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## Extensive Expansion and Intensive Development: Path Selection for New Think Tanks (Postprint)

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### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] After several years of extensional development, the construction of new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics needs to transcend this historical stage and shift toward improving research quality, that is, a new stage of connotative development. [Method/Process] Extensional development is a necessary historical stage in the development of new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics, but this development path is unsustainable because it is constrained by funding and the number of experts. The specialization construction of think tanks and the construction of empirical research methodology systems constitute the main content of the connotative development path. [Result/Conclusion] The connotative development path of “improving research quality and strengthening content innovation” is an inevitable choice.

### Full Text

### Preamble

#### Extension Expansion and Intensive Development: The Path Selection of China's New Think Tanks

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### Abstract

[Objective/Significance] After several years of extensive development, the construction of new think tanks with Chinese characteristics needs to transcend this historical stage and shift toward improving research quality, marking a new phase of intensive development. [Methods/Process] Extensive development

represents a necessary historical stage for new think tanks with Chinese characteristics, yet this path is unsustainable due to constraints in funding and the number of available experts. The primary components of the intensive development path lie in the professionalization of think tanks and the construction of an empirical research methodology system. [Results/Conclusion] The intensive development path of “enhancing research quality and strengthening content innovation” represents an inevitable choice.

**Keywords:** Think tank development path; Extension expansion; Intensive development; Evidence-based analysis; Content innovation

**Classification Number:** C934

## 1 Extensive Growth as a Necessary Stage in the Construction of New Think Tanks with Chinese Characteristics

General Secretary Xi Jinping’s instruction on April 15, 2013, regarding new think tanks marked a milestone in the development of Chinese think tanks. To implement this important directive, the central government quickly established a document drafting group. After months of investigation, consultation, and negotiation, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee issued Document No. 65 on December 30, 2014, titled “Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of New Think Tanks with Chinese Characteristics.” However, what is widely known to the public is the 同名 document issued on January 20, 2015, in the name of the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council. The April 15 instruction initiated this round of new think tank construction, while Document No. 65 accelerated the process. We believe that from April 15, 2013 (the April 15 instruction) to May 17, 2016 (the May 17 symposium on philosophy and social sciences), the construction of new think tanks with Chinese characteristics essentially completed its first stage—extensive expansion characterized by quantitative growth and simple imitation.

The exact number of think tanks in China remains a mystery. According to the “Global Go To Think Tank Index” published by the University of Pennsylvania’s James G. McGann, China had 428 think tanks in 2009, and this number only grew to 435 by 2015, remaining relatively stable. The Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences’ “2015 China Think Tank Report—Influence Ranking and Policy Recommendations” counted 279 think tanks, while its 2016 survey questionnaire “Think Tank Candidate Pool” listed a total of 377 think tanks. The “China Think Tank Directory” published by China Social Sciences Press included 1,137 think tanks. Although different institutions have varying understandings of the think tank concept and employ different statistical criteria, resulting in significant numerical discrepancies, all three institutions clearly applied strict standards in identifying think tanks. Even so, the “Great Leap Forward” trend in think tank growth over the past three years remains evident. According to a prominent scholar in the think tank community, there are now tens of thousands of institutions on the Chinese mainland claiming to be think tanks, reaching what he terms a “period of mixed quality” [1]. Wang Simin, editor-in-

chief of *Guangming Daily*, and colleagues argue: “While newly established think tanks have brought fresh blood to China’s think tank community, prominent problems persist: low-level, homogeneous redundant construction still exists, causing resource waste and ineffective labor; the term ‘think tank’ has been generalized, abused, and even distorted, with some institutions self-proclaiming under the ‘think tank’ banner, affecting the overall image of think tanks” [2]. The “false fire” of new think tank construction burns rather vigorously, which is probably an undeniable fact.

In his May 17 speech, General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out: “In recent years, enthusiasm for building think tanks in the field of philosophy and social sciences has been high, with many achievements that have provided beneficial assistance to decision-making at party and government departments at all levels. At the same time, some think tank research has emphasized quantity over quality, some have emphasized form of dissemination over content innovation, and others have resorted to formalistic practices such as building platforms, inviting celebrities, and holding forums. The focus of think tank construction should be placed on improving research quality and promoting content innovation.” This warning from General Secretary Xi Jinping about problems emerging in new think tank construction was very timely, accurate, and necessary. In essence, it cautioned the think tank community that new think tank construction should transcend the stage of extensive expansion and the stage of imitating Western think tank activity formats, entering a period of intensive development focused on improving research quality and content innovation.

Nevertheless, we should recognize that the “extensive expansion” stage is an unavoidable learning period for the initial stage of new think tank construction—a stage of making up for lost time. The “positive energy” of this stage is reflected in three aspects: First, it popularized the concept of think tanks and fostered industry self-awareness. Second, through formal imitation of Western think tanks, it deepened understanding of think tank operational models. Third, through continuous practice, it prompted questions about “What is new about new think tanks with Chinese characteristics?” and “What is special about them?” thereby constructing a basic interpretive system for new think tanks and achieving some basic consensus. However, new think tank construction should not remain at this stage of 粗放式增长 (extensive growth) but should transcend it as soon as possible. This is both the hope of the central government and the need for career development.

The deeper reason for urgently transcending the extensive growth stage is that this growth model is unsustainable—it represents growth in ineffective supply, performance-driven growth, and growth without autonomous motivation. It is unsustainable because extensive growth relies primarily on factor inputs. The basic elements of a think tank include people, funding, and materials (space). With experts, funding, and office space, one can establish a think tank; continuously adding experts, injecting funds, and constructing more office buildings can create more think tanks—but this model is unsustainable. Experts consti-

tute the most significant constraining factor. An outstanding strategic research or policy analysis expert cannot be rapidly cultivated. Beyond systematic academic training, they also need practical experience. Generally speaking, age 40 marks the maturation point for experts. It can be confidently asserted that the total number of excellent (or even qualified) strategic research and policy analysis experts in China has remained basically stable over the past five years, with no possibility of dramatic growth. If experts are the numerator and think tanks are the denominator, then the larger the denominator, the smaller the value. Moreover, strategic research and policy analysis differ from general social science research in that they require teamwork. In other words, each think tank must maintain a certain number of experts to operate effectively. Without reaching this threshold for effective team research, a think tank cannot conduct research efficiently. Therefore, the current stock of experts capable of engaging in strategic research and public policy analysis in China cannot support the continuous extensive expansion of think tanks.

Additionally, everyone agrees that running a think tank is far more “money-burning” than running an academic institution. This is because academic institutions have only one basic attribute—“academic nature”—whereas think tanks have four attributes: academic, political, economic, and media-related. Think tanks must not only conduct research but also manage government relations and media relations. They must not only produce high-quality reports but also deliver them to relevant government officials and disseminate them through authoritative media. Many think tanks serve not only as research centers but also as conference centers and policy roadshow venues. “Activities” constitute one of the main outputs of think tanks. Modern conferences are both intellectually and capital-intensive activities, and organizing them mostly requires substantial funding. In 2015, the Brookings Institution held 292 events with over 20,000 participants and 110 online discussions with 59,000 participants. Brookings’ research and activity expenditures exceeded \$100 million in 2015. While this total may not surpass that of some domestic research institutions, Brookings employed only 358 researchers, giving it a per capita funding level far ahead of any think tank in mainland China. However, even in the U.S. think tank community, where fundraising is relatively easy, funding available for think tanks is limited. This is the fundamental reason why the total number of U.S. think tanks has remained basically stable for years, and the list of top-tier think tanks has barely changed. As a developing country with heavy fiscal burdens, China cannot continuously inject large amounts of funding into think tanks. While national investment may have been relatively strong in the initial stage of new think tank construction, this intensity is unsustainable. Furthermore, due to the lack of well-coordinated policy measures for social donations, channels for think tanks to raise funds from society are not smooth. Therefore, the funding situation cannot support large-scale quantitative expansion.

Thus, whether from the perspective of experts or funding, extensive expansion is unsustainable, and the construction of new think tanks with Chinese characteristics needs to enter the fast lane of intensive development as soon as possible.

## 2 Strengthening Professionalization as the Inevitable Choice for Intensive Development

The transition from extensive to intensive growth represents a universal law of material development. Since the reform and opening up, China's economy has experienced this process: after three decades of high-speed growth, it entered a phase of medium-low speed growth and arrived at the period of supply-side reform. Supply-side reform is essentially another expression of the intensive development path—a quality-oriented growth, a growth in effective supply. This universal law of material development exists not only in the economic field but also in social undertakings. The same applies to new think tank construction.

How then should we understand the intensive development path for think tanks? “Improving research quality and promoting content innovation” represents the outcome of the intensive development path. To achieve this goal, it is important to respect the inherent laws of think tanks and operate according to these laws.

Implementing the intensive development strategy first requires clearly building think tanks according to a narrow definition. We cannot treat think tanks as a basket into which any type of institution can be placed. A think tank is a think tank. Chinese and foreign think tanks may have their differences, but their basic connotations should be consistent; otherwise, the concept of “think tank” would have no common denominator, and using the concept would become meaningless. We believe the greatest common divisor of the think tank concept includes the following points: (1) Serving the government policy process. Here, “government” is a broad concept that includes, for China, the Party, government, people's congresses, and political consultative conferences at all levels from central to local; (2) Policy analysis, policy promotion, and policy education constitute the main work of think tanks. Academic institutions primarily engaged in theoretical research should not be included in the scope of think tanks. Organizing various policy promotion and education activities is a major characteristic of think tanks. While academic units occasionally hold events, think tanks consider activities as basic business—the quantity and frequency of activities serve as important criteria for distinguishing academic institutions from think tanks; (3) Evidence-based research (fact-based research) is a major feature of modern think tanks. The difference between modern think tank policy research and traditional advisors and strategists lies in the fact that their conclusions are based on data and facts; (4) Think tanks must transcend various interest considerations. Think tanks are “public instruments” that should take the welfare of all people as their sole position and should not be utilized by any interest group.

Only by adopting a narrow definition can think tanks be distinguished from other institutions. Government internal policy research institutions are part of the administrative machinery, with their tasks and processes directly constrained by administrative leaders, lacking neutrality. Moreover, paperwork constitutes one of the main tasks of government internal policy research institu-

tions, which can hardly be considered strict policy research. More importantly, government internal policy research departments rarely hold “activities” such as policy debates, promotion, and education, showing clear differences in operational form from think tanks. Consulting companies aim for profit and can operate identically to think tanks in form, but their activities must ultimately generate profit and consider client interests. If China’s new think tanks can clearly differentiate themselves from government internal policy research institutions, external consulting companies, and traditional academic institutions—starting from a narrow definition—they can form their own “industry consensus,” “industry awareness,” and “industry identity.” This constitutes the epistemological foundation of the intensive development path.

Second, specialization is the core of the intensive development path. Complexity is a basic feature of modern society. The fundamental method for solving complex problems is “division of labor.” Think tanks are the result of social division of labor—a portion of people, resources, and institutions have been differentiated from academia and government to specialize in research and consulting related to the policy process. Whether this differentiated work can constitute a “profession” depends on its degree of specialization. If the degree of specialization is not high, the profession will sooner or later disappear or fail to gain social recognition.

In what aspects does think tank specialization manifest? At the think tank level: (1) Governance structures are reasonable and operate effectively; (2) Operational processes for research, consulting, and activities are streamlined, standardized, and legalized; (3) Except for a few comprehensive think tanks, most think tanks must have clear positioning and professional division of labor. Think tanks on the intensive development path must have market segments and conduct specialized research. Apart from national high-end think tanks such as the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Development Research Center of the State Council, 99% of new think tanks should be specialized and dedicated think tanks. These think tanks need only address one or two policy domain problems in our country. If our country has one or two outstanding think tanks in each 细分领域 (sub-field), then overall, China’s think tank layout would be quite successful. Currently, some social think tanks one-sidedly pursue “visibility,” feeling compelled to “voice their opinions” on almost every policy hotspot, which actually damages their image as specialized think tanks; (4) Think tank inputs, processes, and organizational effectiveness can be evaluated, assessed, controlled, and measured. Achieving these four points makes a think tank a specialized modern organization.

At the industry level, only when the academic system, disciplinary system, and discourse system of think tanks are basically established, with their own national industry associations, national media, national conferences, and even their own talent training institutions, can the industry initially establish a professional status. From both micro and macro perspectives, Chinese think tanks have not yet reached the level of specialization. This is precisely one of the main

contents of think tank intensive development. Currently, although many have called for it, China's think tank national industry organization has not yet started. The think tank section of *Guangming Daily* and the journal *Think Tank: Theory & Practice*—“one newspaper and one journal”—have initially formed brand influence and represent a bright spot in the construction of the think tank academic system.

Since 1970, the RAND Corporation has operated an innovative graduate school that has developed into one of the world's leading incubators for PhDs in public policy analysis. The Pardee RAND Graduate School (PRGS) currently enrolls approximately 100 doctoral students from 25 countries. Graduates of this graduate school have become an important source of policy analysis talent in the United States. Although the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences also trains doctoral students, it covers all disciplines of philosophy and social sciences, making it difficult to claim that any domestic think tank is a specialized base for training PhDs in public policy analysis. Under the current graduate training model, public management schools in Chinese universities cannot cultivate qualified public policy analysis talent because most public management schools are unfamiliar with “think tanks.” Based on the author's contact with a limited number of deans of public management schools, they have almost never considered training specialized policy analysis talent for think tanks. Therefore, the disciplinary system construction of China's new think tanks has little to commend it.

As for the achievements in China's think tank discourse system construction, many articles have been written about new think tank construction in the past three years, and many issues have been discussed. However, how many of these discussion outcomes can be accumulated as part of the discourse system remains questionable. Based on our observation, discussions in these three years have exhibited “three mores and three lesses” : more opinion-based articles, fewer analytical articles based on facts and data; more short, quick articles, fewer solid long articles; more newspaper articles, fewer monographs. “Learning is the foundation of governance.” With a weak discourse system and insufficient knowledge reserves, the foundation of new think tank construction with Chinese characteristics is not solid, and the degree of professionalization and occupational development is naturally not high.

Thus, the core content of new think tank intensive development lies in scientific construction at the micro level and in operations, as well as in the construction of the three major systems at the macro level—these two aspects are inseparable. Without the streamlining, standardization, legalization, and scientification of internal think tank operations, there can be no modern think tank organization; without healthy “industry cells,” there can be no healthy “industry” ; without a sound three-system framework, there can be no healthy think tank industry. Only when both achieve positive interaction can this modern profession take root in China.

### 3 Strengthening the Evidence-Based Analysis System as the Inherent Requirement of Intensive Development

Traditional policy research institutions have many talented scholars and skilled writers. Talented scholars often write thousands of words effortlessly, and their articles can sometimes serve the purpose of rectifying social ills. However, such articles contain too many “I believe” formulations, with more opinions than facts, more statements than analysis, and more intuition than logic. Such policy researchers belong to the category of traditional advisors and can hardly be called modern policy analysis experts because their policy recommendations are based primarily on personal experience and “insight.” While this “policy intuition” can sometimes be very accurate, it is too subjective, too personalized, and non-replicable. This subjective approach can easily lead to mistakes and has caused significant losses in the history of the Chinese revolution. Therefore, the Party’s history includes multiple critiques of this style of writing and scholarship. At the same time, this has also shaped the Party’s evidence-based analysis system—namely, investigation and research methods and historical analysis methods.

Mao Zedong was the founder of the Chinese Communist Party’s tradition of investigation and research. As early as when he was studying at the First Normal School, he used summer vacations to walk through Hunan to investigate social conditions. From mid-July to mid-August 1917, Mao Zedong and his classmate Xiao Zisheng walked through the countryside of five counties in Hunan—Changsha, Ningxiang, Yiyang, Yuanjiang, and Anxiang—covering more than 900 kilometers. Along the way, they learned about many local customs and conditions and talked with people from all walks of life, which deepened his understanding of Chinese rural society and laid a good foundation for his future social investigations. In 1927, when criticism of the peasant movement emerged within the Party, Mao Zedong continued to believe that the key to solving China’s problems lay in the countryside. He conducted a 32-day investigation in five counties including Xiangtan and Xiangxiang during January and February, which laid the documentary foundation for two important works: “Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society” and “Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan.” Later, Mao Zedong conducted many more rural investigations, with the more famous ones including the “Xunwu Report,” “Changgang Township Investigation,” and “Caixi Township Investigation,” which made great contributions to the establishment, consolidation, and development of rural revolutionary bases. In 1930, Mao Zedong also wrote a specialized treatise on investigation and research, “Oppose Book Worship” (originally titled “Investigation Work”). During the Anti-Japanese War period, his compilation of documents on rural investigation, “Rural Investigation,” was printed, greatly enhancing the Chinese Communist Party’s ability to handle policies related to Chinese rural society. Mao Zedong’s tradition of investigation and research established for the Party includes the following points: First, it extremely emphasizes the importance of investigation and research, proposing the basic proposition that “without investigation, there is no right to speak.” Second, investigation and research serve

policy formulation. Whenever major policies are formulated, investigation is the foundational work. Third, personally participating in field investigations is the basic method; investigation cannot be limited to listening to subordinates' reports but requires personally going to the grassroots level and to the sites where problems arise. Both perceptual and rational knowledge are basic materials for policy formulation, but perceptual knowledge can only come from the front lines of investigation, so one must go deep into the grassroots.

Deng Xiaoping summarized the essence of Mao Zedong Thought as the spirit of seeking truth from facts. Comrade Deng Xiaoping regarded investigation and research as an inevitable requirement for implementing the Party' s ideological line and mass line, attaching great importance to leaders personally conducting investigations. He pointed out: "Whether one can go deep and whether work can be implemented depends on whether leading cadres take the lead, go deep into the troops, conduct investigation and research, analyze problems from reality, and solve problems." A distinctive feature of Deng Xiaoping' s investigation and research was going deep, being pragmatic, connecting with the overall situation, and daring to take responsibility, specifically manifested in "asking for numbers" and "loving to do accounting" —that is, emancipating the mind based on investigation results. When he conducted investigations in various places, he often went directly to grassroots cadres and masses to understand situations. By listening to the voices of the masses, he discovered problems, corrected work errors, and formulated and implemented important decisions based on investigation findings. Deng Xiaoping' s viewpoint of seeking truth from facts and emancipating the mind enriched the Party' s tradition of investigation and research [4].

General Secretary Xi Jinping has placed even greater emphasis on the importance of research. Investigation and research are the foundation for planning matters and the way to accomplish them. Without investigation, there is no right to speak, let alone decision-making power. To research, think about, and determine the ideas and major measures for comprehensively deepening reform, one cannot seek the sword by marking the boat, cannot work behind closed doors, and certainly cannot indulge in wild fantasies; comprehensive and in-depth investigation and research must be conducted [5]. General Secretary Xi Jinping' s thinking on investigation and research has distinct contemporary characteristics. One of the goals of his proposed national strategy for new think tank construction is to build a policy investigation and research system based on modern survey organizations and survey methods.

Another distinctive feature of the Party' s evidence-based analysis methods is the skillful application of historical analysis. Mao Zedong excelled at summarizing experiences from history, with his "The 300th Anniversary of the Jiashen Year" being a typical example of historical analysis application. Xi Jinping has repeatedly emphasized that history is the best textbook. Studying Party history and national history is a required course for upholding and developing socialism with Chinese characteristics and for continuing to advance the Party and the

country' s various undertakings. This course is not only required but must be well studied. We must continue to strengthen the study of Party history and national history, and do a better job in current work and move toward a better future through deep reflection on history, constantly delivering satisfactory answers to upholding and developing socialism with Chinese characteristics.

The construction of evidence-based analysis methodology for new think tanks with Chinese characteristics cannot ignore the Party' s tradition of evidence-based policy analysis. This tradition not only cannot be abandoned but should also be creatively transformed into an important component of the new think tank evidence-based analysis methodology system. The history of the Chinese Communist revolution and socialist construction also proves that periods when the Party followed the evidence-based analysis tradition of investigation and research and seeking truth from facts were often periods when revolution and construction developed healthily, whereas deviations from this tradition often led to major mistakes in revolution and construction. However, the Party' s evidence-based analysis tradition cannot be limited to investigation and research and historical research. General Secretary Xi Jinping' s major strategy of new think tank construction with Chinese characteristics aims to integrate the Party' s evidence-based policy analysis with modern think tank policy research, using modern think tank theories and methods to transform and elevate the Party' s evidence-based policy analysis to a higher level.

On the basis of inheriting the Party' s evidence-based analysis tradition, new think tanks with Chinese characteristics need to explore modern evidence-based analysis methodology systems. Establishing evidence-based analysis methodology and case systems for new think tanks constitutes the main content of the intensive development path. Evidence-based analysis, empirical analysis, data-driven analysis, and other approaches correspond to English expressions such as fact-based research/evidence-based research/data-driven research, with essentially consistent connotations: policy analysis must be based not only on data, facts, and cases but also on following academically recognized theoretical frameworks and standardized procedures and methods when processing these data, facts, and cases. Conclusions must withstand debate, and quantitative research results must be reproducible and verifiable. Evidence-based analysis capability consists of three components: data collection capability, data analysis capability, and policy construction capability based on them.

Evidence-based analysis is the result of modern social science development. Marx and Engels' research on Western European society represents one of the origins of Western social science. Around 1900, Western social sciences gradually matured, developing not only a complete conceptual system for observing and explaining society but also forming traditions of normative analysis and empirical analysis, with quantitative research at the core of empirical analysis. Discipline groups represented by political science focused mainly on normative analysis, while those represented by economics and sociology focused mainly on quantitative analysis. During World War II, a large number of American social

scientists were recruited into the military, primarily for intelligence analysis, during which many effective intelligence analysis processes and methods were developed. After World War II, the development of computer science made the construction of many large databases possible. Social sciences benefited from large databases and statistical software, making quantitative analysis widely practiced.

The American think tank community not only inherited intelligence analysis methods from World War II but also kept pace with the times by absorbing the latest achievements in quantitative social sciences, forming increasingly standardized evidence-based analysis systems. In 1948, the U.S. Air Force established the RAND Corporation to prevent the intelligence research team formed during World War II from disbanding, as a pre-research institution for Air Force weapons development. This weapons pre-research institution gradually developed into the military's most important strategic intelligence analysis department. The "systems analysis method" formed by RAND in weapons pre-research became a highly influential typical method of policy evidence-based analysis. McGann believes that RAND adopted the "R&D model" from the industrial sector for public policy research from the very beginning. In its 50 years of service to the Pentagon, the super technical competitiveness, originality, depth, breadth, and knowledge accumulation formed by RAND are unmatched by other think tanks [6]. With increasingly powerful computer tools, RAND has also adjusted its traditional prediction-based policy analysis methods and proposed robust decision analysis. When policymakers and decision-makers face highly unpredictable and uncertain futures, making correct choices requires more than traditional decision analysis based on predictions. Fortunately, new methods such as robust decision analysis can solve such dilemmas with the help of increasingly powerful computer tools. Robust decision analysis is based on a simple concept: instead of using models and data to make the best predictions about the future, it uses models hundreds or thousands of times to demonstrate how plans would be implemented under various possible future scenarios, and conducts visualization and statistical analysis on the database generated by model applications to help decision-makers distinguish between situations where plan implementation would be good or bad, enabling them to formulate more "robust" plans [7]. We cite RAND Corporation as an example only to illustrate the important position of evidence-based analysis in American think tank policy analysis.

In February 2009, 15 scholars including David Lazer of Harvard University jointly published a paper titled "Computational Social Science" in *Science*, announcing the birth of computational social science. The authors believe that computational social science, as an emerging research field, aims to conduct interdisciplinary social science research from an information processing perspective, using advanced computer and information technology. This paper provides the first complete and unified introduction to computational social science, including its concepts, relevant definitions and terminology, and describes the research scope and content of various fields of computational social science,

including information mining, social networks, social complexity theory, and social simulation [8]. In fact, computational social science did not emerge out of nowhere, but its appearance has indeed elevated evidence-based analysis methods to a new height.

The foundation of evidence-based analysis is databases. Almost all renowned modern think tanks have established their own powerful institutional repositories. Cheng Li of the Brookings Institution proposed in the late 1980s that China had entered the era of “technocracy” —rule by experts—achieving instant fame. This proposition may not seem particularly brilliant today, but before proposing it, he compiled more than 20,000 biographical entries on Chinese officials at the provincial and ministerial levels and above. Data and knowledge accumulation often constitute the pioneering research work of modern think tanks. RAND Corporation has accumulated tens of thousands of cases, models, and PowerPoint presentations through years of research and consulting. The author once consulted experts from Elsevier about think tank knowledge management. They said that after doing enough consulting, one can discover that many clients’ needs are similar, making the accumulation and management of consulting cases very important. The construction of institutional repositories (referred to differently by different institutions as knowledge management systems, document control systems, etc.) is crucial for think tanks. Think tank progress is built upon the accumulation of their own knowledge. If think tanks cannot establish a depersonalized knowledge management system, then whenever an employee leaves, the knowledge and social connections attached to that employee are lost. Once several core employees leave, the think tank suffers a major blow.

In a sense, we can say that the success or failure of new think tank construction with Chinese characteristics depends on whether strategic analysis and policy analysis methods advance. If China’ s think tank community can form its own effective evidence-based analysis system, no longer relying on 揣摩上级领导意图 (speculating about superior leaders’ intentions), no longer depending on “flashes of inspiration,” no longer relying on literature reviews, but instead conducting fact-based calculations and analysis based on long-accumulated databases, facts, data, cases, models, and patterns to produce well-founded policy plans and recommendations, then the construction of new think tanks with Chinese characteristics can succeed. Policy research relying on evidence-based analysis is objective, neutral, and confident. Speaking truth to power based on facts is often the most effective strategy for offering advice.

In summary, new think tank construction with Chinese characteristics cannot simply engage in “Sturm und Drang” (storm and stress). It needs to pause and consider whether our forward path is correct, whether it needs correction, and whether we are walking steadily enough. We should transcend the stage of extensive expansion as soon as possible, remember the General Secretary’ s reminder to engage in fewer formalistic activities, accurately position ourselves, find our place, form professional characteristics, strengthen data and knowledge

accumulation, and establish our own evidence-based analysis systems. Through joint efforts in the think tank community, we should build the industry' s disciplinary system, academic system, and discourse system as soon as possible. The intensive development path of “enhancing research quality and strengthening content innovation” is the inevitable choice.

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