

## Successful Internationalization Experiences and Implications from Foreign Think Tanks: Post-print

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### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] Internationalization is one of the important tasks in the construction of new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics. As a late-comer in internationalization, Chinese think tanks need to learn from and draw upon the successful internationalization experiences of foreign think tank pioneers. [Method/Process] This study selected 10 think tanks at different development stages and with different growth models internationally for in-depth case studies, with research materials all sourced from the official websites of each think tank. Individual case articles were developed through data collection, organization, and analysis. Based on these individual case studies, the successful internationalization experiences of various types of think tanks were inductively summarized. [Results/Conclusion] The author argues that, in terms of strategic positioning, think tank internationalization requires a global vision and layout, leaders who play a core role, and a balance between government engagement and independent research; in terms of operational models, think tank internationalization requires sufficient research funding, high-caliber researchers, high-quality research outputs, and various forms of international cooperation.

### Full Text

## The Successful Experience and Enlightenment of Foreign Think Tanks' Internationalization

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## Abstract

**[Purpose/Significance]** Internationalization represents a critical task in constructing new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics. As relative newcomers to internationalization, Chinese think tanks must learn from the successful experiences of their foreign predecessors. **[Method/Process]** This study selected ten think tanks from different countries at various developmental stages and with diverse growth models for in-depth case analysis. All research materials were sourced from the official websites of these think tanks. Through data collection, organization, and analysis, individual case studies were developed, which then served as the foundation for summarizing the successful internationalization experiences across different categories of think tanks. **[Result/Conclusion]** We argue that in terms of strategic positioning, think tank internationalization requires a global vision and layout, leaders who play a central role, and a balance between government communication and independent research. Operationally, it demands adequate research funding, high-level researchers, high-quality research outputs, and diverse forms of international cooperation. Finally, we discuss the implications of these experiences for China.

**Keywords:** foreign think tanks; internationalization; successful experience; enlightenment for China

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## 1. Clear Strategic Positioning

Strategic positioning refers to a think tank's selection and determination of research fields and geographical scope, essentially addressing the questions of "what to do" and "where to do it." The successful internationalization experiences of foreign think tanks are primarily manifested in three aspects.

### 1.1 A Global Vision and Layout

While different think tanks maintain their own area-specific focus, possessing a global vision and concern constitutes an important prerequisite for successful internationalization in the era of globalization. This global perspective is mainly reflected in the establishment of research agendas and the worldwide distribution of research institutions.

Brookings Institution's 2014 expenditures, published in 2015, reveal its global vision: what was originally an institute focused primarily on U.S. domestic issues now allocates its largest expenditure share to foreign policy (31%), followed by economic studies (23%), urban policy research (16%), global economic research (14%), and governance studies (9%). In terms of geographical distribution, Brookings has successively established the Center for East Asia Policy Studies (1998), the Saban Center for Middle East Policy (2002), the Center on the United States and Europe (2004), the John L. Thornton China Center (2006), and the Brookings Doha Center (2007), among others. In October

2013, it launched the Lee Kuan Yew Southeast Asia Studies Center (under the East Asia Policy Studies Center) to intensify research on major regions and U.S. relations with other major powers. The successive establishment of overseas operational centers—the Brookings-Tsinghua Center in 2006 and the Brookings Doha Center in 2007—realized the physical operation of overseas branches and represented a solid step forward in Brookings’ globalization.

Since its founding, Nomura Research Institute (NRI) determined to expand overseas and has paid great attention to cultivating employees’ global perspective. By establishing branches in developed regions and areas with development potential worldwide, NRI actively gathers information on politics, economics, military affairs, and culture to provide robust support for its business operations. NRI’s global office locations span mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines in Asia; and Russia, Luxembourg, and the United Kingdom in Europe. Moreover, NRI’s overseas research institutions are highly targeted, with the primary purpose of promptly grasping overseas market trends to serve Japan’s foreign trade. For instance, NRI’s New York office focuses on investigating the economy, military, and politics of the world’s leading power; its London office leverages the city’s status as a global financial and intelligence hub to collect political and energy information from Europe and the Middle East; its Singapore, Hong Kong, and Beijing offices reflect Japan’s attention to Southeast Asia and China’s rise; and its Moscow office was established specifically for Japan’s participation in Russian energy development.

## 1.2 The Unique Charisma and Multiple Roles of Core Leadership

For any think tank, its founder, board chair, or president constitutes the core leadership, whose personal vision and influence largely determine the institution’s strategic positioning and scope of influence.

The founding of the National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR) originated from the timely concern and reflection of U.S. Senator Henry Jackson. Throughout his career, Jackson served in Congress alongside nine presidents (from Franklin D. Roosevelt to Ronald Reagan), a time span exceeding one-fifth of the United States’ history. It was his firm belief in strengthening Asian studies to achieve more effective foreign policy that led to NBR’s establishment.

NRI’s predecessor was the Research Department of Nomura Securities, founded with assets of approximately 500 million yen and 130 employees, claiming to be Japan’s first modern “think tank.” Nomura Tokushichi, founder of Nomura Securities, was a visionary entrepreneur whose slogan was “Research is the guarantee for prosperous enterprises and overseas expansion.” When NRI was initially established, Tokushichi set down three creeds: develop together with clients, expand overseas, and emphasize research related to the first two principles. These became NRI’s corporate motto. NRI’s mission is “creating the future” —the NRI Group must continuously generate new business models and

boldly tackle an unclear, unpredictable future.

The Aspen Institute's establishment, development, and path to internationalization are inseparable from the contributions of its successive presidents. As the first president, Paepcke invested considerable energy in hardware aspects such as funding, personnel, and infrastructure, while also establishing the institute's purpose, development goals, and broad direction of humanities research, paving the way for its growth. After its founding, Paepcke vigorously recruited talent from all walks of life, giving the institute the initial characteristics of a global elite club. Slaughter was another pivotal figure for the Aspen Institute. Whether in expanding research fields or establishing international branches, Slaughter demonstrated remarkable foresight, leading the institute onto the formal path of internationalization. Meanwhile, the network Slaughter built through his rich life experiences greatly facilitated the institute's development. During his tenure, the institute's staff achieved qualitative leaps in both quantity and quality.

### **1.3 Maintaining Good Government Communication Alongside Independent Research**

A successful think tank must ground itself in real-world issues, rely on theoretical foundations, identify policy deficiencies, propose practical solutions, and then influence elite decision-making or public opinion through various communication channels to build social impact. Achieving these goals requires both independent research and smooth political communication channels, as well as maintaining good relations with government.

Brookings Institution's enduring success is closely related to its consistent adherence to a nonpartisan, neutral stance, which prevents it from becoming a mouthpiece for any particular party and ensures the fairness and objectivity of its research. New York City Mayor Hon. Michael Bloomberg stated in 2007: "Precisely because Brookings Institution can transcend party limitations, it has won a special level of respect in Washington, and maintaining this nonpartisanship is no easy feat on a stage built on partisan games." Although Brookings maintains a closer relationship with the Democratic Party, it remains overall a neutral, nonpartisan, and inclusive think tank. Its relatively neutral attitude has earned respect and trust from both parties, attracting talent from different political parties and beliefs and making its research more objective and impartial. This rare and valuable trait is crucial for the institute's development and for establishing its credibility.

Simultaneously, thanks to the "revolving door" mechanism, Brookings has maintained significant influence across successive governments. As a traditionally established think tank with close government ties, Brookings has never lacked scholars serving in key government positions. Current Brookings President Strobe Talbott served as Deputy Secretary of State during the Clinton administration; former Vice President James Steinberg (2001-2005) served as Special

Advisor to the Secretary of State in the George H.W. Bush administration, and as Deputy Secretary of State, Deputy National Security Advisor, and Director of Policy Planning in the Clinton administration.

The Norwegian Centre for Human Rights has become an influential international research institution in the human rights field not only because it is based at the University of Oslo with deep research capabilities, but also due to its status as a national institution. As Norway's national human rights institution, the Centre participates in a series of international activities on behalf of Norway in accordance with international treaties and practices, maintaining good communication, interaction, and cooperation with numerous international organizations, institutions, and national representatives, making it an indispensable part of the international network of national institutions. As a national human rights institution, it is also responsible for monitoring and improving Norway's national human rights situation, giving it an official character and certain authority, while Norway's excellent human rights record also enhances the Centre's research and work. Naturally, as a national institution, the Centre receives substantial research funding and projects from the Norwegian government annually. Thus, the Centre's dual identity as both a research institution and an official body provides it with unique advantages to become an internationally leading human rights research institution.

## 2. Distinctive Operation Models

If possessing a global strategic vision determines the height of a think tank's development, then a distinctive operation model that matches this strategic positioning constitutes a crucial factor in determining a think tank's sustainability. An operation model refers to the manner in which a think tank operates, primarily addressing the question of "how to do it." A distinctive operation model means a particular think tank possesses characteristics different from other think tanks that match its own resources and capabilities.

### 2.1 Adequate Research Funding

As nonprofit institutions, the adequacy of funding directly relates to whether they can operate effectively. Furthermore, funding sources are directly related to researchers' capabilities, the quality of research output, and the independence of the research process.

Saferworld maintains an extensive funding chain beyond support from the UK government, including appropriations from the governments of Canada, Denmark, the EU, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden; funding from trusts and individuals; and donations from institutions such as the European Commission and the United Nations Development Programme. These financial inputs play important roles in institutional construction, capital circulation, and peacebuilding, while also activating further cooperative relationships between Saferworld and countries where it operates.

The successful implementation of research and programs at the National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR) relies on long-term and stable external financial support. NBR's research funding sources are highly diverse, encompassing foundations (such as the Bradley Foundation, Henry M. Jackson Foundation, and Henry Luce Foundation), corporations (including General Electric, Microsoft, and ConocoPhillips), government agencies (such as the Japan External Trade Organization), other institutions (like the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States), and individual donors. This broad funding base has enabled NBR to produce high-quality research on U.S. policy and interests in the Asia-Pacific region and to convene important figures from political, business, and academic circles worldwide. According to statistics, in NBR's 2012 expenditures, charitable donations accounted for 11%, operational expenses for 15%, while 75% was spent on program research. This essential material foundation laid the groundwork for NBR's expanding international influence.

The European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) maintains stable and diversified funding sources, with donations from different institutions flowing to different projects and topics. Major funding sources include foundations, government agencies, and individuals. In 2013, for example, ECFR received a total of £5.4 million in donations, with foundation donations accounting for 51%, government agencies for 21%, corporate donations for 7%, individual donations for 4%, and in-kind contributions for 17%. Foundation donations constitute ECFR's primary funding source.

## 2.2 Gathering High-Level, International Professional Research Talent

For a think tank, nothing is more important than capability. A research institution's overall level primarily depends on its researchers' knowledge, skills, and intellect. High-quality talent plays a decisive role in an institution's development, and internationally renowned think tanks often function as reservoirs of senior talent.

Brookings Institution attracts and employs first-rate professionals from the United States and around the world, many of whom are highly respected or globally renowned. The institution currently employs nearly 300 people, including both experts and administrative staff. Among its more than 200 experts working on nearly 85 projects are 95 senior fellows. These experts come from diverse backgrounds, including resident, non-resident, and visiting scholars. They possess strong academic credentials, and their viewpoints and publications carry significant influence in academia, earning Brookings the reputation of a "university without students." Many scholars have served in government departments and private enterprises, earning them the title of "academic practitioners." These experts' research capabilities and international reputation ensure the high quality, authority, and continuity of Brookings' research output.

The European Council on Foreign Relations' unique personnel composition also

contributes to its success. Over 50% of ECFR members have backgrounds in government or intergovernmental international organizations, with the vast majority being current or former senior officials from European governments and EU institutions. Most of these members with distinguished official backgrounds have been or are policymakers (or participants in policymaking) for European foreign policy, creating unique social and political resources for ECFR and providing it with innate conditions for enhancing social influence that ordinary international think tanks cannot match. Simultaneously, ECFR has assembled a group of world-leading researchers in foreign policy studies to work on various projects, ensuring the high standards and quality of its academic output and laying a solid academic foundation for enhancing its influence. Additionally, many ECFR members have served or continue to serve as senior members of other foundations or international organizations, bringing extensive experience in think tank or foundation operations that contributes to ECFR's efficient functioning.

In addition to directly recruiting outstanding talent, cultivating talent internally represents another human resource model for many think tanks. The Asan Academy of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies aims to cultivate future Korean leaders. Each semester, it selectively recruits outstanding university students for an intensive 15-week training program covering Korean history, Eastern and Western philosophy, political science, international politics, international political economy, economics, and English. Beyond coursework, Asan Academy students are sent to renowned foreign think tanks and NGOs for three-month internships. This combination of theory and practice cultivates young talent, injecting "fresh blood" into the Asan Institute's long-term development while also training reserve forces for the Korean government and academia. Beyond the Asan Academy program, the Asan Institute also prepares for its future through its "Internship Program," held three times annually. Each cohort completes a 16-week internship, with performance determining future employment. Interns enhance their capabilities by planning, organizing, and moderating Asan Institute roundtable discussions, conferences, and forums, while also potentially participating in research projects, translating and compiling research materials, and disseminating Asan publications and research reports online. Through the Asan Institute platform, interns also receive leadership training and engage in discussions with renowned scholars and policy experts from top think tanks and international organizations. These activities help interns develop practical capabilities and represent an important pathway for cultivating reserve talent, laying a human resource foundation for the Asan Institute's sustained influence.

Beyond human resources, unique research perspectives and methodologies constitute another crucial factor in core resources. The Aspen Institute represents an important force in American humanities and social sciences research. It pays close attention to real-world society, excels at identifying new social problems and studying them, and often creates innovative methods to solve these problems before introducing them into academic disciplines to expand research fields. The new perspectives proposed by the institute not only affect social change but

also enrich theoretical research and provide new impetus for humanities and social sciences studies. For a research institution, emphasizing the significance of human factors in modern social development and problem-solving is quite unique. This approach not only attracts numerous outstanding literary and academic figures to join but also gives Aspen distinctive characteristics from the outset. Compared with contemporaneous think tanks such as RAND Corporation, Council on Foreign Relations, and Brookings Institution, which have relatively strong political colors, the Aspen Institute can be considered a model “think tank” in the humanities and social sciences, playing certain roles in education, international exchange, decision-making studies, comparative literature, and management. Moreover, the research topics Aspen selects concern fundamental issues of human and social development, giving its research an ultimate value that commands greater respect.

### **2.3 High-End Research Results or Brand Projects with International Influence**

Excellent research institutions must produce high-quality research results or possess distinctive brand projects to gain public trust and popularity, establish authority and uniqueness, achieve broad recognition of their professional image, continuously enhance influence, and expand their space for survival.

For over four decades, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has enjoyed a worldwide reputation for its persistent independent assessment of global security issues. Since 1969, it has published an annual yearbook evaluating the previous year’s major armed conflicts worldwide, multilateral peace operations, national military expenditures, arms production and sales, nuclear and biological weapons status and control, conventional arms control, and other issues. This represents the most comprehensive and in-depth single publication covering international and regional security and conflicts, peace-keeping operations, military expenditures, arms production, weapons transfers, weapons of mass destruction, arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation. Its output has become an authoritative source frequently used by international political circles, researchers, journalists, and scholars. This unique research field has given SIPRI unparalleled global influence in arms control research. Additionally, SIPRI’s fully open database serves as the most authoritative and comprehensive public source of information for global political circles, researchers, media professionals, and scholars.

In terms of brand projects, the “Aspen Ideas Festival” represents the Aspen Institute’s signature program, characterized by its global reach, authority, and innovation. Festival themes encompass global politics and economics, U.S. policy, environment, technology, science, health, education, arts, and economic issues. Each year, numerous celebrities from various fields attend the Aspen Ideas Festival, and their speeches become shining highlights. Speakers typically possess diverse backgrounds, including politicians, diplomats, presidents, judges, scientists, musicians, entrepreneurs, artists, designers, and reformers.

The project's purpose is to share speakers' experiential knowledge on topics related to their professional expertise and areas of interest.

The "European Foreign Policy Scorecard" project represents the European Council on Foreign Relations' most distinctive and innovative research initiative. The Scorecard systematically quantitatively assesses the performance of EU institutions and member states across six major themes and nearly 80 policy areas in foreign policy each year, representing performance with corresponding scores and publishing the results as an annual report. The Scorecard annual report clearly reflects the EU's performance in handling these nearly 80 policy issues under the six major themes each year, providing very objective, convenient, and effective perspectives for EU institutions, member state governments, and readers interested in EU issues. The Scorecard project has won widespread acclaim for ECFR and significantly enhanced its social influence and visibility.

As an academic research think tank, the India China Fellowship Program constitutes the core program of the India China Institute, aiming to build a team of experts and scholars using rigorous, multidisciplinary approaches to explore India and China as they re-emerge on the world stage. Since 2006, three cohorts have participated in addressing challenging questions under three themes: urbanization and globalization; prosperity and inequality; and social innovation for environmental sustainability. These represent the key issues of focus for the India China Institute. This program is considered the cornerstone for promoting research, exchange, and cooperation among scholars from the New School, India, and China.

## 2.4 Efficient and Comprehensive Communication Methods

The magnitude of influence is directly related to the effectiveness of communication. Without efficient and comprehensive communication methods, think tanks cannot maximize their public opinion influence.

The Aspen Institute, as an elite think tank, actively conducts domestic activities while vigorously enhancing its international visibility through its journals, book series, media, and online promotion. It also excels at leveraging renowned international organizations, particularly the United Nations, by providing conference preparation and policy recommendations to publicize itself, which to a large extent establishes Aspen's unique international status.

SIPRI's worldwide reputation is also inseparable from its communication channels. The institute distributes its publications to governments, UN delegations, NGOs, policymakers, experts, and news agencies worldwide, and has exchange agreements with libraries in many countries to provide free publications. Its *SIPRI Yearbook: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* is published in multiple languages.

In recent years, online media has become an important component of Brookings Institution's global communication strategy due to its speed, interactivity, and

global reach. Brookings invests heavily in website design, maintenance, and updates. Online, audiences can read policy reports, purchase books, and listen to or watch recordings of conferences and scholars' interviews on electronic media. By registering as members, audiences receive free regular updates on the latest policy information and conference invitations. These websites also allow visitors to download all research materials for free. Additionally, the institute publishes lists of management members and all scholars with their contact information, enabling audiences to communicate directly with these scholars. In 2009, Brookings launched its Chinese-language website primarily to enhance its brand recognition and policy influence in China. Brookings' website offers not only email subscription services but also multimedia and blogs, essentially functioning as a one-stop media supermarket.

ECFR's efficient use of the internet and social media has enabled rapid dissemination and promotion of its think tank brand. Its podcasts and blogs have tens of thousands of subscribers, and on popular social networks like Twitter, ECFR has attracted tens of thousands of global followers. Through comprehensive, efficient, and diversified use of modern networks, ECFR has gained widespread attention and established its position in European foreign policy research.

## 2.5 Diversified Partnerships

Cooperation and collaborative innovation are buzzwords of our era. For think tanks that need to widely disseminate ideas and expand influence, having diversified partnership networks becomes an important method and channel.

The India China Institute, based at The New School in the United States, is an academic research institution that attaches great importance to cooperation with universities in India, China, and the United States. It maintains close ties with many universities in these three countries, and the experts invited to its events include not only institute researchers but also many scholars and professors from renowned universities in these nations, giving its research strong academic and forward-looking characteristics. Since its establishment, the India China Institute has continuously expanded the types of its partners, gradually diversifying its partnership network. Beyond numerous universities and its initial partnership with Horizon Research Consultancy Group, it has also cooperated with environmental NGOs on environmental sustainability. It partners with other institutions such as the Rubin Museum of Art, the Skyscraper Museum, and independent publisher Anthem Press. Speakers and participants in its projects and activities are no longer limited to scholars and students but include many corporate chairpersons from these three countries.

The National Bureau of Asian Research maintains a strong cooperative orientation. Specifically, NBR's partners include foundations, universities, and think tanks. Most of its projects are collaborative, ensuring greater impact. For example, NBR jointly organized the "National Asia Research Program" with the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars to revitalize and

enhance contemporary Asia policy-related research. Under this program, NBR and the Wilson Center jointly selected biennial expert teams based on research standards, jointly held annual Asia policy assemblies and several regional conferences, and published co-authored research results. Additionally, NBR frequently co-hosts seminars with research institutions from other countries, engaging in strategic dialogues with other research and educational associations to build solid relationships and enhance its international influence.

Nomura Research Institute, through thorough self-assessment and understanding of others, cleverly utilizes its resources to identify potential development trends in its regions of operation, creating workable cooperation platforms for partners' future development while uniting relevant enterprises, research institutions, and even governments. This approach facilitates NRI's business operations while circumventing local policy obstacles and maximally mobilizes the resources needed for project implementation. In China, NRI has incorporated local renowned universities (Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, Tsinghua University), research institutions (Chinese Academy of Sciences), and powerful large enterprises (China Mobile, China Unicom, etc.) into its business activities as partners, while local governments and even entire society become its service targets, greatly enhancing its local visibility and influence.

### 3. Implications for Chinese Think Tank Construction

The development of modern Chinese think tanks has paralleled the reform and opening-up process. Over the past 30-plus years, China has basically formed a situation where government-affiliated think tanks, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences think tanks, university think tanks, and private think tanks develop together. However, overall, Chinese think tanks remain in the initial stages of development, with most still having considerable gaps compared to world-class think tanks. On one hand, China lacks high-end think tanks with global influence; on the other hand, China's globalized development urgently requires strong support from internationally influential think tanks. In the self-construction and development of Chinese think tanks, we must actively learn from the experiences of successful foreign think tanks. Simultaneously, we must recognize that think tank growth cannot be separated from constraints and influences of local political and cultural environments, and that no fixed model or single development path guarantees successful acquisition of high international influence. Only by examining Chinese think tanks' gaps from a global perspective and critically analyzing their current situation and problems with rational thinking can we further promote their development.

What does a successful think tank require? John Thornton, Chairman of Brookings Institution's Board of Trustees, believes: "The key to becoming a top think tank lies in three core values: quality, independence, and impact." In the strategic task of constructing new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics, Chinese think tanks, as providers of decision-making consultation products, need to rebuild their social responsibility, while the government, as the primary manager

and demander, should attach strategic importance to and actively promote the development of modern Chinese think tanks as a strategic force. Specifically, strengthening the construction of new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics requires focused efforts in the following areas.

### **3.1 Seizing Opportunities to Further Strengthen “Government-Think Tank” Integration**

Objectively speaking, China has not yet formed a large-scale policy consulting market, and the institutional mechanisms for Chinese think tanks to fully participate in public policy formation remain imperfect. In this sense, the sharpening and breakthrough of Chinese think tanks cannot occur without strong support and demand-driven impetus from national decision-making departments based on their recognition and trust. Policy formulation is a systematic process including front-end research, opinion solicitation, and program design; mid-stage implementation testing and feedback; and back-end evaluation, improvement, and social opinion response. In China, most of these tasks are currently undertaken by government departments at various levels. The growth environment for Chinese think tanks differs most from the West in terms of the policy demand market. However, objectively speaking, government departments at all levels cannot cover everything in detail. Therefore, as the Chinese government intensifies its functional transformation and as decision-making consultation systems are established and improved, broad space exists for Chinese think tank growth and continues to expand.

In January 2015, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the “Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of New-Type Think Tanks with Chinese Characteristics” [2], stating: “We must, from the strategic height of the overall development of the Party and the state, regard the construction of new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics as a major and urgent task, and take effective measures to grasp and manage it well.” This presents both challenges for Chinese think tank development and broad space for various think tanks to play their roles. Seizing these growth opportunities constitutes a prerequisite for the rapid development of Chinese think tanks. Additionally, learning from European and American practices and establishing and improving laws and regulations concerning think tank consultation in public decision-making, incorporating decision-making consultation into decision-making mechanisms, and institutionalizing and legalizing it constitute important guarantees for the leapfrog development of Chinese think tanks.

### **3.2 Clarifying Positioning to Improve Existing Structural Problems**

The characterization that “official think tanks lack independence, academic think tanks are disconnected from society, and private think tanks face identity dilemmas” vividly describes the structural problems of Chinese think tanks. Focusing on policy influence and excelling in applied research are characteristics

of think tanks, and the proposition that research institutions are not entirely equivalent to think tanks is very important. The substantive role of think tanks is to use rigorous academic standards to seek solutions to real-world problems under clear policy guidance, thereby achieving the goals of influencing decision-making, influencing the public, and influencing media.

Moreover, the relationship between think tanks and government should not be simply “independent” or “subordinate,” but rather comprehensive and multi-dimensional interaction. Chinese think tanks must find the optimal balance between exerting influence on government and maintaining research independence, and this balance point is objectivity and seeking truth from facts. They should maintain credibility in the minds of policymakers and the public, especially preventing two extreme tendencies: “becoming a government vassal” and “pandering to public opinion.” Therefore, in the tide of constructing new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics, promoting the “de-administrativization” of official think tanks, the “grounding” of academic think tanks, and the “innovation” of private think tanks are necessary paths.

### **3.3 Taking a Long-term View: Chinese Think Tank Construction Requires Global Height and Vision**

On one hand, “based domestically, with a global mind” should be the basic requirement for China’s top think tanks. In today’s globalized world, where domestic politics is internationalized and international politics is domesticated, focusing solely on domestic issues likely cannot produce policy knowledge products that meet the needs of the globalization era. Conducting international exchanges and cooperation, even establishing overseas branches, obtaining authentic information from different countries and regions, carrying out interdisciplinary comparative research, and promoting the internationalization of decision-making consultation are all practical necessities.

On the other hand, introducing international management experience, attracting international talent, integrating international resources, and producing brand products with international influence should all be development goals for China’s top think tanks. The construction of new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics must be forward-looking and adapt to the development needs of domestic and international policy consumption markets. They must actively expand forward-looking research fields and produce forward-looking intellectual products, as only in this way can think tanks maximize their value.

### **3.4 Open Cooperation: Chinese Think Tanks in the Information Age Need Comprehensive Communication Skills and Cooperative Concepts**

With internet technology, new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics should exist in more real-time and interactive forms. The transformative power of information technology on think tanks from form to content must not be

underestimated. The old-style “good wine needs no bush” approach to research no longer suits this era of high-speed information. Mature think tanks must not only influence policy decision-makers but also affect society and cultivate mature publics. They must not only possess professional leadership capabilities in domestic fields but also speak out internationally to highlight China’s discourse power. Achieving such influence goals requires constructing multi-dimensional communication networks. In the new media era, using public relations techniques and adjusting communication media and methods according to audience needs are essential. Chinese think tanks should keep pace with and adapt to these changes rather than be left behind by the internet era, fully utilizing new media, new technologies, and new business forms to enhance decision-making research levels and public influence. They need to establish comprehensive, multi-level information dissemination mechanisms and focus more on conducting research that can be adopted by decision-makers, understood by the public, recognized by the world, and maintains academic quality, thereby maximizing the impact of think tank research results.

Furthermore, promoting the expansion of think tank functions and collaborative innovation among different types of think tanks is the necessary path for developing new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics. Currently, Chinese think tanks have already shown a development trend of diversified organizational backgrounds. On this stage of policy ideas, different think tanks are not only competitors in policy viewpoints but also collaborators who learn from each other’s strengths. A good competitive and cooperative atmosphere constitutes important soil for the growth of quality Chinese think tanks.

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

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