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## A Preliminary Study of the Think Tank Market under the US Decision-Making System: Post-print

**Authors:** Shen Jinjian

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### Abstract

[目的/意义] To further understand the operation and development of American think tanks, this paper systematically examines the American think tank market from a market perspective, attempts to explore the market operation of American think tanks within the U.S. decision-making system, and provides references for the construction of Chinese think tanks. [方法/过程] The article takes market supply-demand relations as the entry point, systematically examines the operation of the American think tank market from a market perspective, and analyzes the reasons for the formation and development of the think tank market by investigating, collecting, and organizing relevant materials. [结果/结论] The article argues that driven by the think tank market, American think tanks have developed rapidly, gradually establishing their current scale and system, serving as the ideological foundation and intellectual support for the U.S. decision-making consultation system, and becoming part of the government decision-making system. Its experience provides some beneficial insights for the construction of new-type think tanks in China.

### Full Text

## A Preliminary Study of the American Think Tank Market under the U.S. Policy Decision System: An Analysis from Market Perspective

**Shen Jinjian**

Chinese Evaluation Center for Humanities and Social Sciences, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing 100732

## Abstract

**[Purpose/Significance]** To further understand the operation and development of American think tanks, this paper examines the American think tank market from a market perspective, attempting to explore the functioning of the U.S. think tank market under the American policy decision system and provide reference for Chinese think tank construction. **[Method/Process]** Taking market supply-demand relationships as the entry point, this article analyzes the formation and development of the think tank market from a market perspective by investigating and collecting relevant materials. **[Result/Conclusion]** The paper argues that driven by the think tank market, American think tanks have developed rapidly and gradually formed the current scale and system, providing the ideological foundation and intellectual support for the American policy consultation system and becoming part of the government decision-making system. Their experience offers beneficial insights for the construction of new types of Chinese think tanks.

**Keywords:** think tank market; thought market; supply side; demand side

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The think tank market constitutes the ideological foundation for government policy consultation and represents a crucial component of a sound decision-making consultation system. The development of the think tank market plays a decisive role in policymaking, directly or indirectly influencing government decisions. Therefore, examining the causes of the American think tank market from a market perspective, understanding its structure, analyzing its characteristics, and evaluating its role in government decision-making holds significant implications for comprehensively and systematically drawing upon American think tank development experience, strengthening the construction of new types of Chinese think tanks with distinctive features, and avoiding blind imitation.

### 1.1 Historical Causes

History provided opportunities for the development of the think tank market. The Progressive Era marked an important transformation period in American history, during which the United States confronted various complex domestic and international social issues. To address these practical social problems, American political, intellectual, and cultural elites, motivated by the desire to safeguard American national interests and institutions, felt obligated to ensure the smooth functioning of the state machinery. Seeking appropriate channels to apply their knowledge and political experience to advise the government and provide intellectual services for social development, they established various research groups and academic institutions to discuss political affairs, analyze situations, study countermeasures, and reflect diverse political demands. These entities regularly published research reports and expressed opinions through various platforms to guide public opinion, resulting in the formation of numerous

civil society think tanks and university think tanks outside the government—collectively creating a think tank market operating external to the government.

## 1.2 Political Causes

The political structure of separation of powers provided living space for the think tank market. The American political system is based on pluralism, featuring a multi-party system, democratic elections, and separation of powers. Government decisions on major international and domestic issues must undergo congressional review, which in turn requires judicial department approval. The three branches check, supervise, and complement each other, forming a power-sharing decision-making system. Throughout this process, proposals require layer-by-layer examination, necessitating broad political participation to unify diverse interest demands, goals, and aspirations while aligning means with ends to address complex problems.

From the 1920s to the early 20th century [1], the U.S. federal government and Congress gradually established various professional committees and subcommittees to study issues and directly advise the government, forming a think tank consultation team composed of internal government research institutions that serve as the “nerve center of decision-making.” Simultaneously, these bodies play a critical role in rebalancing decisions and interests, acting as a platform for negotiating with interest groups, government, the public, and civil society and university think tanks, while serving as “gatekeepers of Congress” [1].

To achieve balance between decision-making and interests and ensure adequate consultation, professional committees regularly hold hearings, interviews, roundtable discussions, and press conferences to communicate with think tanks for decision-making consultation, thereby expanding the scope of government policy consultation. Through this approach, the government can understand civil society think tanks’ opinions on policies, while these think tanks can reflect public sentiment through this channel, provide countermeasures, influence decisions, and effectively achieve information communication between government and think tanks, enriching the connotation of the think tank market and further nurturing its balanced development.

## 1.3 Formation of the Think Tank Market

National governance’ s demand for policy consultation gave birth to the think tank market. Precisely because of the urgent demand from government, media, and the public for think tank policy supply, and because think tank elites can provide necessary knowledge and intellectual supply for media, the public, and government policymaking, a supply-demand relationship between government demand and think tank supply gradually formed during this important historical transformation period, giving rise to a dual-structured think tank market.

After more than a century of evolution, the American think tank market has

gradually matured and now functions as a “supermarket” that continuously satisfies the U.S. government’s demand for policy consultation. In this well-stocked “idea supermarket,” the government can always find the ideological countermeasures it needs.

## 2 The Dual Structure of the American Think Tank Market

The American think tank market is a dual-structured market. On one side is the demand side, primarily comprising the government, media, and public as think tank demanders. On the other side is the supply side, mainly consisting of government think tanks, civil society think tanks, and university think tanks as providers of intellectual resources for government decision-making consultation. These two sides form the dual structure of the think tank market.

### 2.1 The Demand Side in the Dual Structure

In the dual-structure think tank market, the demand side consists of four main components: government, media, the public, and interest groups.

**2.1.1 Government** The government represents the demand side in the think tank market, comprising primarily the president, vice president, federal and state governments, the House of Representatives and Senate, and judicial institutions. This includes 50 advisory committees and 18 agencies under the president, cabinet departments (including 335 subordinate agencies and 766 advisory committees), the State Department and 11 ministries [2]; 435 House members, 22 standing committees, 189 other committees and subcommittees, and 14 joint or special committees [2] (such as the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, established on October 10, 2000); 100 Senate members, 18 standing committees, and 112 other committees and subcommittees; and the judicial system including the Supreme Court, constitutional courts, legislative courts, state courts, and the Department of Justice [2]. With approximately 1,500 institutions and over 500 legislators, compared to roughly 1,800 civil society think tanks, the government’s demand for policy consultation is enormous.

Additionally, the president and vice president receive mail, letters, and reports from think tanks. For instance, the Brookings Institution specifically prepares two reports for the president to reflect problems and provide countermeasures. Government demand is generally expressed through hearings, roundtables, seminars, and interviews to solicit think tanks’ policy recommendations on specific policies and issues, sometimes even through competitive bidding to select trusted think tanks for commissioned research projects to achieve policy consultation objectives. The government is the most important demand side for think tank products.

**2.1.2 Media** Media primarily refers to major newspapers, television stations, radio stations, and online media, such as the American Broadcasting Company

(ABC), National Broadcasting Company (NBC), Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), Cable News Network (CNN), *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and others. These media outlets frequently interview think tank researchers, invite them to write articles on hot issues, or appear on television, maintaining close cooperation and urgent demand for think tanks, making them an important component of the demand side.

**2.1.3 Public** The public is the largest demand side for think tanks. In civil society, public demand for think tanks manifests primarily as being loyal readers, viewers, and audiences of think tank publications, articles, interviews, lectures, and conferences. They are also the main targets of think tank fundraising. In recent years, with the emergence of new media, the number of public clicks on think tank websites has continuously increased, demonstrating growing demand. The public hopes think tanks can serve as their spokespersons, mouthpieces, and opinion leaders to satisfy their interest demands.

**2.1.4 Interest Groups** Interest groups refer to communities with shared interests, such as political parties, social groups, chambers of commerce, associations, consortia, and corporate groups. They often provide financial support to think tanks through foundations like the Rockefeller Foundation, Ford Foundation, and National Endowment for Democracy, requiring think tanks to represent their political positions and interest demands and serve as their spokespersons or mouthpieces. Some foundations themselves perform think tank functions, such as the Carnegie Foundation, which has its own research teams and projects.

## 2.2 The Supply Side in the Dual Structure

In the dual-structure think tank market, think tanks constitute the supply side for government decision-making consultation demand, primarily comprising government think tanks, civil society think tanks, and university think tanks that produce intellectual products to provide intellectual support for decision-making consultation. The supply side consists of these three types of think tanks, each performing its own functions, complementing each other, and developing synergistically to provide reference proposals and recommendations for government decision-making and intellectual nourishment for media and the public.

**2.2.1 Government Think Tanks** Government think tanks are professional research institutions established and funded by government approval. They include research offices, professional advisory committees, presidential legacy think tanks, and expert and special working groups established within federal government administrative departments and both houses of Congress with congressional or government approval. Government think tanks constitute the most important component of the American government decision-making consultation system, often conducting specialized research and directly drafting proposals for the government to assist decision-making. In the decision-making process,

they are responsible for collecting information, providing evidence, drafting contingency plans, executing assigned tasks, and providing decision-making consultation, serving as internal research institutions that assist government affairs—the “brain center” of government. Compared with civil society think tanks, they have more direct functions and advantages in political participation and policy deliberation.

In terms of specific committee functions, they differ from civil society think tanks and are granted more rights in actual operations, enabling them to directly influence government decision-making actions. For example, they enjoy four privileges: (1) Investigative power—these professional committees have the right to subpoena witnesses and compel evidence; (2) Supervisory power—committees can supervise and even intervene in the management of congressional administrative departments; (3) Review power—they can study whether to amend, shorten, or even cancel bills; and (4) Voice—committees can express their opinions through web media [3]. These four privileges greatly enhance government think tanks’ influence on decision-making, making their depth and breadth of political participation and policy deliberation far exceed that of civil society think tanks. These rights also elevate government think tanks’ indispensable position in decision-making consultation, enabling them to fully exert their policy-advising energy at the national level. Therefore, in the think tank market, government think tanks are the think tanks most closely related to government decision-making and the direct suppliers of government decision-making consultation.

Government think tanks are mostly led by legislators and government officials, composed of university professors or researchers, and study issues of greatest concern to the government. Through hearings, roundtables, and interviews, they collect market information, listen to diverse opinions, refine proposals and recommendations submitted by civil society and university think tanks, and form decision-making proposals for direct government consultation. Their role in the decision-making process is that of a “setter,” analogous to a volleyball setter who “feeds the ball” to government decision-making, making them direct suppliers of government decision-making proposals. They account for approximately one-third of total think tanks and should be considered high-level American think tanks.

**2.2.2 Civil Society Think Tanks** Civil society think tanks are non-profit organizations or institutions registered according to law and composed of social sponsorship, including party-funded think tanks, corporate consortium-funded think tanks, and privately established think tanks. In the think tank market, civil society think tanks constitute the largest and most active cluster of American think tanks, with the ability to discover, research, and reflect the demands of various interest groups. These think tanks are adept at capturing information, identifying issues, reflecting opinions, and conducting research and advocacy in the market.

In the American decision-making consultation system, they actively offer suggestions and express opinions, earning the title of “opinion leaders” representing various interests. They are more skilled at using traditional and new media to publicly express viewpoints, guide public opinion, and influence the public. Many civil society think tanks also maintain frequent personnel contacts and information exchanges with foreign universities, research institutions, and even governments, establishing branch research institutions abroad to undertake both domestic and foreign commissioned research projects. Their intellectual products are marketed both domestically and internationally, making them the main force driving the internationalization of the American think tank market and occupying an important position in the supply side.

Civil society think tanks are mainly composed of retired former government officials, entrepreneurs, lawyers, senior journalists, and professional researchers, also hiring university professors part-time. They are more adept at using knowledge, political experience, and social experience to analyze practical problems and study countermeasures, researching both domestic and international issues and primarily offering suggestions through political participation, hearings, roundtables, and interviews. For example, the Cato Institute participated in 25 policy release conferences on Capitol Hill and 24 congressional hearings last year [4]. Because they come from civil society organizations, they pay more attention to practical hot issues, easily connecting with grassroots realities and understanding first-hand situations, becoming “first passers” who can supply intelligence and opinions to government officials, legislators, and government think tanks. In the think tank market, they are veritable suppliers and represent mid-level American think tanks.

**2.2.3 University Think Tanks** University think tanks consist of civil society research groups headquartered at various universities, such as the Hoover Institution at Stanford University and the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies at Harvard University. University think tanks are primarily organized by university scholars and professors. In the American decision-making consultation system, they differ from civil society think tanks by being more skilled at using professional knowledge to systematically express opinions and viewpoints from an academic perspective, rationally analyzing problems and tending toward systematic, theoretical long-term research that produces lengthy papers and substantial monographs. For example, the Hoover Institution currently holds 1.6 million books, over 60,000 microfilm documents, 4,300 categories of approximately 40 million archival items, and more than 25,000 periodicals for scholarly research [5]. University think tanks constitute an academic think tank force in the market, serving as suppliers of ideas and wisdom in decision-making consultation. They are considered foundational, follow-up research think tanks in the United States. For instance, Harvard University’s Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies is a pioneer in American East Asian studies and modern Chinese studies, having developed into a multidisciplinary comprehensive research institution with history as its backbone. Its research on China covers almost all

aspects, including not only Chinese politics, economy, diplomacy, history, and social conditions but also detailed and marginal issues within these areas. Since the Fairbank era, the center has shown a research trend of linking academic research with real politics, and combined with its excellent academic reputation, its scholars possess unusual influence on U.S. policy toward China. The weakness of university think tanks is their geographical limitation—they are closer to universities but farther from government, with closer academic ties to universities but more distant political relationships with government, and lower frequency of political participation than Washington-based civil society think tanks.

To compensate for these deficiencies, some university think tanks have begun establishing research branches in Washington. In 2003, the Hoover Institution established the John Research Center in Washington, and former Secretary of State Shultz participated in nine congressional hearings last year on national security, military strategy, and economic issues [6].

### **3.1 The Dual-Structure Three-Level Market**

The dual-structure three-level market represents a prominent characteristic of the American think tank market. The American think tank market forms a complete market between think tanks and government, constituting a decision-making system. Based on think tanks' different functions, proximity to government, and depth of participation in decision-making, the dual-structure think tank market can be divided into three levels:

#### **3.1.1 Primary Market**

The primary market is characterized by think tanks having very close relationships with government, directly providing decision-making proposals and forming a direct supply-demand relationship between government and government think tanks. The supply side of the primary market consists of professional committees established within government, chaired by internal government officials or members of Congress in the form of special committees or task forces that undertake special research tasks assigned by the government. Some are short-term studies addressing urgent issues, forming temporary task forces to investigate specific problems, while most are long-term follow-up studies addressing issues of various government departments, proposing bills for government discussion and decision-making to provide direct services. The demand side comprises government agencies, Congress, and the court system.

#### **3.1.2 Secondary Market**

The secondary market primarily features interaction between civil society think tanks and government think tanks. In this market, civil society think tanks indirectly provide policy suggestions to the government by participating in hearings

on various issues held by government think tanks, forming a secondary market of supply and demand between them and the government and Congress.

### 3.1.3 Tertiary Market

The tertiary market is the market for interaction between university think tanks and government. University think tanks primarily analyze and research practical problems from an academic perspective through teaching, research, and publication. By publishing books, holding conferences, and teaching, they enhance the influence of their academic and research results, indirectly providing the government with theoretical and policy suggestions that can support its policies, guiding public opinion for the public, and forming an interactive tertiary market with government and the public.

In summary, think tanks perform their own functions in different market levels, conducting independent research while complementing and debating each other when discussing issues. For example, research topics of government think tanks selectively absorb countermeasures and suggestions from civil society think tanks and academic research results and theoretical support from university think tanks.

The three-level structure of the think tank market provides three layers of screening for government decision-making consultation proposals. The screening procedure can be roughly summarized as follows: (1) Decision-making proposals to solve problems are first released to the tertiary market for open and broad policy deliberation; (2) After market discussion, debate, and intellectual warfare [7]; (3) The most valuable and targeted optimal countermeasure proposals are extracted and submitted to the government for decision-making reference. In this decision-making consultation process, the three-level market plays different functions and facilitating roles, building a platform for think tanks to participate in government decision-making consultation through “wide-open discussion, full expression, and great debate,” and laying a solid ideological foundation for effective decision-making consultation.

## 3.2 Government Guidance, Cultivation, and Regulation

Government cultivation of the market represents a second characteristic of American think tank development. The American political system of separation of powers provides sufficient space for the development of the think tank market. Currently, thousands of think tanks demonstrate their talents in this market, researching and discussing issues surrounding the president, Congress, and judicial departments, reflecting the diversification and breadth of decision-making consultation. This also demonstrates the government’s continuous guidance, long-term cultivation, and gradual regulation of the think tank market.

The specific practices of government guidance, cultivation, and regulation are mainly manifested in three aspects:

### 3.2.1 Government Guidance

To avoid think tanks having no communication channels with government and to ensure diverse voices are heard, U.S. government, congressional, and judicial institutions have widely opened consultation channels to listen to their suggestions and countermeasures, forming mechanisms for direct and indirect contact, communication, and information exchange between government officials, congressional members, government think tanks, civil society think tanks, university think tanks, and scholars. A system has been established for collecting think tank information and research results through hearings, roundtables, and interviews to ultimately form decisions. Through these channels, the government guides civil society and university think tanks to research problems and provide solutions.

Numerous cases illustrate this practice. For example, last year, 91-year-old former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, an advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies; former Secretary of State Shultz from the Hoover Institution; and former Secretary of State Albright jointly attended a Security Committee hearing on January 29, 2015.

Additionally, communication channels with government are not entirely public. Sometimes think tanks “use back doors,” leveraging professional relationships and networks to invite old friends, subordinates, and superiors from government departments to discuss problems, study countermeasures, and exchange information as an alternative path for government communication.

### 3.2.2 Government Cultivation

The American think tank market is a market encouraged and cultivated by the government. Government cultivation of the think tank market is mainly manifested in openness to and encouragement of social fundraising for civil society and university think tanks.

Think tanks can enjoy tax exemption and accept social donations. The United States has stipulated Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code [8], exempting think tanks from fundraising taxes, indirectly providing financial support, stimulating the development of civil society think tanks, and promoting their sustained development.

To improve and cultivate balanced development of the entire think tank market, the government has substantially reduced its investment in civil society think tanks since World War II, gradually replacing the previous practice of government funding and think tank services with encouragement for civil fundraising. Think tanks are permitted to solicit donations in the market, accept social contributions, and are exempted from taxes on fundraising income, with these provisions codified into law. This private funding model cultivates the healthy development of the think tank market. This approach not only eliminates public suspicion of government “buying” think tanks but also alleviates concerns

about think tanks being “bought,” benefiting the credibility of think tanks and the relatively fair development of the think tank market. Currently, except for government think tanks that are still government-funded, almost all think tanks obtain social funding and donations through tax exemption, with the RAND Corporation even operating on a commercial model.

The government is more willing to cultivate think tank market development in this form, under donors’ supervision, to prevent think tanks from accepting “black money” to serve interest groups, avoid commercializing decision-making consultation services for profit purposes, and prevent profit-driven operations. The number of American think tanks has doubled compared to a decade ago, forming a market scale, perhaps benefiting from this cultivation approach.

### 3.2.3 Legal Regulation

Market development cannot be separated from government guidance and legal regulation. To ensure think tanks can inquire into and discuss politics without being manipulated or controlled by interest groups or political parties, and to prevent improper political involvement, the U.S. government continuously regulates the think tank market to ensure this double-edged sword neither harms nor interferes with government decision-making while helping the government solve difficult problems.

The rules of the American think tank market are regulated by law. Addressing the profit-seeking drawbacks of the market, legal means are used to regulate market operations, gradually incorporating the American think tank market into a legal framework. Like commodity markets, think tank markets have their own order, encouraging both intellectual debate and free competition while requiring compliance with laws and regulations. For example, entering this market requires registration and annual fee payments [9]. Think tanks must not hold partisan positions, must not leak secrets, must not provide opinions detrimental to the nation and government, must not oppose the party or government, must not operate for profit, must not interfere with or participate in U.S. elections, must not obstruct political elections, and must not interfere with government administration [9].

Furthermore, in June 1966, the United States passed the Freedom of Information Act, making government information disclosure a socially recognized fundamental principle. The Act explicitly stipulates exceptions to non-disclosure, requiring all other information to be made public [10]. This opens the door for think tanks to understand government information, policies, and governance capabilities and to supervise government behavior, guiding the development direction of the think tank market toward think tank participation in politics and policy discussion, further broadening the functions and roles of the American think tank market in supporting governance.

Due to legal regulation of the market, the orderly development of the think tank market has been promoted, gradually forming an echelon of government think

tanks, civil society think tanks, and university think tanks, injecting vitality into think tank market development.

### **3.3 Internationalization of the Think Tank Market**

Driven by the market, the American think tank market continues to expand, with its actual geographical scope continuously expanding from knowledge-intensive regions in the southern and northern United States to the political center in the northeast. Driven by the maximization of political interests, the American think tank market also continues to expand outward, diffusing from the traditional European market to Asian, African, and Latin American markets. The main manifestation is that traditional American think tanks continuously establish permanent institutions abroad and dispatch working groups, with purposes extending beyond understanding and investigating local intelligence to infiltrating local governments as advisory groups to counsel local governance, expanding think tanks' influence and soft power. More than 10 think tanks, including the Brookings Institution, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and the Atlantic Council, have expanded abroad through publishing political commentaries, holding forums, and conducting private meetings for lobbying [10]. The Brookings Institution, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Carter Center, the Ford Foundation, and the Fulbright Program have also established offices and research institutions in China, cooperating with Chinese scholars and expanding their think tank business in China. With deepening globalization, the international boundaries of American think tanks continue to extend and take root abroad, a trend that will become increasingly evident.

## **4 The Positive Role of the American Think Tank Market in the Decision-Making Consultation System**

The American think tank market serves as the ideological foundation supporting the American decision-making system and plays an important role in it, mainly manifested in the following aspects:

### **4.1 The Think Tank Market Helps Government Identify Problems**

In the American think tank market, primarily composed of government think tanks, university think tanks, and civil society think tanks, these different types of think tanks vary in scale, operate at different market levels, represent different group interests, and engage with different social groups. They can observe problems from more perspectives, reflect issues from different market levels, voice different opinions, and propose different countermeasures. This multi-level think tank market structure helps the government hear diverse voices and comprehensively, holistically, and timely identify problems and understand national conditions from different sides.

## 4.2 The Think Tank Market Facilitates Problem Debate

The American think tank market features numerous disciplines that frequently intersect. In a single research field, several or even dozens of think tanks may participate in research and discussion, potentially generating dozens of different solutions to a problem. In the think tank market, different think tanks regularly gather for joint discussions and even debates, expressing their respective viewpoints. They frequently publish articles in media or open their own columns to attract public attention and engage the public in discussion. Moreover, their research intersects and integrates, with functions often interchanging and boundaries becoming increasingly blurred. Some think tank researchers undertake research for other think tanks, and some think tanks conduct joint research with others. With such a think tank market that allows extensive debate, problems can be identified more timely, discussed more thoroughly, and researched more deeply, providing more effective policy consultation services for the U.S. government.

## 4.3 The Think Tank Market Provides Government with Multidisciplinary Decision-Making Consultation

The think tank market consists of thousands of think tanks, including professional think tanks researching various fields, comprehensive think tanks conducting interdisciplinary research, specialized think tanks, conference-type think tanks, and project-type think tanks. Their research areas involve politics, military affairs, economy, diplomacy, taxation, immigration, housing equity, and other issues. Sometimes they conduct long-term research, sometimes macro and long-term strategic research, and sometimes in-depth specialized research on policy issues in specific professional fields, forming a huge comprehensive professional team in the think tank market. They can identify, track, and research problems, providing the government with multiple feasible solutions to assist decision-making. They also undertake urgent research tasks assigned by the government, with some even undertaking confidential national projects, conducting policy analysis and research to help the government generate ideas and solutions and provide multidisciplinary professional technical consultation.

## 5 Conclusion

From a market perspective, American think tank development has initially formed a think tank market oriented toward government decision-making demand and characterized by multi-professional, interdisciplinary research. Once issues are identified, think tanks express different viewpoints in the market, creating fierce collisions of various opinions and intense competition of ideas. In this intellectual warfare, the superior wins and the inferior loses, enabling government policies to be fully discussed and gradually forming optimal solutions to problems, timely responses to issues, and effective countermeasures. Through market channels and institutional arrangements, the government can hear var-

ious voices from all sides in the think tank market, find reference suggestions, and obtain more valuable and timely decision-making recommendations.

On the other hand, in the decision-making process, when a policy or issue is introduced, multiple think tanks claim to be participants in the opinion formation, though evidence of participation is difficult to find in archives. This demonstrates that any government decision is never the product of just one or two think tanks, and government decisions never merely consult one or two think tanks. In the decision-making process, an effective policy often relies on extensive discussion in a huge think tank market, undergoing a relatively long period of intellectual warfare to discard the dross and select the essential, forming opinions. The think tank market is precisely the best foundation for the U.S. government, the ideological basis for decision-making, and continuously provides intellectual support for American government decision-making consultation.

Based on preliminary research of American think tanks, although the American think tank market is far from perfect in actual operation, inevitably mixed with personal emotions, partisan consciousness, grudges, hidden feelings, biases, and grievances that cannot withstand public scrutiny and mislead public opinion and decision-making—making it often difficult to judge as simply good or bad, right or wrong [11]—the American think tank market operation model provides a reference for think tank market theory, offering new perspectives and insights for deeply understanding American think tank operations and exploring think tank market theory.

In constructing new types of Chinese think tanks with distinctive features, China also needs a strong think tank market that can absorb advanced foreign ideas and beneficial experiences, resist Western infiltration, and provide problem-solving countermeasures and suggestions to provide intellectual support for decision-making. The experience of American think tank market development offers some beneficial enlightenment worthy of further exploration.

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