

## The Traction and Linkage Functions of the Decision-Making Consultation System: Post-print

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### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] Establishing and improving the decision consultation system constitutes a prerequisite condition and external driving force for breaking through the development bottlenecks of new-type think tanks and facilitating their better performance. [Method/Process] To advance the construction of new-type think tanks, it is imperative to exert efforts on the demand side, enhance the proactive policy-seeking awareness of decision-making bodies, optimize decision-making methods and procedures, improve decision consultation legislation, innovate decision consultation policies and institutions, forge synergies in decision consultation, and strengthen both the guiding role of the decision-making system and the linking function of the decision consultation system. [Results/Conclusions] New-type think tanks must enhance their awareness of role, clientele, professionalism, and responsibility, improve supply quality, refine supply methods, and achieve efficient alignment and positive interaction with the needs of decision-making departments.

### Full Text

## On the Traction and Link Function of the Decision-Making Consultation System—Based on the Positive Interaction Between Government and Think Tanks

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### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] Establishing and improving the decision-making consultation system constitutes the precondition and external driving force for

breaking through the development bottlenecks of new-type think tanks and enabling them to better fulfill their functions. **[Method/Process]** To promote the construction of new-type think tanks, it is urgently necessary to exert efforts on the demand side by enhancing decision-making bodies' awareness of proactively seeking policy advice, optimizing decision-making procedures, improving decision-making consultation legislation, innovating consultation policies and institutions, forming synergistic consultation forces, and strengthening both the traction of the decision-making system and the linking function of the decision-making consultation system. **[Result/Conclusion]** New-type think tanks must enhance their awareness of roles, customers, professionalism, and responsibility; improve the quality of their supply and the methods of delivery; and achieve efficient alignment and positive interaction with the needs of decision-making departments.

**Keywords:** think tank; decision-making; consultation; link; system

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The 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China emphasized the need to “uphold scientific, democratic, and law-based decision-making, improve decision-making mechanisms and procedures, and give full play to the role of think tanks.” The Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee proposed “strengthening the construction of new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics and establishing and improving the decision-making consultation system.” The Fourth Plenary Session stressed the importance of improving law-based decision-making mechanisms by establishing public participation, expert consultation, risk assessment, legality review, and collective discussion as statutory procedures for major administrative decisions.

In May 2016, at the symposium on philosophy and social sciences, General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that “Party committees and governments at all levels should give full play to the important role of philosophy and social sciences in state governance” and that “they should strengthen information sharing and interactive communication between decision-making departments and think tanks, closely integrate policy research by Party and government departments with countermeasure research by think tanks, and guide and promote the healthy development of think tanks so they can better play their role” [1]. These statements set clear requirements for Party committees, governments, and their policy research departments to value, connect with, and effectively utilize think tanks. In July of the same year, at the symposium on the economic situation with experts, General Secretary Xi called on Party committees and governments at all levels to cultivate the habit of consulting experts and scholars, mobilize their enthusiasm, initiative, and creativity, and make good and flexible use of intellectual resources. He emphasized that correct opinions and suggestions from experts should be actively adopted. In fact, the collective study sessions of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, which invite experts to explain relevant issues, represent another form of decision-making consultation and expert consultation. Therefore, promoting the institutionalization of

decision-making consultation, giving full play to the role of think tanks, supporting scientific decision-making with scientific consultation, and guiding scientific development with scientific decision-making have become distinctive features of General Secretary Xi Jinping's governance philosophy.

## **1. Improving Decision-Making and Consultation Systems to Enhance the Development of New-Type Think Tanks**

Think tank development follows its own laws. The primary responsibility of Party committees and governments is not to participate in the micro-level construction of new-type think tanks but to create favorable policy environments and external conditions for their development. Currently, local governments have attached considerable importance to and provided substantial support for think tank construction itself. Regrettably, however, the decision-making system has not yet completely broken away from traditional paths. The relatively closed decision-making system and relatively arbitrary consultation procedures often prevent new-type think tanks from effectively embedding themselves in the decision-making process, making it difficult for them to fully play their role. Establishing and improving the decision-making consultation system constitutes an important institutional condition for promoting the construction of new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics. It not only helps address the problem of insufficient effective supply from think tanks but also helps solve the problem of inadequate effective demand for policy decision-making consultation. This represents a crucial pre-emptive driving force for promoting positive interaction between the decision-making system and the think tank system.

### **1.1 Think Tanks Have Increasingly Become the Main Body for Party and Government Decision-Making Consultation**

Modernizing the governance system and governance capabilities cannot be achieved without the participation of experts and the support of think tanks. We can analyze decision-makers' dependence on experts and think tanks through the lens of social development. During the era of rule, society was primarily agrarian, and decisions were dominated by the rulers' will. Experience-based governance was the main form, with strategists and advisors assisting decision-making when necessary. During the era of management, society was primarily industrial, and management relied more on rules. The main role of think tanks was to concretize the managers' will, which was highly passive and still largely dependent on experience, making the role of decision-making consultation less critical. In the era of governance and good governance, the arrival of the information age and network society, along with the diversification of state and social governance subjects, has made experts and the public themselves important governance actors who need to play significant roles in social governance. Meanwhile, due to diverse interests and the complexity of social governance networks, decision-makers can no longer rely solely on their own experience, knowledge, wisdom, and capabilities.

The traditional advisor model can no longer adapt to these new conditions, necessitating greater reliance on external brains and the role of specialized decision-making consultation institutions—think tanks. Consequently, think tanks have become one of the most important auxiliary tools for leaders in governing the country and society, even being referred to as the “fifth power” alongside legislation, administration, judiciary, and media.

In terms of consultation objects and subjects for decision-making institutions, these can include the public, experts, research institutions, or think tanks. As decision-making conditions become increasingly complex and the decision-making environment changes rapidly, the main body of Party and government decision-making consultation is shifting from individual experts to think tank institutions, from advisors to think tanks, from emotional participation to rational demonstration, from theoretical deduction to model-based deduction, and from primarily relying on social sciences to giving equal weight to both social and natural sciences. This is particularly true for economic and industrial decisions, where technological factors are increasingly emphasized. This transformation not only improves consultation efficiency but also enhances the scientific credibility of decision-making consultation.

## **1.2 The Institutionalization of Decision-Making Consultation Reflects a New Governance Style**

Institutionalizing the extensive solicitation of opinions from experts and scholars on important decisions concerning economic and social development represents an important manifestation of General Secretary Xi Jinping’s emphasis on maintaining close ties with the people in the leadership decision-making process. It is a crucial component of the Party’s efforts to promote scientific and democratic decision-making. Strengthening the construction of new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics and establishing and improving the decision-making consultation system constitute one of the governance approaches established by the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core: in April 2013, important instructions were given on think tank construction; in October 2014, a meeting of the Central Leading Group for Deepening Reform was held to discuss the “Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of New-Type Think Tanks with Chinese Characteristics” ; in November 2015, the Central Leading Group for Deepening Reform approved the pilot work plan for national high-end think tank construction; and in May 2016, clear requirements for think tank construction were put forward at the symposium on philosophy and social sciences. Strengthening the construction of new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics has become an important national strategy. This requires leaders at all levels and government departments to consult the people, seek strategies from think tanks, listen to multiple perspectives, and pool collective wisdom when analyzing problems, assessing situations, planning work, and making decisions. Through this process, they can consciously understand, accurately grasp, and better follow economic and natural laws, continuously improving their ability

to promote reform and opening up, lead economic and social development, and enhance development quality and efficiency.

### **1.3 The Decision-Making Consultation System Is an Important Condition for Think Tanks to Play Their Role**

Think tank development is highly dependent on demand for decision-making consultation, and the role of think tanks is largely passive. Establishing and improving the decision-making consultation system and achieving its institutionalization and legalization are important prerequisites and conditions for new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics to play their role. First, think tanks have multiple functions. The Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee discussed think tanks within the context of decision-making, emphasizing their decision-making consultation service function. Second, think tanks are closely related to the decision-making consultation system. If we focus solely on strengthening think tank construction without reforming the decision-making system to release demand for consultation, think tanks will struggle to play their role, and think tank product overcapacity may easily emerge. Currently, we need to give equal weight to strengthening think tank construction and improving the decision-making consultation system, using the improvement of the decision-making consultation system to promote the healthy development of new-type think tanks. Third, strengthening the connection between decision-making institutions and think tank institutions and promoting positive interaction is an inevitable choice for improving the quality of think tank products. At present, due to certain blindness in think tank development, inadequate understanding of decision-making institutions' needs, and inaccurate grasp of those needs, many think tank research results suffer from homogenization and low-level repetition. They tend to be more interpretive than creative, more follow-up than forward-looking. Therefore, decision-making consultation also faces the challenge of reducing overcapacity and optimizing structure. Low-level repetitive products not only fail to serve decision-makers but sometimes even create policy noise that troubles them. There is an urgent need to advance supply-side structural reform in decision-making consultation to improve the precision of consultation services.

## **2. Construction Background and Main Components of the Decision-Making Consultation System Chain**

Currently, the overall development of new-type think tanks is positive, but there exists uneven development. First, there is enthusiasm at the top but coldness at the bottom. While the central and provincial levels attach great importance to think tank construction, the city and county levels pay insufficient attention to think tank construction and role performance. This does not mean that every county needs to build its own think tank, but grassroots decision-making also needs to rely on think tank strength, and think tanks established at the central and provincial levels can also provide decision-making consultation services

for grassroots governments. Second, the think tank community is enthusiastic while the decision-making circle remains cool. At present, domestic research institutions, including universities, have high enthusiasm for building think tanks, sparking a construction boom that includes establishing new think tanks, re-branding old institutions, setting up vertical branches, and forming horizontal alliances, with various activities and forums following one after another. In some localities, decision-making circles remain relatively calm and wait-and-see about think tank construction, skeptical about whether think tanks can play a role and uncertain about how to make them effective. This has resulted in some think tanks having nowhere to apply their strength, with intellectual resources being airdropped and institutions running idle, feeling they have “no way to serve the country.” Third, there is enthusiasm for external forms but coolness toward internal cultivation. Generally speaking, current think tank construction emphasizes form over content, with institutional construction lagging behind organizational construction, and quality and connotation failing to keep pace with the needs of the times and society [2]. As General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out at the symposium on philosophy and social sciences, think tank construction still suffers from emphasizing quantity over quality, form over content innovation, and formalistic practices such as setting up stages, inviting celebrities, and holding forums—all of which require high attention.

To analyze the causes of these problems, we must examine the systems related to think tank construction. Overall, there is insufficient institutional supply in all aspects of current think tank construction. New-type think tanks constitute a subsystem within the larger system of Party and government decision-making and operation, requiring us to focus on the broader environment of decision-making and implementation. The decision-making consultation system includes not only the decision-making system and expert participation in decision-making procedures but also the consultation system regarding the forms and methods of think tank participation in decision-making, as well as the system for how the decision-making process connects with consultation services. In this institutional system, the decision-making system, consultation system, deliberation system, and think tank operation and management system collectively form the ecological chain and institutional chain for the generation and development of new-type think tanks. Among them, the decision-making system is the leading link at the forefront of the chain, serving as the starter, tractor, and power source—the external driving force for new-type think tank development. The decision-making system is the pre-emptive power source for new-type think tank development and the driving wheel of the decision-making consultation institutional chain. Through the decision-making consultation mechanism, it transmits power to the think tank system, driving think tank development. The think tank operation system is the driven wheel of the decision-making consultation institutional chain, operating effectively under the drive of decision-making institutions’ demands and transmitting ideas and wisdom to decision-making departments for reference. The traction capacity of the decision-making system and the endogenous driving force of think tanks combine to drive the effective

operation of the decision-making consultation chain, giving the decision-making consultation system important linking functions throughout the entire process of new-type think tank construction. Therefore, constructing a scientific and efficient decision-making consultation institutional chain and system requires focusing on three key links:

First, the decision-making system reform link. Think tanks are intellectual service industries, and their development is highly dependent on demand for decision-making consultation. Without reform of the decision-making system and without decision-making demand as the overall traction, the development of new-type think tanks will lose external driving force, and think tank development driven by internal motivation may lose direction. The original decision-making system was not conducive to scientific, democratic, and law-based decision-making, nor was it conducive to the growth of think tanks. Reform efforts must be intensified to inject fresh impetus into new-type think tank development and reserve institutional interfaces for think tank involvement in government decision-making. Therefore, the decision-making system faces a reform imperative, and the degree to which reform is implemented determines whether think tanks can play their role.

Second, the consultation system establishment link. The consultation system mainly refers to the system that clarifies the responsibilities and obligations of both decision-making institutions and think tanks, links them together, and promotes better alignment, collaboration, and positive interaction between the two parties. For the consultation system, the challenge is how to establish it. Whether the construction is scientific determines whether think tanks can achieve institutionalized development. Due to the slow pace of current decision-making system reform and the ongoing construction of the decision-making consultation system, there are problems of insufficient driving power from the driving wheel and poor transmission from the transmission belt. Although the think tank system has begun to exert force and operate at high speed, it is mostly self-rotating and sometimes even idling. The current uneven development of think tanks can be attributed to think tanks themselves, but it is also closely related to factors such as insufficient attention from Party committees and governments to new-type think tank construction, inadequate participation, and poor alignment. To prevent think tanks from blindly self-rotating or idling ineffectively, effective linking and efficient alignment between the decision-making system and the think tank system must be achieved. After all, think tank activities without the participation of decision-makers and practical work departments can hardly achieve genuine decision-making consultation effects, and think tank results that cannot be transformed and applied by decision-makers and practical work departments lose their value and significance and largely constitute a social waste.

Third, the think tank internal system improvement link. New-type think tanks differ from traditional research institutions and have their own characteristics. They should establish a complete set of systems conducive to knowledge product

production and decision-making consultation role performance. These mainly include: improving organizational structures, establishing council systems, and promoting flattening of think tank institutions; perfecting internal operation systems to standardize work procedures such as preliminary research, data collection, report formation, and results release to ensure output quality; establishing results evaluation, transformation, and performance assessment systems compatible with the characteristics of think tank products; and strengthening systems for connections with government, media, and the public. In particular, think tanks transformed from social science research institutions must intensify reform efforts to quickly establish management systems and mechanisms compatible with think tank development requirements.

In short, promoting new-type think tank construction requires exerting efforts on both the supply side—focusing on improving think tank construction levels and supplying high-quality intellectual products—and the demand side—promoting leading cadres at all levels to value and make good use of think tanks, stimulating potentially strong consultation demand, and making consultation an institutional necessity in administrative decision-making, thereby forming a huge decision-making consultation market. We should promote a transformation from think tanks trying every means to ask the government for projects and submit reports to governments carefully selecting think tanks and seeking consultation, giving full play to the traction role of decision-making departments in new-type think tank construction.

### **3. Practical Paths for Establishing and Improving Decision-Making and Consultation Systems**

In the interactive system between government and think tanks, the government occupies a dominant and active position, playing a traction role in the decision-making consultation system and serving as the leading force in promoting new-type think tanks to embed themselves in decision-making and play their role. Establishing and improving the decision-making consultation system and promoting positive interaction between the decision-making system and the think tank system requires first exerting efforts from the government side—as both the demand side of decision-making consultation and the supply side of decision-making consultation institutions.

#### **3.1 Releasing Demand for Decision-Making Consultation**

Engels once said that social needs drive scientific development more than ten universities. General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that Party committees and governments at all levels should give full play to the important role of philosophy and social sciences in state governance. He emphasized that “leading cadres at all levels, especially principal responsible comrades, should possess relatively rich knowledge of both natural and social sciences to continuously improve their decision-making and leadership levels,” and that “leading cadres

should adopt a scientific attitude toward philosophy and social sciences, respect the hard work and research results of philosophy and social science workers, and not assume that they can talk about any philosophy and social science issue themselves, as if it were not a serious academic matter. They should actively engage with, befriend, and regularly assign topics to experts and scholars, and listen more to their opinions and suggestions” [1]. The key to improving the institutionalization of decision-making lies in enhancing decision-makers’ capabilities and levels, particularly their ability to make decisions under complex conditions. Decision-makers must be good at using external brains, willing to use, capable of using, skilled in using, and flexible in using think tanks. Therefore, leaders in decision-making departments should strive to improve their theoretical literacy in philosophy and social sciences, attach importance to decision-making consultation work and the strategic role of think tanks, and enhance their initiative, enthusiasm, and consciousness in seeking policy advice from think tanks. Through institutional design, we should stimulate and release decision-making departments’ demand for consultation, creating strong traction for new-type think tank development through government procurement of decision-making consultation services. By making decision-making consultation demand public, we can guide and focus think tanks’ research directions and enhance the relevance of their research results, avoiding the inefficiency caused by double-blind selection between decision-making institutions and think tank institutions. We should reduce intermediate links between decision-makers and think tanks, avoid information distortion after multiple transfers and filtering, actively engage in face-to-face dialogue and point-to-point consultation with think tank experts, and smooth channels for bilateral interaction and communication.

### 3.2 Promoting Decision-Making System Reform

With the increasing scientific, professional, and systematic nature of modern decision-making, there is an urgent need to formally incorporate think tanks’ “planning” (mou) as an indispensable link in the decision-making system through institutional arrangements, encourage competition among different think tanks, and form a “demand market” for policy consultation to advance the scientific, democratic, and law-based decision-making process of Party committees and governments. In the process of comprehensively deepening reform, we should intensify the government’ s self-reform, streamline its own research institutions, and gradually separate planning from decision-making, entrusting the collection of external information in the decision-making process to professional research institutions and think tanks. In accordance with the requirements of the Fourth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee on comprehensively governing the country according to law, we should improve legislation on decision-making procedures, stipulating that major decisions require think tank participation and follow the sequence of “planning” before “decision-making” (duan), thereby establishing the legal status of think tanks in public decision-making, strengthening government awareness of consciously and proactively “seeking policy advice” from think

tanks, and providing necessary platforms for new-type think tanks to play their role. We should clarify the conditions, content, and forms of expert and think tank participation in decision-making, define the rights and obligations of both parties, provide legal guarantees for think tanks and other organizations to intervene in the decision-making process, and create institutionalized platforms for think tank participation in decision-making.

### **3.3 Improving Decision-Making Consultation Legislation**

First, provide legal guarantees for think tank participation in decision-making. Drawing on international experience, it is recommended to introduce a “Government Procurement Law” to further clarify the equal contractual relationship based on contracts between decision-making departments as commissioning parties and think tanks as commissioned parties of decision-making consultation services. Second, grant legal status to social think tanks. Regarding the scope of decision-making consultation, we should focus not only on intra-system consultation by leveraging the role of government research institutions and official think tanks but also on extra-system consultation forces by actively playing the role of civilian research institutions and social think tanks. We should accelerate the pace of legislation on social organizations, grant social think tanks legal identity and status, and create a social environment conducive to their generation and development. Third, introduce supportive policies such as tax incentives for think tanks. Compared with general for-profit enterprises, the decision-making consultation function of think tanks determines their public welfare and non-profit nature. For social think tanks that are primarily operational, the state should provide certain support in terms of tax policy and other areas.

### **3.4 Innovating the Decision-Making Consultation System**

We should strengthen the construction of sub-policies and subordinate policies under meta-policy objectives and improve the decision-making consultation institutional system to provide institutionalized guarantees for think tanks to embed themselves in decision-making. First, improve the information disclosure system. Decision-making plans made under asymmetric information conditions may be biased or even lead to vastly different conclusions. Therefore, promoting government information disclosure and sharing is key to improving the quality of think tank products. Information disclosure includes not only information needed for decision-making but also information on the decision-making process and results. Second, implement an open bidding system for decision-making consultation. Decision-making departments should strengthen connections with think tanks and project management agencies. Project management agencies should release topics closely aligned with Party committees and governments’ decision-making needs, optimize and improve project bidding schemes, and make research topic design more closely match decision-making departments’ needs. For high-end key think tanks, while providing integrated policy support to promote their infrastructure development, we should gradually

transition to a project-based system and establish a market-demand-based competitive mechanism for decision-making consultation projects. Third, establish and improve a credit and performance evaluation system for decision-making consultation. In the process of public policy promotion, we should appropriately disclose the main sources of decision-making plans, measure the level of decision-making consultation through policy implementation results, and gradually establish a think tank credit evaluation system. In conducting third-party evaluations of public policies, we should simultaneously evaluate the degree and effectiveness of think tank participation. For decisions that cause major losses, while holding decision-making organs accountable, we should trace back to the institutions that provided suggestions and plans. If it is determined that the decision-making consultation product itself had major defects, corresponding accountability should be imposed.

#### **4. Strategic Choices for New-Type Think Tanks to Actively Align with Decision-Making Systems**

Precisely because the decision-making system and consultation system occupy an active position and play a traction role in the entire government-think tank system, new-type think tank construction itself also requires continuous optimization and reform to gradually establish a new-type think tank development mechanism oriented toward the decision-making needs of Party committees and governments. Currently, new-type think tanks need to focus on strengthening five areas of awareness.

##### **4.1 Strengthening Role Awareness**

New-type think tanks must have a clear understanding of their positioning and role, and properly handle several relationships. First, handle the relationship between proximity and distance. Think tanks should maintain a certain distance from the government but not become distant from it. Think tanks' viewpoints and positions should be as objective and neutral as possible, but complete independence is impossible. Maintaining appropriate contact with the government and understanding its main viewpoints and decision-making processes are prerequisites for think tanks to conduct decision-making consultation. The ideal distance between think tanks and decision-making institutions is an arm's length—close enough to observe public policy from the outside without being “in the midst of it,” yet near enough to observe and sense decision-makers' needs and be visible, accessible, and usable when the government needs them. Second, handle the relationship between planning (mou) and decision-making (duan). The professional and technical demonstration work in the decision-making process (i.e., “planning”) should be entrusted to qualified think tanks, while the government's role lies in selecting policy options (i.e., “decision-making”) and implementing decisions, truly achieving separation between planning and decision-making [3]. To this end, we should intensify the reform of government-built think tank institutions, scientifically and accurately define their functions, and reasonably

demarcate the boundaries between countermeasure research by think tank institutions and policy research within the government to avoid the confusion of political and intellectual functions caused by the internal administrative institutionalization of think tanks, where think tanks completely speak from the government's position or even interfere in public policy decision-making. Therefore, as new-type think tanks that gather public wisdom and ideas, they must scientifically grasp their own responsibility boundaries and properly manage the "degree" of participation in public policy. Third, handle the relationship between passive response and proactive initiative. For issues urgently needing resolution by Party committees and governments, especially emergency 命题作文 (assigned topics), think tanks should be good at responding, relying on their knowledge accumulation and expert teams to form high-quality research results in the first place. For identified problems, they should dare to and be good at taking timely initiative to conduct forward-looking and reserve policy research.

#### 4.2 Strengthening Customer Awareness

Party and government decision-makers are the end customers of think tanks and the main purchasers and consumers of think tank decision-making consultation products. New-type think tanks should promote supply-side structural reforms to better meet the government's decision-making needs with higher-quality products and more targeted services. To this end, new-type think tanks must strengthen capacity building, focusing on improving research quality and promoting content innovation. First, produce high-quality decision-making consultation products. Think tanks should expand their ways of participating in public policy to better meet the needs of Party committees and governments, playing appropriate roles in the entire process of public policy—from topic selection and plan demonstration before decision-making, to policy consultation during the decision-making process, to tracking implementation and evaluating effects after public policy is issued, and conducting third-party evaluation activities. Second, establish trusted decision-making consultation brands for Party committees, governments, and society. Influence is the lifeblood of think tanks, and sustained influence is key to forming think tank brands. New-type think tank construction should not aim to be large and comprehensive from the start but should accumulate bit by bit, with the spirit to endure solitude and the will to leave solid footprints. They should focus on developing influential original products, build reputation through quality, create brands through products, and strive to enhance visibility and influence. Third, gradually promote the establishment of an ideas product market. The socialization of official and civilian think tanks represents the general trend of new-type think tank development, and allocating think tank resources through government procurement of services and contractual agreements is the necessary path for new-type think tank development. Although the public welfare nature of decision-making consultation products makes them difficult to sell on the market, the emergence of a large number of new-type think tanks provides greater choice for government procurement of services, and an ideas product market will gradually take shape.

Establishing a moderately sized ideas product market will help standardize the relationship between decision-making institutions and think tank institutions, form moderate competition mechanisms, promote survival of the fittest, and stimulate think tank vitality.

### 4.3 Strengthening Professional Awareness

As society develops, the decision-making needs of Party committees and governments become increasingly specialized and systematic. For most think tanks, the development direction is specialization and professionalization rather than becoming all-purpose. It is neither necessary nor possible to build an omnipotent think tank. First, enhance professional research capabilities. Think tanks should absorb more research resources from social science research and Party and government talent to form professional research teams focused on producing specialized, original, and high-quality research results. From the perspective of the process and degree of expert and think tank participation, this means moving from partial participation to full participation, from individual participation to team participation, from occasional participation to necessary participation, from formal participation to substantive participation, and from selective actions to mandatory actions, continuously improving the professional level of decision-making consultation through deepening participation. Second, develop professional research tools. The professionalization of think tanks is also reflected in scientific research methods, standardized operation processes, and objective management systems [4]. They should uphold scientific spirit, emphasize the professionalism of think tank expert teams, establish professional survey institutions and teams, and master professional databases. They should establish social laboratories and policy observation points, conduct policy pilot projects, use professional toolkits to test policy effects, and ensure the scientific nature of decision-making plans through specialization and professionalization. Third, promote the professional cultural spirit of think tanks. New-type think tanks should inject advanced cultural genes, strengthen organizational culture construction, and form an ideological and cultural spirit core that supports and guides the long-term healthy development of think tanks.

### 4.4 Strengthening Responsibility Awareness

On the one hand, new-type think tanks must be responsible to decision-making institutions as their service objects and customers and be responsible for their own products. Think tank experts should have the intellectual's sentiment, taking responsibility for what they say and the decision-making consultation products they provide. They should enhance the seriousness of the decision-making consultation process, the relevance of consultation results, the professionalism of consultation products, and the legalization of consultation activities. First-class think tank experts should, like natural scientists, establish their own social laboratories and innovate ways of participating in public policy. Policy recommendations should undergo scientific deduction and experimentation, and

think tank products should withstand practical and social testing, capable of “standing as evidence.” They should uphold Party leadership over think tanks, strengthen political discipline and rules, grasp the boundaries between disclosure and confidentiality, and refrain from publicly disclosing high-quality research results that are not suitable for public release. They should reduce utilitarianism and serve as “unsung heroes” assisting Party committees and governments in decision-making. On the other hand, think tanks must be responsible to the broad public. The Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee emphasized new-type think tank construction within the context of democratic consultation, highlighting think tanks as one of the main carriers of democratic consultation. New-type think tank construction should strengthen the mass perspective, conduct good social surveys, and do a good job in collecting, pooling, and organizing work. Expert decision-making consultation suggestions should maximize the aggregation of public wisdom and serve as spokespersons for the people, maximizing the connection of public wisdom to Party committees and governments’ decision-making.

#### 4.5 Strengthening Alignment Awareness

New-type think tanks should strengthen self-management and establish internal management systems compatible with knowledge production requirements and conducive to innovation and development, promoting high-quality decision-making consultation products through scientific work processes. First, achieve effective alignment with decision-making institutions. New-type think tanks should strengthen their own capacity building, emphasizing the alignment between supply products and decision-making institutions’ needs, between think tank activities and practical work departments, and between think tank experts and decision-making levels. They should establish flexible and efficient decision-making participation mechanisms to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of research. In promoting alignment between think tanks and the government, attention should be paid to leveraging the bridging role of organizations such as federations of philosophy and social sciences and associations for science and technology. Second, achieve effective alignment with policy research departments. They should be able to effectively align with decision-making departments and their policy research institutions to smooth channels for information and results flow. They should handle the relationship between think tanks and advisors well and do a good job in transforming decision-making consultation semi-finished products into final products. Third, achieve effective alignment with university research institutions. Universities focus on knowledge production and theoretical innovation, while think tanks focus on knowledge transformation and theoretical application. Think tanks are downstream from universities in the entire knowledge chain and must firmly grasp universities as the source of theoretical innovation, focusing on drawing nourishment from them and leveraging their strength for development. Fourth, achieve effective alignment with the work of people’s congresses and political consultative conferences. In the process of major decision-making and important legislation, think tank

participation mechanisms should be introduced to promote the organic combination of deliberation and consultation processes. Think tank research institutions should be guided to enhance collaboration and interaction with people's congress deputies and political consultative conference members, improve the scientific level of proposals and motions at the two sessions, and increase decision-making consultation on important topics at the two sessions. Fifth, achieve effective alignment with media and the public. Attention should be paid to the important role of media in think tank development, with think tank results emphasizing media publication and public release to expand their audience and build bridges for the social transformation of public policy. They should break through the "last mile" of transforming think tank results to society, focusing on strengthening mainstream public opinion and building social consensus to better play the positive role of think tanks in interpreting Party theory, explaining public policy, judging social opinion, guiding social hotspots, and 疏导 public sentiment.

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