundation of police work. These values and institutional principles not only regulate the ethical behavior of think tank personnel but also ensure that think tanks can achieve their missions in ways consistent with their value judgments.

### 2.1.3 Strategic Planning and Research Management Mechanism

To accurately grasp the problems and challenges faced by modern society’s law enforcement and criminal justice systems and to better provide decision-making consultation services, many foreign police think tanks attach great importance to strategic planning work, reasonably positioning research fields and planning priorities at different stages. CQP, in response to the current situation of government budget tightening, high policing costs, and the urgent need for police departments to maximize limited resources, has set its strategic goal as helping police agencies improve cost-effectiveness and policing quality, focusing its research on four interrelated areas: best practices, performance evaluation, technology use, and workforce planning. SIPR has identified developing evidence-based policing, promoting research innovation, and supporting career development as core strategic goals, and has devoted significant effort to building four major research networks: police-community relations, evidence and investigation, education and leadership, and public protection. In terms of

strategic planning processes, IACP is quite representative (as shown in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper]).

Specifically, IACP's strategic planning work is comprehensively led by the board of directors, executive director, and professional staff. Strategic goals and action plans are developed through a series of meetings, talks, communications, and surveys with staff, members, and partners. In this process, IACP attaches great importance to personnel, processes, and technology. It not only provides employees with necessary tools and skills to achieve organizational strategic goals but also focuses on developing partnerships with Congress, government, media, international institutions, and the communities it serves to drive the successful implementation of strategies. Given that efficient processes will support the achievement of strategic goals, the association also identifies strategic areas requiring additional support by surveying and evaluating existing standardized processes. To make operations more effective, the association emphasizes the intelligent application of technology. Effectiveness monitoring of strategic goal achievement is mainly conducted through progress evaluation. IACP has developed specific implementation plans for each strategic goal, evaluating their progress quarterly. The board of directors and responsible departments regularly review the implementation of baseline indicators and annual goals, and the achievement of strategic goals is an important element of personnel performance evaluation. To ensure that the association's daily operations and resource allocation are consistent with the overall strategy, the board of directors reviews the annual budget and resource allocation, listening to relevant departments' opinions on cost savings and process improvement. To maintain the applicability of strategic plans, IACP also regularly updates strategies according to specific circumstances.

In terms of project research and development, foreign police think tanks mostly attach importance to the following work: convening relevant experts to systematically collect information on the current state of scientific development in established project areas to help build a knowledge system; collecting and analyzing information on research priorities and related activities of other institutions to identify potential cooperation opportunities; conducting meta-analysis of all research activities in a certain field to evaluate the impact of research projects on that field based on research results; using previous research experience to identify potential research and technology gaps for developing new research projects or guiding future research investment portfolios; and using institutional resources to form innovative research based on the needs of practitioners and decision-makers, conducting formative testing, and on this basis formulating strategies and research plans for the next steps of research, development, testing, and evaluation.

#### **2.1.4 Talent Management and Incentive Mechanism**

Maintaining a well-trained and diverse talent team plays an important role in developing and implementing think tank strategies, conducting think tank eval-

uation, and communication work. Many foreign police think tanks have unique talent management and incentive mechanisms. The U.S. Police Foundation mainly attracts and retains talent through various Law Enforcement Fellowship programs, which represent career advancement opportunities for American law enforcement officers interested in police policy, technology application, research, and training development. Among them, the Executive Fellowship and International Fellowship programs mainly target current or retired management personnel in U.S. and non-U.S. criminal justice organizations. These two types of fellows are responsible for conducting specific project research, representing the foundation at meetings, and forming substantive thought pieces on pressing issues facing policing in an international context, with terms determined by the foundation president. The Police Fellowship program mainly targets front-line law enforcement officers on active duty. As members of the foundation's Practitioner Advisory Committee, these law enforcement fellows' expertise, experience, and skills help advance the foundation's mission and ensure that the foundation's research is built on a comprehensive understanding of the actual needs of law enforcement organizations. Law enforcement fellows fill the foundation's position vacancies at no cost to the police themselves or their participating agencies. Fellows are assigned to relevant/related knowledge or skill areas. Through guidance from foundation staff, they have opportunities to cooperate with nationally recognized experts in policing, police policy, and research, increase their understanding of policing and public management, and gain extensive exposure to all aspects of the foundation's work. This mutual arrangement not only benefits the foundation by providing access to the experience of national policing authorities but also allows fellows to return to their agencies with new skills and fresh insights into theory and practice in their respective fields, promoting the direct transformation of research results and the reform and development of police practice.

NIJ mainly attracts and gathers research talent through fellowship programs and the Research Assistantship Program (RAP). Through various fellowship programs, NIJ provides opportunities for outstanding researchers in any discipline who hold terminal degrees and are in the early stages of their careers to promote their original research and ideas to the national level; encourages promising doctoral students to use critical and innovative thinking in solving urgent criminal justice problems; provides full-time employment opportunities to award recipients in research addressing criminal justice issues related to NIJ's work and public policy to promote the career development of criminal justice researchers and professionals; and encourages students in any discipline to propose pioneering research that has a direct impact on U.S. criminal justice. NIJ's Research Assistantship Program aims to provide practical research experience and opportunities for eligible outstanding doctoral students at multiple universities that have signed RAP agreements. NIJ provides funds to participating universities to pay salaries, health insurance, and tuition waivers for research assistants committed to NIJ research activities. The number and type of fellowships are determined by NIJ. Research assistants are nominated by par-

participating universities from enrolled students and selected by NIJ based on their background and expertise. There are basic qualification requirements for candidates in specific fields, such as mathematical skills to understand statistical principles and quantitative and qualitative research methods, reasoning ability, communication skills, and necessary computer skills. Research assistants, after review and approval by RAP administrators, are assigned tasks by NIJ staff and university graduate program directors according to established objectives, tasks, and priorities. Their responsibilities include but are not limited to compiling and summarizing technical or professional literature, assisting in designing research strategies, participating in collecting, compiling, storing, managing, analyzing, and summarizing research data, conceptualizing and drafting various publications, and assisting in research dissemination and promotion activities. Research assistants generally serve one-year terms, with the possibility of renewal depending on mid-year and annual assessments, availability of funds, and agreements between NIJ and the research assistant's university.

### 2.1.5 Cooperation and Exchange Mechanism

The development and maintenance of partnerships can help think tanks determine research agendas, obtain future funding, strengthen their image as industry spokespersons, disseminate their service value and research results, and enhance their visibility. The Police Foundation has now established formal cooperative relationships with substantive academic research institutions, non-profit organizations, and membership associations such as the Cambridge University Police Senior and Middle Management Program and the International Association of Crime Analysts (IACA), aiming to broaden research perspectives and achieve the common goal of improving policing through innovative resources and programs. SIPR also attaches great importance to building partnerships. The institute itself is the result of strategic collaboration between 13 Scottish universities and Scottish police service agencies. It is not only strongly funded by Scottish police, police authorities, the Scottish Funding Council, and participating universities but also works closely with the Scottish government, parliament, and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, aiming to draw on knowledge and skills within Scottish higher education institutions to provide support for leadership and professional development and organizational learning in policing, while ensuring that commissioned research projects undertaken by consortium universities can promote the development of Scottish policing policy. SIPR's police-scholar collaboration model not only provides a template for the N8 Policing Research Partnership in northern England and the East Midlands Policing Academic Collaboration (EMPAC) but has also been adopted by Dutch and New Zealand police as a model for developing cooperative policing research. In addition, SIPR has continued to participate in extensive domestic and international networks of policing researchers and practitioners. Domestically, it mainly engages in cooperative project research with the Scottish Center for Crime and Justice Research. In Europe, SIPR is a founding member of the European Police Institutes Collaboration (EPIC), currently chairs the Policing

Working Group of the European Society of Criminology, and participates in two major European projects: the Horizon 2020 project on community policing and mobile technology and the “Trends in Modern Policing” project hosted by the Norwegian Police University College and funded by the Norwegian Research Council. It has also played a key role in the EU Police Service Training program on “Monitoring Vulnerable Communities in Conflict-Affected Countries.” In the Americas, SIPR’s transatlantic partnership with George Mason University’s Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy is also flourishing, having successfully held two joint seminars on policing policy and practice and hosted the SIPR-GMU International Summer School for policing doctoral students from Scotland, the U.S., Norway, and other countries in St. Andrews in 2016. These commissioned research projects and knowledge exchanges have created a series of opportunities for SIPR members to participate in policing research projects, promoted innovation in evidence-based policing methods, and been crucial to SIPR’s success and its international reputation as an excellent policing research center and a model of collaboration between researchers, policymakers, and practitioners.

## **2.2 The Docking of “Internal and External Brain” in Government Decision-Making**

Relying on the above management systems and operational mechanisms, many foreign police think tanks have independently or cooperatively carried out various business activities, including data-driven project and strategy evaluation for commissioning agencies, providing improvement suggestions, and promoting best practices; assisting R&D departments in understanding industry needs, evaluating and testing the impact of new technologies and methods during trial stages and their potential use for improving policing; providing technical assistance to police and criminal justice departments in problem identification, strategic development, organizational and policy design, and implementation evaluation; providing various training to relevant personnel and institutions; widely disseminating think tank research results; actively promoting the application and transformation of results; and striving to create discourse power and status and influence in the industry. However, given the professional characteristics of policing research and the confidential nature of research data in some areas, various police think tanks as the external brain of government decision-making must rely on a docking mechanism with the government’s internal brain to fully play their role in providing policy advice. In the above classification of police think tanks, “government-affiliated police policy research and project management agencies” undertake the role of internal brain for government decision-making and the bridge connecting internal and external think tanks. Such agencies often set up many relevant functional departments that cooperate according to established rules and regulations. Among them, the research and evaluation department is generally responsible for developing, conducting, directing, and supervising research and evaluation activities for various projects; the administrative department is responsible for planning and managing various administrative businesses, including strategic planning, human resource management,

logistics management, budget formulation and execution, contract and procurement supervision, auditing, data access management, inter-agency agreements, peer review and tender management, and training development and delivery; the project management department is responsible for managing project grants and cooperation agreements, providing technical assistance and guidance to project applicants to ensure compliance with important statutory, regulatory, agency rules and guidelines, and ensuring that projects can meet project objectives; and the liaison department is responsible for the transformation of research results, mainly disseminating research results to the industry through comprehensive strategic measures such as publishing, conferences, marketing, and promotion, including various empirical knowledge and tools.

The docking mechanism between internal and external think tanks for government decision-making is often realized through project solicitation or signing cooperation agreements and project management. In this regard, NIJ' s relevant procedures can bring us much enlightenment (see Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]).

NIJ generally identifies research needs through the following approaches: institutionalizing engagement with practitioners, policymakers, and researchers; generating rich intellectual exchange through sponsoring conferences, workshops, and working groups; and funding cooperative research to evaluate and prioritize industry technology needs, thereby guiding future research to meet actual needs. Its research agenda development can be divided into non-competitive and competitive types. The former is mainly NIJ' s internal research or cooperative research with other scientific organizations, while the latter is often conducted through annual external project solicitation. The vast majority of NIJ' s projects are funded through competitive solicitation, with such projects exceeding 85% in fiscal year 2015. Solicited project applications are often reviewed by independent peer panels, with suggestions prepared by NIJ internal scientists, and final funding decisions made by the NIJ director. Funding is often conducted through grants (external research) or cooperative agreements (internal research). Regarding the former, each project is assigned a grant administrator to provide technical support and guidance while conducting in-depth, proactive grant supervision activities. Regarding cooperative agreement-based funding, NIJ internal scientists collaborate with cooperative researchers on substantive issues related to the project, including providing assistance, guidance, and coordination, and participating in project activities to ensure project success. Project research results are evaluated by external peer reviewers, NIJ scientific staff, or both, and then disseminated through multiple channels, including internal use of research results to promote further development of research and evaluation projects; incorporating reports, articles, and other publications generated by research into the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) library and abstract database for public use; submitting research-generated data to the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data to enable researchers to test each other' s conclusions, verify, refine, or refute initial findings; and reviewing and rating project evaluations and publishing them on the NIJ-funded "CrimeSolu-

tions” website.

Through the docking mechanism between internal and external think tanks for government decision-making, various police think tanks have not only achieved in-depth cooperation among researchers and exchange and sharing of information resources, making the strategic goals of policing research more closely aligned with the practical needs of practitioners and policymakers and continuously generating highly innovative policing ideas, guiding policing policies, and actionable police results, but also can utilize various resources controlled by the government to greatly broaden the dissemination and transformation channels of think tank results, better serving policing research and practice.

### **3 Implications and Reflections for the Construction of Public Security Think Tanks in China**

Currently, the construction of new-type public security think tanks in China is in its initial stage, lacking overall planning for think tank construction, research lacking leading figures and outstanding talents, and public security organs lacking correct understanding of think tank functions. To break this situation, unified understanding must be achieved on some core issues of think tank construction. In this regard, the mature experience of foreign police think tank construction can bring us many enlightenments.

#### **3.1.1 Think Tank Positioning Must Closely Align with the Timeliness and Innovative Development Needs of Public Security Work**

When positioning themselves, many foreign police think tanks attach great importance to accurately grasping the responsibilities and tasks that the times have entrusted to the police. The U.S. Police Foundation was established in 1970 when American policing was facing soaring crime rates, the failure of traditional policing models, and questioned police legitimacy. Therefore, the foundation took improving policing through innovation and science as its mission, aiming to rely on scientific evidence to solve some of the most basic and complex problems in the criminal justice field and to rely on innovation to develop effective solutions rooted in its own or others’ research. When the Crime and Justice Department of Policy Exchange in the U.K. was established, the police were facing budget tightening and increasingly complex security challenges, so it determined its mission as helping the police prevent crime and disorder more effectively, efficiently, and accountably, promoting innovative and modern working methods, and using technology to help the police create more flexible and professional services. Currently, the law enforcement and supervision environment faced by Chinese police is more complex than ever before, and the long-term development of public security is affected and constrained by some institutional, mechanistic, and guarantee issues. The establishment of new-type public security think tanks is precisely to focus on solving these major problems. From the perspective of the Ministry of Public Security, the functional positioning of ministerial-level think

tanks is relatively clear: to serve public security decision-making consultation and actual combat through systematic, holistic, strategic, and forward-looking research. Therefore, think tank construction must closely align with the innovative development needs of public security, grasp future development trends of public security work, focus on prominent issues that affect public security organs' combat effectiveness and constrain the development of public security, center on the main direction of serving public security decision-making and actual combat, conduct breakthrough research in a timely and accurate manner, carry out theoretical innovation based on summarizing experience, and strive to enhance public security organs' ability to maintain national security and social stability.

### **3.1.2 Strive to Highlight the Innovativeness of Public Security Think Tanks**

Before the Ministry of Public Security established two ministerial-level think tanks in 2015, the main institutions undertaking the function of providing suggestions for public security organs were the general offices (rooms) and their research offices (investigation rooms) at all levels of public security organs. As the internal brain of public security organs, although these institutions are very good at grasping problems, highly effective, and fast in output, they are often small in scale and limited in manpower, mostly engaged in temporary task-oriented research, and greatly influenced by leadership intentions. Various public security colleges and universities, on the other hand, are more engaged in academic research, focusing on disciplinary development, often disconnected from reality, and difficult to guide public security actual combat or influence public security decision-making. Constructing "new-type" public security think tanks must meet the eight basic standards clearly stipulated in the "Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of New-Type Think Tanks with Chinese Characteristics" issued by the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council, especially the target requirements regarding "multi-level academic exchange platforms and achievement transformation channels," "fully functional information collection and analysis systems," and "good conditions for conducting international cooperation and exchanges." They should strive to explore operational mechanisms adapted to their own characteristics and development laws. At the same time, they should try to avoid problems existing in the research of many social think tanks, such as emphasizing quantity over quality, emphasizing form dissemination over content innovation, and the formalistic practices of merely setting up platforms, inviting celebrities, and holding forums, striving to explore construction and development models for new-type public security think tanks.

### **3.1.3 Correctly Understand the Independence of Public Security Think Tanks**

Regarding the independence of new-type public security think tanks, considering the current unique professional nature of core researchers and the restricted

nature of research content (data resources are limited by confidentiality levels), coupled with the fact that the two ministerial-level pilot think tanks are established relying on public security colleges and universities, new-type public security think tanks still have dependency in management systems and financing mechanisms. Their relative independence is mainly reflected in ideological viewpoints and operational mechanisms (such as the organization and implementation of research tasks, personnel employment and assessment, and financial asset management).

### **3.2 How Public Security Think Tanks Serve Public Security Decision-Making and Actual Combat**

Public security think tanks are an important source of ideas and knowledge for comprehensively deepening public security reform and development. This is both the core advantage of public security think tanks and the main task of constructing them. To serve public security decision-making and actual combat, think tank development must focus on three links: research, transformation, and dissemination.

#### **3.2.1 Identify the Right Direction, Select the Right Personnel, and Improve Research Quality with Scientific Methods**

Research quality is the primary standard for measuring the value of public security think tanks. To this end, we must identify the right research direction, select the right researchers, and rely on scientific methods. On the one hand, research must have theoretical support, keep up with the frontiers of academic development, and emphasize innovation and objectivity. On the other hand, it must have a strong problem awareness, focusing on forward-looking, targeted, and reserve policy research around major strategic needs arising in public security reform and development. We must be good at summarizing and utilizing knowledge products from academia and mining and perfecting reform measures with innovative highlights from actual combat departments, distilling new ideas, new concepts, and new thoughts from them, and proposing constructive and practical professional policy recommendations. Talent team construction is the key to the success of think tank research. We can learn from mature practices of foreign police think tanks and attract talents with certain research capabilities to join think tank teams through public recruitment, selective employment, or transfer of full-time/part-time researchers and research assistants from public security organs, public security colleges and universities, or social universities and research institutes, achieving two-way flow of research talents between think tanks and the above institutions. Think tanks must also be good at mobilizing researchers' enthusiasm, cultivating their sensitivity to capture policy information, breaking researchers' thinking inertia through assessment, evaluation, and incentive mechanisms, and encouraging the formation of research teams to conduct collaborative 攻关. In terms of research methods, we must focus on the accumulation and integration of data and resources and be good at using big

data for research. We can also learn from various social and behavioral science research methods commonly used by foreign police think tanks to conduct various experimental, quasi-experimental, and non-experimental social research.

### **3.2.2 Optimize Mechanisms, Be Flexible in Form, and Establish and Broaden Channels for Research Achievement Transformation and Application**

The key factor in judging the value of think tank research lies in whether it can influence public security decision-making or practice. Public security think tanks can realize the transformation and application of research results through the following channels: First, establish long-term or short-term collaborative relationships with public security organs through commissioned research, signing cooperation agreements, and conducting institutional or project evaluations to directly facilitate the transformation and application of research results. Second, indirectly facilitate the transformation and application of research results by utilizing the docking institutions between internal and external brains for public security decision-making. To this end, it is necessary to establish or reorganize provincial/ministerial-level public security policy research and project management agencies and establish and improve various systems and mechanisms supporting them. We must build think tank management information systems, strengthen the planning, solicitation, coordination, and management of major decision-making consultation topics, guide think tanks (external brain) to conduct research through project bidding and other methods, reduce the blindness of think tank research, and increase the adoptability of research results. We must establish joint meeting systems, policy evaluation systems, and government procurement systems for major decision-making consultation work, strengthen communication and contact with public security think tanks in legislative suggestions, policy proposals, and decision-making consultation, and attach great importance to and fully adopt reasonable suggestions put forward by think tanks. We must establish release platforms and reporting systems for think tank research results to help public security decision-making organs and actual combat departments find needed policy solutions and technical and knowledge products as soon as possible. Third, rely on public security colleges and universities to carry out training at all levels and directly transform think tank research results into the wisdom and execution power of front-line police.

### **3.2.3 Disseminate Ideas, Guide Public Opinion, and Enhance the Influence and Discourse Power of Public Security Think Tanks**

Public security think tanks must have business concepts and promotion awareness, be good at using various media to disseminate knowledge (except for confidential information) and ideas, and in addition to traditional intermediary forms such as press and publication, academic conferences, and forum reports, also use the internet and various new media for dissemination. They must speak out in a timely manner on major events to enhance the influence and discourse

power of public security think tanks by guiding public opinion.

### 3.3 How to Build Public Security Think Tanks Relying on Public Security Colleges and Universities

Serving actual combat is the proper characteristic and orientation of public security colleges and universities. Leveraging talent advantages and scientific research advantages to provide intellectual support for public security work is an important responsibility of public security colleges and universities. One of the reasons why the Ministry of Public Security relies on public security colleges and universities to build new-type think tanks is to further deepen the collaborative co-construction mechanism between public security organs and public security colleges and universities, expand and enhance the functional role of public security colleges and universities, and better serve public security decision-making and actual combat. Therefore, public security colleges and universities must start from the hot and difficult problems encountered in policing actual combat, strengthen topic cooperation with public security actual combat departments, and collaborate with other universities. In this regard, SIPR' s police-scholar collaboration model can provide us with good reference. Since the current professional title promotion evaluation standards and scientific research evaluation mechanisms of public security colleges and universities are not equivalent to the evaluation mechanisms for think tank research results, the vast majority of domestic university teachers and researchers lack the motivation for policy research. The actual combat-oriented transformation of public security colleges and universities must be promoted through their own institutional innovation. We must break through existing institutional and mechanism barriers for policy research in universities, reform all systems and mechanisms that are not conducive to stimulating the vitality of policy research, fully release innovation vitality, and at the same time strengthen institutional construction, appropriately tilting toward the policy research direction in formulating scientific research management, achievement rewards, fund use, and other systems and methods. We must establish and improve work mechanisms for cooperative research with public security actual combat departments, carry out collaborative innovation with other think tanks, social universities, and research institutes around policy research topics in a planned way, build an open research platform with internal and external cooperation, rely on disciplinary advantages, integrate research resources, and enable scientific research results to be transformed into policing decision-making and put into policing actual combat as soon as possible to release application value.

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N8 refers to the consortium of 8 research-intensive universities in northern England: Durham, Lancaster, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield, and York.

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

*Source: ChinaXiv –Machine translation. Verify with original.*