

Comparative Analysis of Top Think Tanks in China and the United States and Its Implications (Postprint)

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] China's think tank development has currently entered a period of rapid expansion, yet the overall caliber of think tanks remains to be elevated. It is therefore imperative to analyze the disparities in think tank development between China and the United States, so as to furnish valuable insights for the construction of Chinese think tanks.

[Method/Process] Grounded in the "2015 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report" and the "2015 China Think Tank Report", this study selects 48 top-tier think tanks from both nations and undertakes a comparative analysis across five dimensions: organizational type, operational model, research domain, service modality, and internet application status.

[Results/Conclusion] The study pinpoints existing deficiencies in Chinese think tank development and, building upon these findings, proposes four implications for Chinese think tank construction. It contends that Chinese think tanks should advance through optimizing developmental structures, refining operational models, restructuring research domains, and strengthening publicity and outreach.

Full Text

Preamble

Comparative Analysis on China and the US' s Top Think Tanks and Its Enlightenment

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] China's think tank development has entered a period of rapid growth, yet the overall quality of these institutions remains to be improved. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the gaps in think tank development between China and the United States to provide valuable experience for China's think tank construction. **[Method/Process]** Based on the *2015 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report* and the *2015 China Think Tank Report*, this study selected 48 top think tanks from China and the United States and conducted a comparative analysis of their types, operational models, research fields, service methods, and network applications. **[Result/Conclusion]** The study identifies current deficiencies in China's think tank development and proposes four recommendations for improvement: optimizing think tank development structures, improving operational models, reforming research fields, and strengthening think tank outreach and promotion.

Keywords: top think tanks; research areas; China-US comparison; development

Classification Number: G351

1 Introduction

Think tanks, also known as “idea banks” or “Think Tanks” in English, are public policy research institutions that provide innovative ideas, theories, strategies, methods, and solutions for public policy decision-making—essentially modern advisory bodies. As economic globalization, world multipolarization, and social informatization deepen, the role of think tanks has become increasingly prominent. They provide essential and timely intellectual support and expert wisdom for government strategic decision-making, socioeconomic development, active participation in global governance, and enhanced international discourse power, helping to bridge the gap between knowledge and policy-making.

In January 2004, the *Opinions on Further Prospering and Developing Philosophy and Social Sciences* issued by the CPC Central Committee called for the philosophy and social sciences community to become a “think tank” and “brain trust” for the Party and government. In October 2007, the Party's 17th National Congress report included the role of think tanks in the party congress report for the first time. The Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee proposed “strengthening the construction of new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics and establishing a sound decision-making consultation system.” In January 2015, the central government issued the *Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of New-Type Think Tanks with Chinese Characteristics* (hereinafter referred to as the “Opinions”), and in November 2015, the 18th meeting of the Central Leading Group for Deepening Reform discussed and approved the *Pilot Work Plan for the Construction of National High-End Think Tanks*, proposing to build a group of high-end think tanks that are “nationally needed, distinctive, institutionally innovative, and development-leading” to better serve

the overall work of the Party and the state. China's think tank construction has entered a period of rapid growth and has gradually risen to a national strategy.

The United States is both a major think tank country and a strong one. The annual Global Go To Think Tank Index Report published by the University of Pennsylvania's Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP) shows that U.S. think tanks hold an absolute advantage in both quantity and quality. Therefore, a comparative analysis of the characteristics of top think tanks in China and the United States has reference significance for the construction and development of new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics.

This study selected 24 U.S. think tanks listed in the "Top Think Tanks Worldwide (U.S. and non-U.S.)" category of the *2015 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report* as typical U.S. cases. Regarding Chinese cases, considering potential biases in foreign think tank research toward Chinese institutions and the relatively small number of Chinese think tanks on the global list, we comprehensively selected 24 Chinese think tanks based on the *2015 China Think Tank Report* published by the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (selecting the top 14 domestically ranked think tanks) and two sub-categories in the *2015 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report*: "Top Think Tanks Worldwide (U.S. and non-U.S.)" (selecting 9 Chinese think tanks from this list) and "Top Think Tanks in China, India, Japan, and the Republic of Korea" (selecting the top-ranked Chinese think tank after removing duplicates from the previously selected 23). Using these 48 think tanks as cases, this paper compares and analyzes the development of Chinese and U.S. think tanks in terms of quantity and type, operational model, research fields, service methods, and network application status, hoping to provide enlightenment for the development of domestic think tanks.

2.1 Comparison of Top Think Tank Quantity

In the *2015 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report*, 6 of the top 10 think tanks worldwide were from the United States, with the Brookings Institution ranking first globally for 10 consecutive years since 2006. Notably, China has a large number of think tanks but few top-tier ones. The number of U.S. think tanks selected for the "Top Think Tanks Worldwide (U.S. and non-U.S.)" list ranks first in the world, with 24 institutions—nearly three times that of China. As shown in Table 1, among the 175 top think tanks worldwide counted in the 2015 report, China's number of top think tanks ranks behind the United States, United Kingdom, and Germany, tying with India. In the 2015 global rankings, Chinese think tanks appeared relatively infrequently in the two sub-category lists ranking by 13 research fields and 24 special achievement categories, with some categories containing no Chinese think tanks at all, as shown in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper]. While this "many think tanks but few high-quality ones" problem may partly result from low international recognition of Chinese think tanks, leading to some being excluded from TTCSP's total count and affecting final statistics, it more fundamentally reflects that China's overall think tank strength still lags behind other countries.

2.2 Comparison of Top Think Tank Types

Due to diverse classification standards and differences in political systems and social realities between China and foreign countries, Chinese think tanks are categorized into four types based on the “Opinions” and the *2015 China Think Tank Report*: party/government/military think tanks, research institute think tanks (including academies of social sciences and sciences), university think tanks, and social (private) think tanks. Among the 24 selected Chinese think tanks, research institute think tanks account for 16.7%, party/government/military think tanks 33.3%, university think tanks 29%, and social think tanks 21%. Research institute and party/government/military think tanks together occupy 50% and, with their official backgrounds, have more direct communication channels with decision-makers than the other two types. Therefore, from the perspective of development strength, China’s social think tanks are relatively weak—none appear among the top 10 domestic think tanks, as shown in Table 2 .

Think tank management systems are closely related to their nature. Party/government/military think tanks and research institutes typically have administrative ranks, so their management systems are influenced by administrative or public institution management systems, resulting in relatively rigid management. Institution heads are appointed by higher-level party and government departments and are accountable to them. For example, both the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences have administrative organs such as bureaus and divisions. University think tanks have similar management to official think tanks, with heads selected based on both academic reputation and administrative rank, and the think tanks themselves maintain dependence on their host universities.

Based on affiliations, think tanks can be divided into independent think tanks and those affiliated with government or other organizations. Independent think tanks include four types: academic, contract, advocacy, and policy corporation think tanks. Unlike Chinese think tanks, which are mostly official or university-affiliated, most U.S. think tanks are independent, with research activities free from government and party intervention. As shown in Table 2, all top 10 U.S. think tanks are independent. Most U.S. think tanks adopt a board of directors/trustees system with flat organizational structures. This flat structure reduces middle management layers, improves organizational efficiency, and ensures research independence. Moreover, U.S. think tank board members have diverse backgrounds, typically comprising prominent figures from academia, politics, and business, such as former government officials, renowned scholars, company bank managers and directors, and research institute heads.

3 Comparison of Think Tank Operational Models

3.1 Comparison of Think Tank Scale and Talent Structure

Most U.S. think tanks are relatively small in scale. Among the 24 selected U.S. think tanks, 54% have fewer than 200 staff members, with RAND Corporation

being the largest at over 1,800 personnel—though such large think tanks are rare in the U.S. In contrast, Chinese official think tanks generally have large staffs. For example, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences has over 4,200 personnel, while the Chinese Academy of Sciences employs more than 68,000 staff members. Chinese university and private think tanks, however, are more streamlined, with around 200 personnel each.

Analyzing internal talent structure reveals that U.S. think tank researchers feature diverse national backgrounds and high-level academic credentials. For instance, RAND Corporation’s 2015 annual report shows that its researchers come from 46 countries and regions and speak 71 languages, demonstrating clear internationalization. Among them, 57% hold one or more doctoral degrees, and 34% hold one or more master’s degrees. Additionally, researchers have diverse disciplinary backgrounds. The Urban Institute’s research team includes economists, social scientists, public policy and management researchers, mathematicians, statisticians, urban planners, engineers, and computer scientists. Notably, 63% of Urban Institute researchers are women, and five of the ten board members are women. In comparison, Chinese think tanks have more homogeneous national and disciplinary backgrounds, with room for improvement in the proportion of senior professionals. Taking the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences as an example—China’s most comprehensive think tank—only 40% of its personnel hold senior professional titles, and 29% hold intermediate titles, with researchers primarily being well-known domestic experts and scholars.

3.2 Comparison of Funding Sources

An organization’s operations are easily constrained by funding. U.S. think tanks often have solid financial foundations. In the *2015 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report*, no U.S. think tanks had annual operating budgets under \$5 million, while China had two. All top 10 U.S. think tanks have annual operating expenses exceeding \$30 million. U.S. think tanks have diverse funding sources, including operating income (publications, project service fees, rent, investments), foundation grants, individual or corporate donations, and government appropriations. For most U.S. think tanks, foundation grants and donations constitute the main source of operating funds. Among the 24 selected U.S. think tanks, 22 receive over 50% of their annual income from donations and foundation grants, with seven receiving over 90%. Only one think tank—RAND Corporation—primarily relies on project service fees. RAND’s funding mainly comes from contracts with clients, two-thirds of which are U.S. government projects.

As Brookings Institution pursues the values of quality, independence, and impact, “independence” means the think tank remains independent from government or political parties and operates as a non-profit organization to ensure objective, neutral research outcomes. This independence is reflected in research efforts based on facts rather than political trends, with financial independence being a key factor in safeguarding this autonomy. Therefore, broad funding sources and adequate funding amounts ensure high-quality research and think

tank independence. To raise funds, think tanks must also engage with enterprises, individuals, and foundations, promoting and marketing their image to expand their influence.

Unlike their U.S. counterparts, Chinese think tanks—primarily party/government/military, research institute, and university think tanks—depend mainly on government appropriations and research project funds. While this reliance frees think tanks from financial worries and allows them to focus on research, it also subjects their work to government influence, challenging their independence. In contrast, China’s social think tanks face severe funding constraints. Government funds essentially flow to in-system think tanks, while Chinese private enterprises neither have surplus funds to support social think tanks nor possess consulting awareness, unwilling to spend money on activities without immediate returns. Thus, funding limitations have long constrained the development of China’s private think tanks.

4 Comparison of Research Fields

As analyzed above, U.S. think tank researchers have diverse disciplinary backgrounds. RAND Corporation’s researchers cover 13 disciplines, including literature and arts, social sciences, economics and law, military and foreign affairs, policy analysis, medicine, computer technology, and mathematics and statistics. Figure 1 shows that U.S. think tanks cover extensive research fields, while Chinese think tanks concentrate on relatively narrow areas, with cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional research capabilities needing improvement. Chinese think tanks have achieved higher research accomplishments mainly in domestic economic policy, foreign policy, and international development, though overall research strength requires enhancement.

Analyzing the 48 think tank cases reveals several characteristics of Chinese think tank research fields. First, research content operates at a high level with broad themes, focusing primarily on strategic issues such as national strategy, economic development, and party/government theory, with less attention to people’s livelihood and social issues, as shown in Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]. While strategic-level research concerning national policies is crucial, think tanks—as “lookouts” for national future goals, “planners” for national strategy, “bearers” of national intelligence, and “supervisors” of national governance—should not focus solely on strategic issues but also emphasize practicality and relevance.

Second, Chinese think tank research fields have narrow scope. Since most Chinese think tanks are academy-type or university research institutions, their research concentrates on economics, politics, and management, with less involvement in science and engineering fields. In contrast, U.S. think tank research fields have three distinctive features: (1) broad and multi-level research areas spanning from national strategic issues to people’s welfare, covering law, history, politics, economics, military affairs, energy, and social welfare; (2) high prac-

ticality, with emphasis on current social hotspots such as energy and climate, social welfare, education, and civil rights; and (3) breadth with specialization –while U.S. think tanks have wide-ranging fields, they each possess their own areas of expertise where they hold significant influence, such as the National Bureau of Economic Research’ s strength in economic studies and the Council on Foreign Relations’ expertise in foreign policy.

5 Comparison of Service Methods

As Hu Angang stated, social science research should “produce ideas, devise strategies, and offer policy advice.” How think tanks effectively present their research outcomes (“ideas,” “strategies,” “advice”) constitutes a crucial link in influencing government decision-making. Chinese think tanks primarily influence government decisions through: (1) direct participation in policy formulation; (2) undertaking government-commissioned projects or conveying viewpoints through internal reference channels; and (3) gathering policy perspectives through relevant meetings or delivering face-to-face lectures to decision-makers. Only a few high-end think tanks can directly participate in policy formulation or lecture decision-makers, making research project undertaking the main pathway for Chinese think tanks to influence decisions. For example, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences undertook 14 major or key National Social Science Fund projects in 2015, while the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences undertook 32 such projects. Chinese think tank research outcomes mainly take the form of academic monographs, scientific papers, databases, research reports, foreign language translations, and literature compilations.

U.S. think tanks differ significantly in their service methods. They influence government decisions primarily through: (1) publishing periodicals; (2) holding seminars and training activities; (3) interacting with media; and (4) participating in congressional hearings. Regarding research outcomes, U.S. think tanks utilize not only conventional print or electronic documents but also multimedia audio-visual materials, as shown in Table 3 . In terms of genres, beyond research reports, academic papers, and professional books, U.S. think tanks frequently issue statements or comments on breaking events, current affairs, and government policy announcements to expound their viewpoints. This indicates that U.S. think tanks are not merely expositors of government policy but also its supervisors and evaluators. Additionally, U.S. think tanks emphasize building their brand publications. For example, RAND’ s *RAND Review* and CSIS’ s *Washington Quarterly* not only have significant social influence but also serve as important platforms for conveying think tank perspectives to government.

6.1 Comparison of Social Media Application

The *2015 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report* shows that Chinese think tanks have achieved unsatisfactory results in sub-categories such as “Best Advocacy Campaign,” “Best Think Tank Network,” “Best Use of the Internet,” “Best Use of

Media (Print or Electronic),” and “Best External Relations/Public Engagement Program.” This indicates that compared with U.S. think tanks, Chinese think tanks need to improve their outreach, public interaction, and network utilization capabilities.

In social networking, Chinese think tanks mainly use two domestic platforms: WeChat and Weibo (including Tencent Weibo and Sina Weibo), without any international social media presence, resulting in a single platform type. Moreover, utilization of these two platforms is low. Among the 24 Chinese think tanks, only 4 have opened accounts on both platforms, 9 use only one, and 10 have no social media presence at all. Furthermore, Chinese think tanks insufficiently promote their social media platforms, with 4 think tanks that have opened accounts failing to display social media links on their homepage homepages.

In contrast, U.S. think tanks favor various social software and platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube (the world’s largest video website), Podcasts, and LinkedIn, where they release latest research developments, think tank videos, viewpoints, hot topic commentaries, and expert introductions. U.S. think tanks appear on virtually all mainstream social media platforms. Among the 24 selected U.S. think tanks, each has opened at least 3 social platforms, with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace operating the most at 7 platforms. All are officially verified, maintain high activity levels, and have substantial follower counts.

6.2 Comparison of Think Tank Websites

In the internet era, effective network utilization capability can help think tanks seize survival opportunities. A think tank’s website is the most basic yet crucial network platform for communicating with the outside world, expounding ideas and viewpoints, and serving as an important channel for the public to access think tank information. Therefore, website construction significantly impacts think tank development. Through analysis of 48 Chinese and U.S. think tank websites, several findings emerge: (1) All 24 U.S. think tanks have independent websites, while 2 Chinese think tanks lack independent sites. (2) U.S. think tank websites have more concise and clear navigation menus with relatively concentrated column names, emphasizing displays of researchers, research fields, research developments, and research outcomes. Chinese think tank websites have more dispersed navigation column types, revealing insufficient disclosure of relevant research, as detailed in Table 4. (3) U.S. think tank websites demonstrate superior information transparency. Beyond basic information such as overviews, personnel composition, research developments, expert introductions, and publications, U.S. websites provide free downloads of various research reports or online reading of free electronic publications. Chinese think tanks typically only provide brief research introductions, with only 8 offering free research report downloads and 4 providing online reading of abstract information—far less open than their U.S. counterparts. (4) Chinese social think tanks demonstrate stronger website construction awareness than other types. On one

hand, private think tank websites offer better access to effective information; on the other hand, they place greater emphasis on institutional promotion. For example, the Unirule Institute of Economics not only provides free downloads of its public reports, related media coverage, and video news but also operates Taobao and WeChat stores to sell think tank products such as autographed monographs and research publications.

7.1 Optimizing Think Tank Development Structure

The *2015 China Think Tank Report* shows that among China's top 15 think tanks by comprehensive influence, most are research institute or university think tanks, with no social think tanks represented. This reveals deficiencies and dilemmas in China's social think tank development. The U.S. situation is opposite: few U.S. think tanks have official affiliations, and their research enjoys high independence. Social think tanks, being non-profit and without supervising or affiliated departments, lack the inherent dependency of in-system think tanks. Even when undertaking government or enterprise commissions, they can maintain research independence through contracts, establishing equal and mutually beneficial relationships with clients that enable relatively detached and neutral policy research.

Due to this independence, social think tanks can effectively compensate for the vulnerability of party/government/military, research institute, and university think tanks to government influence, preventing policy research institutions from merely becoming expositors and mouthpieces of government policy. First, originating from civil society, social think tanks are more grounded and naturally closer to the public, enabling them to better reflect popular sentiment in their research and helping improve the comprehensiveness and scientific nature of government decision-making. Second, encouraging social think tank development can create a "catfish effect" among other think tank types, optimizing China's think tank development structure and fostering a think tank market. Specific measures include: (1) policy support such as tax reductions; (2) improving relevant laws to protect the legal status and legitimate rights of social think tanks, enabling the four think tank types to compete on relatively equal footing; (3) improving funding donation channels for social think tanks to secure their material foundation; and (4) enhancing government information transparency so social think tanks can access research-related materials.

7.2.1 Improving Personnel Mechanisms

Think tank talent quality is the decisive factor in research strength, and improving personnel mechanisms is the prerequisite for enhancing talent quality and the core element promoting think tank development. Improving personnel mechanisms requires: (1) **"Bringing in."** First, attach importance to talent recruitment. On one hand, change the original single academic background and boldly employ comprehensive talents of different ages and backgrounds. On the other hand, introduce specialized professionals who often have in-depth research

in specific fields, making their recruitment essential for improving think tank specialization. (2) **“Emphasizing exchange.”** Encourage talent exchange between think tanks to promote research diversification, and also encourage scholars to rotate among different organizations, including universities, enterprises, and government departments. For example, the U.S. “revolving door” mechanism facilitates talent movement among government, universities, think tanks, and enterprises, which has enhanced U.S. think tanks’ policy influence. (3) **“Adjusting ratios.”** As analyzed above, China’s official think tanks are large-scale with many personnel, potentially creating redundancy. Therefore, adjust the ratio of researchers to administrative staff to reduce redundancy and center all departmental work around research activities. Additionally, adjust the ratio of researchers to assistants—RAND’s experience suggests that two researchers are less efficient than one researcher plus half a secretary.

7.2.2 Expanding Funding Sources

Adequate funding lays a solid material foundation for think tank research. China currently exhibits a “three strong, one weak” phenomenon: party/government/military, research institute, and university think tanks have strong momentum, while social think tanks remain weak. Although the first three types have relatively stable funding sources, their channels are singular. Whether government appropriations or project funds, the “official background” of funding can influence think tank research and reduce independence. Therefore, expanding funding sources can both maintain research independence and promote social think tank development. First, improve the social donation system by establishing and perfecting charity publicity and supervision systems to eliminate public concerns about non-transparent, unsupervised charitable donations. This includes standardizing donation fund management, improving project operation supervision, strictly following prescribed channels to receive and use social donations, timely allocation, and strengthening supervision, inspection, publicity, feedback to donors, and auditing. Second, encourage foundation establishment. As non-profit public welfare organizations, foundations can provide economic assistance for Chinese think tank development. Finally, think tanks should enhance self-sufficiency. Beyond relying on external funding, think tanks must strengthen their ability to support themselves. For example, U.S. think tanks derive part of their annual income from operating revenue such as venue and equipment rentals, publication profits, and project contract fees.

7.3 Reforming Think Tank Research Fields

China is currently in a period of economic and social transition with profound changes in its economic system, social structure, interest patterns, and ideological concepts, facing increasingly complex problems and severe challenges. Think tanks serve as the government’s “external brain,” providing recommendations for government decision-making and national policy formulation. However, Chinese

think tanks currently emphasize strategic theoretical research, lack discussion of social issues, have high similarity in research fields with weak brand influence, and suffer from low research collaboration and isolated work. Therefore, think tank research fields must be reformed to make research both targeted and forward-looking, both specialized and comprehensive. First, think tank research must be practical—this is the most fundamental requirement. Think tanks should first address current problems or phenomena, answer decision-makers' questions, or propose recommendations and measures. Second, think tank research must be forward-looking. While practicality addresses applied countermeasures, forward-looking involves strategic research with higher demands for predictive analysis capabilities, enabling think tanks to provide efficient consulting services when the government formulates major policies and development plans, becoming “guides.” Third, enhance brand awareness and research specialization. Through specialized, in-depth research in particular fields, think tanks can develop their own strengths and build brand identity. This creates research characteristics for market competition and expands influence, forming a virtuous cycle. Fourth, emphasize collaborative research: (1) interdisciplinary cooperation—facing complex social and international environments, think tank research should not be limited to single disciplines but employ interdisciplinary methods for multi-perspective examination of issues to form policy recommendations; (2) inter-think tank cooperation—as independent research institutions, each think tank has limited capacity, and cooperation can improve research efficiency and reduce difficulty while fostering a favorable research environment and mutually beneficial think tank market; and (3) international cooperation—strengthening international cooperation can promote research internationalization and enhance domestic think tanks' international visibility.

7.4.1 Increasing Think Tank Information Transparency

The transparency of think tank information not only affects public awareness but also influences public trust. Compared with U.S. think tanks, Chinese think tanks have lower information transparency and limited public access channels. Therefore, increasing information transparency is essential. Specific measures include: (1) **Emphasizing website construction.** Websites should present basic information such as overviews, personnel composition, research outcomes, publications, and donation information, with organized content and enhanced user experience. For example, most U.S. think tank research outcomes are searchable on their websites, with some supporting free downloads. (2) **Issuing annual reports.** Annual reports are important for self-promotion, allowing the public to understand a think tank' s status over the past year. However, Chinese think tanks show low awareness of annual reporting. In this comparative analysis, only two Chinese think tanks published annual reports—the National Development and Reform Commission' s Macroeconomic Research Institute and the Unirule Institute of Economics—though the former requires user login for download and is not freely accessible to the public. In contrast, all 24 U.S. think tanks issue annual reports covering personnel and organizational structure, an-

nual research outcomes, major viewpoints and ideas, and financial status. (3) **Emphasizing traditional publication distribution.** While Chinese think tank research outcomes mainly appear as papers, reports, and monographs, distributing these as publications can enhance think tank visibility and influence society and guide public opinion.

7.4.2 Flexibly Using Social Media

Think tanks serve as the government' s “external brain” with a “connecting” role, and cannot be “only upward-looking, not downward-looking.” Therefore, think tanks must not only understand public opinion, pay attention to people' s livelihoods, and provide recommendations for government decision-making but also communicate and interact with the public, explaining government policies and evaluating their reasonableness. Flexible use of common social media is an effective way to communicate with the public. For example, opening WeChat and Weibo accounts to promote viewpoints and ideas. Given the current mobile internet economy, think tanks can also develop relevant applications and mobile apps, such as the German Marshall Fund' s dedicated app. When using social media, think tanks should: first, choose platforms rationally between domestic and international options—WeChat and Weibo are national platforms targeting domestic audiences, while Facebook and Twitter are global platforms with broader reach, requiring careful consideration given limited resources; second, ensure timely platform updates to help users stay informed about think tank developments; and third, emphasize official platform verification to guarantee information authenticity and maintain their image amid chaotic online information and false content.

7.4.3 Strengthening Media Interaction

Media organizations often lack independent analytical capacity on specialized policy issues and need to draw on professional viewpoints or research findings when reporting or commenting to the public. Since government policymakers are typically cautious in their statements, think tanks with both theoretical foundations and practical research become important sources for media. For think tanks, media represent an excellent platform for expounding viewpoints and increasing exposure. Therefore, strengthening media interaction and establishing friendly cooperative relationships is necessary. For example, U.S. think tanks provide timely interpretations of major social events, current affairs, and national policy announcements. Think tanks can also use press conferences, special reports, and exclusive interviews to publicize latest achievements, research progress, and viewpoints of renowned experts, creating think tank star scholars and increasing media exposure. The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, for instance, runs a TV program called “Public Policy Forum” broadcast on over 400 TV stations nationwide, significantly enhancing the institution' s influence.

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

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