

## Reflections on Several Major Issues Concerning New-Type Think Tanks with Chinese Characteristics (Postprint)

**Authors:** Wang Wen

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### Abstract

As an important component of national soft power, the development of new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics has been elevated to a national strategic priority. Currently, Chinese think tanks are gradually exhibiting a trend toward industrialization, yet many people's understanding of new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics remains incomplete.

### Full Text

#### Thinking on Several Major Issues about New Think Tanks with Chinese Characteristics

**Wang Wen**

Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, Renmin University, Beijing 100872

**Abstract:** [Purpose/significance] As an important part of national soft power, the construction of new think tanks with Chinese characteristics has been elevated to a national strategic priority. Currently, Chinese think tanks are gradually revealing a general trend toward industrial development, yet understanding of new think tanks with Chinese characteristics remains incomplete. [Method/process] Based on daily think tank operating experience and surveys of more than 100 think tanks in the United States and Europe, this paper discusses the popularity of Chinese think tanks, the development gap between Chinese and U.S. think tanks, reflections on the 2014 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report, deficiencies in Chinese think tank development, and the definition of new think tanks. [Result/conclusion] Finally, this paper puts forward innovative proposals for think tank mechanisms, including interactions between think tanks and government, development of the ideas market, promotion of talent development systems, financing operations, and global influence dissemination.

**Keywords:** think tank; new think tanks; think tank construction; Chinese characteristics

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## 1. Has the “Think Tank Fever” Arrived in China?

The *Opinion on Strengthening the Construction of New Think Tanks with Chinese Characteristics* (hereinafter referred to as the *Opinion*) explicitly defines “new think tanks with Chinese characteristics” as “non-profit research and consulting institutions that focus on strategic issues and public policy as their main research objects and aim to serve the scientific, democratic, and law-based decision-making of the Party and government.” The key terms here are “research object,” “service subject,” and “non-profit nature.”

The so-called “think tank fever” in current discourse refers to the noticeable changes in China’s think tank community since General Secretary Xi Jinping’s important instruction in early 2013 on “strengthening the construction of new think tanks with Chinese characteristics.” These changes include reform plans launched by a number of official think tanks and the mushrooming establishment of new think tanks. However, the targets criticized in articles expressing concern about this “fever” are primarily social agitators appearing under the name of “think tanks.”

Such agitation can be divided into three categories. **First, commercialization.** I have repeatedly seen headhunting firms and consulting agencies brand themselves as “famous think tanks” in their self-promotion. This appropriates the name of “think tank.” Commercial consulting institutions have diverse research objects, varied service subjects, and must prioritize profit-making as their main approach—clearly inconsistent with the three relatively strict and explicit attributes of think tanks: “serving the Party and government,” “focusing on strategic issues and public policy as main research objects,” and “non-profit nature.” These commercial companies may label themselves as “think tanks” due to insufficient understanding of what think tanks are, or because the term appears “high-end.” While we cannot currently stop this through policy or legal means, we can achieve collective social consensus on what constitutes a “think tank” through clarifying public discourse. In the United States, the distinction between McKinsey as a consulting firm and RAND Corporation as a think tank is quite clear.

**Second, generalization.** Some traditional academic institutions, fearing policy neglect, have rushed to transform into “think tanks,” including even those specializing in history, archaeology, and pure theory. This generalization trend highlights traditional scholars’ efforts to show concern for reality and transform their research. However, scholarship requires sitting on a cold bench, needing more foundational work and material accumulation. For example, Silk Road research involves, on one hand, studies of various countries’ histories, Dunhuang studies, ethnic minority studies, and minor language research—relatively unpop-

ular fields requiring long-term accumulation, distant from the current national “Belt and Road” policy and not needing to follow trends. Yet many research conclusions from these foundational studies often provide indispensable inspiration and groundwork for the latter type of policy-oriented research. In such cases, “academia” and “think tanks” should have a division of labor.

**Third, entertainmentization.** I have encountered individual folk scholars who claim the title of “master,” some putting on airs of being aloof and unfathomable, half-concealing claims of close connections with certain high-level officials as their senior advisors. Others focus on writing bestsellers and media exposure as their primary goals, making shocking statements to grab attention with keywords like “national crisis” or “conspiracy of a certain country,” also self-proclaiming as “think tanks.” The research work of both types may have value, but it is highly entertaining and easily perceived as “research performers.”

Such “think tank fever” is not necessarily entirely harmful to the development of new think tanks with Chinese characteristics, nor does it constitute grounds for criticizing the current *Opinion*. The development of new think tanks with Chinese characteristics today bears some similarity to the development of private enterprises in the early 1980s, when “fool companies,” “briefcase companies,” and “profiteers” were everywhere—but these were tributaries of social development. The tide of history eliminates the rough and retains the essence, eliminates the false and retains the true. The subsequent 30-plus years of private enterprise growth proved the correctness of the national policy of vigorously developing private enterprises at that time. The *Opinion* discusses the significance of new think tanks with Chinese characteristics from three strategic heights: “scientific, democratic, and law-based decision-making of the Party and government,” “modernization of the national governance system and governance capability,” and “national soft power.” The vigorous development of Chinese think tanks is an inevitable trend. As for current social agitation under the name of “think tanks,” we might as well “let the bullet fly for a while.”

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## 2. How Large Is the Gap Between Chinese and U.S. Think Tanks?

China had occupations similar to think tanks in ancient times, such as “retainers,” “military strategists,” “private advisors,” “staff members,” and “advisors,” but modern think tanks in China emerged only after the reform and opening-up. The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences was established in 1977, and the Development Research Center of the State Council was established in 1981. The founding history of these two largest think tanks largely reflects the reform process of China’s government decision-making mechanism. However, both belong to administrative establishment institutions, making it difficult to shed their “official” imprint. The separation between “planning” and “decision-making” has not been achieved—that is, the advisory system and decision-making system

have not become relatively independent, providing political and historical soil for the emergence and development of civilian think tanks.

In the early 1990s, with China's "entrepreneurship wave," a group of officials and scholars resolutely left the system and founded civilian think tanks relying on the market and focusing on policy analysis and enterprise consulting, such as the China Center for Economic Research at Peking University, the Unirule Institute of Economics, and the China Institute for Reform and Development in Hainan. According to reports, Chinese think tanks once reached more than 2,500 in number. However, due to the ideological pressure on China from the dramatic changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the immaturity of commercial operation models, many civilian think tanks were deregistered or died prematurely, while others transformed into commercial consulting companies. Overall, the first generation of Chinese think tanks had official think tanks as the absolute center, with very low civilian participation in decision-making consultation.

After the Beijing Olympics, administrative system reform accelerated, and the second generation of Chinese think tanks mushroomed: some emulated foreign think tank models, inviting a large number of former senior government officials as managers, such as the China Center for International Economic Exchanges, established in 2009; some relied on private charitable foundation investment, such as the New Huadu Research Institute, established in 2011; some depended on local governments or enterprises to serve local decision-making; and some relied on famous universities and well-known media. The Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies was founded in early 2013 under this historical background through a joint venture between Renmin University of China and Shanghai Chongyang Investment Management Co., Ltd., and has made significant progress.

Compared with the first generation, the second generation of Chinese think tanks exhibits many new characteristics: relatively flexible mechanisms, no longer seeking administrative establishment; funding mostly from social donations rather than administrative appropriations; more diverse viewpoints and positions, with some simply taking social criticism as their mission. However, the gap between the second generation of Chinese think tanks and those in the United States remains large, mainly reflected in three aspects:

**First, industrial scale.** U.S. think tanks originated roughly after World War I. The term "think tank" itself originated from the "tank" used massively in World War I, implying that ideas also have power like tanks. Famous think tanks like the Brookings Institution have nearly a century of history. After more than half a century of development, U.S. think tanks have reached an industrial scale of nearly 2,000 institutions, with an average annual budget of tens of billions of dollars and more than 100,000 practitioners. In contrast, modern think tanks in China emerged only after the reform and opening-up. In horizontal comparison, there remains a gap of roughly 30-50 years in development stages between Chinese and U.S. think tanks. Behind this gap lies the difference

in national and social development stages. From this perspective, Chinese think tank practitioners need to work diligently and forge ahead.

**Second, operational mechanisms.** The development and growth of U.S. think tanks, which emerged in the first half of the 20th century, accompanied the process of American democratization, the historical changes of American social modernization, and the rise of the United States in the international community. Especially before and after World War II, the United States seized historical opportunities to surpass many powerful countries and stand out in the entire international system, with think tanks playing an indispensable role behind the scenes. During the Cold War, the role of U.S. think tanks was equally significant. The great rise of U.S. think tanks was accompanied by the 磨合 of relationships between think tanks and government, media, and society, as well as the perfection of internal operating mechanisms (including fundraising, personnel management, project operations, etc.) and the formation of an ideas market system. In comparison, China's think tank industry is indeed still in its primary stage and far lags behind national development. Many Chinese think tanks still do not know how to communicate and coexist with decision-making departments; the survival of some Chinese civilian think tanks still faces serious problems; many Chinese think tanks have not yet established incentive systems; and think tanks remain in a relatively marginalized position in China's entire social operation system. From this perspective, Chinese think tanks still need to humbly learn operational strategies from the United States, draw on relevant successful experiences, and combine them with China's local realities.

**Third, institutional influence.** I have discussed in my article "*Strategic Planning: The Essential External Function of Think Tanks*" how U.S. think tanks achieve external communication and build influence. In other words, think tanks are like "idea factories," and influence and external communication are like product sales capabilities. What Chinese think tanks currently lack most is not just product quality but product marketing. Compared with U.S. think tanks, the research capability gap of Chinese think tanks is not as large as imagined; China's best think tank scholars are fully capable of competing with the best U.S. think tank scholars. The real gap between the two countries lies in the overall marketing power of think tank ideas, including project design, research, writing, evaluation, submission, communication, social culture, political structure, and other links. The gap between Chinese and U.S. think tanks is much like the gap between Chinese cinema and Hollywood—not about the strength of individual actors but about deficiencies in various links of the industrial chain leading to overall industrial backwardness.

### 3. How Should We View the Popular Penn Global Think Tank Report?

On January 22, 2015, the University of Pennsylvania released the *2014 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report* simultaneously in 55 cities worldwide. This was the largest-ever global think tank ranking release, with seven Chinese think tanks making it into the most important “Top 150 Global Think Tanks” list across 49 sub-categories. This was the ninth time the university had published this global list.

Some Chinese scholars have different views on the *Global Go To Think Tank Index Report* led by the University of Pennsylvania’s “Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program” (TTCSP). However, overall, regardless of whether it has gained collective recognition from Chinese academia, the report holds significant importance for China: it has attracted the attention of Chinese leaders, gradually influenced peers in China’s think tank industry, and consequently elevated the status of this emerging industry throughout Chinese society.

One industry scholar once commented that without this report and the fact that Chinese think tanks rank far behind, the think tank industry might not have received such early attention.

Dr. James G. McGann, the project’s director, conducted research in China again in the fall of 2014. He stated that the report aims to “conduct more authoritative and objective comprehensive evaluations of think tanks based on specific indicators, by experts from various countries,” hoping to obtain more field data. Starting in 2007, Dr. McGann began this work, initially able to invite only over a thousand experts to nominate global think tanks, then forming evaluation results based on scientific and systematic standards and relatively objective and fair research methods.

He revealed that he has traveled to all major countries worldwide, visited almost all important think tanks for research, and after eight years of accumulation, obtained the strong support of 3,572 experts and scholars from all walks of life globally, as well as suggestions from 1,950 experts and scholars. The larger the statistical sample, the smaller the error. This is also an important reason why the report is called the “international first weathervane reflecting global think tank performance and comprehensive influence.”

The report is 172 pages long with 49 sub-forms, quite rich in content. Three of its functions deserve our attention. **First, it describes the basic situation of global think tanks.** The report shows that there are currently 6,681 think tanks worldwide, with the United States having 1,830, China 429, and the United Kingdom 287—the three countries with the largest number of think tanks. As a traditional think tank powerhouse, the United States has six institutions selected among the world’s top ten think tanks, with the Brookings Institution, the Royal Institute of International Affairs, and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace ranking as the world’s top three think tanks.

The report also addresses current think tank development trends and operational problems. For example, it suggests that the main current trends in think tanks are globalization and democratization, with international forces affecting think tanks continuously strengthening. Additionally, it mentions the demand for independent information and analysis in the context of the internet and the development of big data—all new issues facing global think tank industry development.

**Second, it displays the relative gap of Chinese think tanks.** In the most important “Top 150 Global Think Tanks” list, seven Chinese think tanks were selected: the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, China Institute of International Studies, Development Research Center of the State Council, China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, Institute of International and Strategic Studies at Peking University, and Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University. The highest-ranked Chinese think tank is the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, only at 27th place. In various field rankings—such as best-managed think tanks, best conference think tanks, best domestic economic research think tanks, and best defense and security research think tanks—Chinese think tanks do not rank at the top. This shows that although China is the second-largest country in terms of think tank quantity, it is not yet a think tank powerhouse.

**Third, it standardizes industry criteria for think tanks.** The report’s measurement standards are no longer limited to academic core journals but adopt industry influence, supplemented by international communication, media impact, and social recognition, highlighting the functional characteristics of the think tank industry facing society and reality. In the years following the report’s release, the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, Horizon International Development Research Institute, China.org.cn, and several other research institutions currently designing think tank rankings have all made improvements based on this report. In this sense, the report serves as a “syllabus-level” standard-setter for global think tanks. Just as the widely circulated saying in the business world goes, “First-class enterprises set standards, second-class enterprises build brands, third-class enterprises manufacture products.” To truly dominate a field, one must develop to the height of “setting standards.” It is for this reason that this report demonstrates the appeal to be released simultaneously in 55 cities worldwide.

Although a few scholars disdain ranking research, it must be admitted that a widely recognized “ranking” embodies the evaluation power over the ranked objects. Currently, those most enthusiastic about rankings remain media or related think tank institutions in Europe and America. Each ranking release represents a value judgment of reality, embodying the discourse power of European and American institutions and representing a certain ideological soft power of European and American countries. Therefore, for Chinese think tanks, the first step is not to view the still imperfect *Global Go To Think Tank Index Report* with a rejecting eye, but to learn its strengths from the perspective of

ideological competition and soft power 博弈.

In my view, the global vision and appeal of the University of Pennsylvania's *Global Go To Think Tank Index Report* is what Chinese think tanks currently lack most. Chinese think tanks and various research institutions and media have not yet been able to regularly release rankings like "Global City Safety Rankings" or "Global Corruption Perceptions Index" as many European and American institutions do, defining the quality, superiority, and ranking of various objects in a linear logic, thereby disseminating the cultural values they embody. Leaving aside the methodology, the key is that global reports are based globally and have international influence. From this perspective, Chinese think tanks should perhaps release more industry reports with global discourse power and evaluation power in various fields such as politics, economy, technology, society, ethnicity, and military affairs.

Of course, this cannot be achieved overnight. Dr. McGann's *Global Go To Think Tank Index Report* dares to be a pioneer, with continuous tracking research, encompassing more and more global scholars to work with him, ultimately gaining support from a considerable range. This requires perseverance and tenacity. In contrast, some annual reports by Chinese think tanks lack sufficiently unified research standards and sustained effort, which is regrettable.

Additionally, the international intervention power and appeal to peers demonstrated by the *Global Go To Think Tank Index Report* also deserve Chinese think tanks' attention. Currently, the international influence demonstrated by the report, like global financial credit evaluation systems and economic measurement indices being held in the hands of European and American countries, determines the ranking of global think tanks in a "highly profitable" manner, reflecting the soft power of the American research community.

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#### 4. Several Deficiencies in Chinese Think Tank Development

Various signs indicate that Chinese think tanks are ushering in the best historical opportunity, but they also face enormous challenges and have many development deficiencies and cognitive gaps.

**From the perspective of attribute positioning**, think tanks still have unclear understanding of conceptual differences among consulting companies, academic institutions, and themselves. Consulting companies are employed by clients and absolutely serve the latter, with completely commercialized operation models. Think tanks, however, should be public instruments, providing consultation for decision-makers but not necessarily aligning with what decision-makers want. Academic institutions focus on theoretical innovation and lean toward basic research, while think tanks focus on policy analysis and excel at applied research. In China, there are at least 200,000 institutions with names containing "research" such as "research institutes" or "research centers," mostly

academic research institutions funded by fiscal appropriations, with personnel establishment, operating with academic characteristics. But think tanks are essentially “idea factories,” requiring complex functions and related architectures based on idea production, assembly, sales, and feedback regarding real-world issues. In this architecture, introducing market competition mechanisms and increasing vitality in policy research is crucial. In countries with relatively developed idea production mechanisms, the three relatively clear functions of “for commerce,” “for academia,” and “for policy” correspond to consulting companies, academic institutions, and modern think tanks, respectively, and must not be confused.

**From the perspective of value stance,** think tanks still have insufficient national loyalty in how to build socialism with Chinese characteristics. Domestic research usually holds that think tanks must be independent, which makes some sense. However, some people extend “independence” to mean that think tanks must be critical, even opposing the current path of socialism with Chinese characteristics and the current government. This misunderstands the original meaning of “think tank.” The “independence” advocated by European and American think tanks refers to independence from the basic positions of the Democratic or Republican parties, objectivity in academic logic and argumentation, and maintaining certain unique viewpoints in the process of issuing policy reports. European and American think tanks do not deliberately keep their distance from government; instead, they constantly demonstrate how close their relationship with government is, even “showing off” that their members enter or come from government through the “revolving door.” Some receive substantial funding from government—for example, the well-known U.S. think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) received 21% of its 2012 annual budget from government. In fact, the research products of U.S. think tanks ultimately aim to influence government and change policy. Therefore, building new think tanks with Chinese characteristics must both prevent the “independence” misunderstanding from leading to an “oppositional” trend with government and avoid the “accommodating” tendency of merely providing footnotes for policy introduction.

**From the perspective of transnational interaction,** the internationalization process of think tanks is still far from sufficient, unable to provide adequate intellectual support for China’s participation in more global affairs. Chinese think tanks have not yet formed global organizational power to go abroad, have quite limited understanding of various countries’ situations, and have serious scarcity in understanding and tracking medium-sized powers. For example, their grasp of regional powers like Ukraine, Turkey, Nigeria, and Venezuela is quite insufficient, causing China’s grasp of changes in these countries and policy responses to often appear inadequate. Chinese think tanks have also not formed international appeal to lead other countries, lacking the necessary strength to build global dialogue platforms. The world’s most famous forums today, such as the Davos Forum, Shangri-La Dialogue, and Global Fortune Forum, are all dominated by top-tier U.S. and European think tanks and related institutions.

Chinese think tanks have not yet formed discourse-shaping power to intervene globally, unable to actively construct international mainstream public opinion and set major international agendas, and cannot create major strategic terms or academic concepts that countries compete to discuss. Top-tier European and American think tanks almost periodically throw out new vocabulary or new issues, such as “end of history,” “BRICS,” “stakeholder,” “G2,” “smart power,” “fiscal cliff,” “PIIGS,” and “China threat theory.” Chinese think tanks can often only follow discussions or passively refute them, struggling to cope.

**From the perspective of personnel cultivation,** Chinese think tanks have not yet formed a complete talent cultivation ecosystem, having neither nurtured enough reserve elites for government nor formed talent 输送 power to international organizations. In contrast, the “revolving door” mechanism for recommending and gathering talent in European and American think tanks is quite mature. Most senior think tank scholars in Europe and America have experience as senior government officials, deeply understanding decision-making processes and political rules. In comparison, the resumes of Chinese think tank scholars are often much less impressive. More importantly, European and American countries are also adept at delivering talent to important international organizations. Europeans and Americans remain the absolute monopolizers of leadership positions in major international organizations, and almost all those elites have work or study experience in first-tier think tanks or related institutions. After assuming important positions, they still maintain good interaction with the think tanks they previously worked for, mutually enhancing each other. These are important reasons why European and American countries still dominate the operation of the international system.

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## 5. What Constitutes a New Think Tank?

A strong country needs strong intelligence, and the rise of a modern great power requires great think tanks to guide its course. The process of America’s rise in the 20th century was basically synchronized with the development of American think tanks. The particularity of China’s political system determines that the development of Chinese think tanks must be close to national conditions and avoid tendencies such as political lobbying and extreme positioning that are widely criticized in American think tanks. However, some successful experiences of American think tanks can serve as references for China. I use four terms—“policy advising,” “public enlightenment,” “strategic planning,” and “talent cultivation”—to summarize the functions that new think tanks with Chinese characteristics should possess.

**Policy advising.** In periods of severe interest differentiation, the introduction of any policy appears exceptionally difficult, and the slightest misstep will attract widespread controversy. Therefore, the relationship between new think tanks and national decision-makers should not be simple consultation and ad-

vice but should involve complex interactions. Good new think tanks need to fully intervene in all processes of policy formulation: the front-end procedures (such as research, opinion solicitation, and program design), mid-term advice (designing policy frameworks through internal references and research reports), and later-stage improvement (including evaluation, refinement, and responding to public opinion). Think tank intervention is like building a “decision-making laboratory,” helping decision-makers conduct sufficient demonstration and evaluation of policies in a professional, objective, and independent manner, thereby reflecting the openness, socialization, democratization, and scientification of political decision-making mechanisms.

**Public enlightenment.** In a public opinion environment with diversified demands, the functional positioning of new think tanks in China cannot be satisfied with internal advice alone; they should play a role in resolving contradictions and facilitating communication and consultation between government decision-makers and public opinion. Think tank scholars should be adept at using easily understandable language and communication skills close to the general public, interpreting and popularizing policies to the public through publishing works, writing commentaries, and giving interviews, and can also reflect the next-step demands of the public to decision-makers from the public’s perspective. In this sense, think tank scholars should be regarded as “responsible scholars” and “advisory scholars,” who should not adopt emotional criticism or unfounded assertions but need to convey the most pertinent insights to the public and decision-makers with a sense of responsibility and mission, contributing to cultivating social rationality and ideological emancipation.

**Strategic planning.** *The Art of War* states: “The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting; the next best is to disrupt his alliances; the next is to attack his army; the worst is to attack his cities.” As international competition intensifies, first-class think tanks should not only engage in social policy research but also extensively intervene in global affairs, such as value dissemination and making friends with foreign elites. They should research, design, and promote their country’s foreign strategy at the global level, extending their country’s interest chain deeply to every corner of the world. Most American think tanks have strong strategic communication capabilities, serving national strategic goals, influencing decisions and public opinion domestically, and disseminating American values externally. For Chinese think tanks to stand tall in the world, they must also seize international discourse power and enhance their country’s international intervention power in thought by holding high-end international forums and releasing internationally influential research reports, promoting Chinese culture and thought to the world.

**Talent cultivation.** Schools “educate people,” while think tanks “cultivate talent.” New think tanks with Chinese characteristics cannot repeat the past inertia of placing retired cadres or marginalized officials in research departments. Instead, they should shoulder the heavy responsibility of training government officials and state-owned enterprise executives at all levels. The well-known

American “revolving door” mechanism is not just a simple job exchange between think tanks and government due to changes in party governance; more importantly, think tank work often promotes comprehensive social interaction and enhanced thinking abilities of talents, providing a large reserve of high-end talents and selection space for government positions for national development. The Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee proposed “promoting cadres to be able to move up and down, in and out,” which has been widely praised by society. Accordingly, we can appropriately encourage and arrange cadres to work in think tanks or select elites from think tanks. After all, think tanks are excellent “talent reserves” for re-exercising abilities, recharging knowledge, and re-contacting society, and should cultivate enough reserve elites for the benign operation of modern governance systems.

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## 6. Reform Proposals for Building New Think Tanks with Chinese Characteristics

From the experience of developed countries, think tanks are already an important link in modern governance systems. In the United States, think tanks are called the “fifth power” after government, Congress, courts, and media. Building new think tanks with Chinese characteristics requires not only enhancing their own policy research capabilities but also, from the height of modernizing national governance capabilities and global ideological competition, deeply reforming current think tank operation models in five aspects: the interaction mechanism between planning and decision-making, the ideas market mechanism, the personnel expansion mechanism, the financing operation mechanism, and the global dissemination mechanism.

**Reform of the planning-decision interaction mechanism.** Although government departments frequently introduce public notices, hearings, or draft opinions, the decision-making system ( “decision-making” ) remains relatively closed, insufficiently absorbing the most excellent, wisest, and most brilliant ideas and strategic suggestions ( “planning” ) from the broadest range, and even more difficult to create an open think tank culture. The so-called “open think tank culture” means building an open network for policy discussion and socialized decision-making using internet thinking, promoting frequent and effective positive interactions among decision-makers, researchers, and the public, and strengthening the important role of first-class think tanks in public policy formulation, especially obtaining proactive and prescient intellectual support from intelligent individuals.

**Reform of the ideas market mechanism.** Currently, the positions of government and think tanks are unequal. Facing decision-makers, think tanks have almost no bargaining power over their ideological contributions and work value. The construction of new think tanks must create a benignly operating ideas market, giving play to the market’ s decisive role in allocating ideological re-

sources, providing competitive research funding for valuable research reports, and thereby improving related incentive mechanisms. Otherwise, it will be difficult to attract the best researchers to serve the country. Reform of the ideas market mechanism tests decision-makers' magnanimity and courage. I suggest actively elevating the authority of domestic think tanks, following the experience of European and American leaders to visit think tanks more often, delivering various important speeches against the backdrop of Chinese think tanks, and using international media exposure to enhance the social and international status of Chinese think tanks.

**Reform of the personnel expansion mechanism.** New think tanks need to create a Chinese-style "revolving door," cultivating and utilizing talents on think tank platforms without sticking to conventional patterns. Think tanks can regularly select some scholars to take up temporary posts in governments at all levels and select some officials to return to various think tanks for forging. Over time, mutual communication and understanding between think tanks and government will be greatly strengthened, and think tank scholars with practical knowledge and officials with ideological depth will emerge in large numbers. At the same time, think tanks need to fully utilize retired but still energetic veteran cadres. Under current retirement personnel mechanisms, China can completely produce a large number of excellent think tank talents like former U.S. Secretary of State Kissinger, who can still devote themselves to national interests at over 90 years old. New think tanks with Chinese characteristics need to possess multiple abilities and experiences in government relations, brand building, and report writing, requiring the construction of comprehensive talent teams of old, middle-aged, and young people, as well as a complete set of internal mechanisms for incentives, elimination, assessment, planning, and management.

**Reform of the financing operation mechanism.** Most American think tanks have diversified financing capabilities. Although think tanks are non-profit organizations, established think tanks like the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Brookings Institution have huge "financial reservoirs," preserving and increasing value through financial operations to ensure think tanks become "century-old shops." Such financing capabilities are beyond the reach of China's current administrative appropriation-dependent official think tanks and financially strapped civilian think tanks. Therefore, new think tanks with Chinese characteristics must also establish Chinese-style "financial reservoirs." Relying solely on administrative appropriations cannot comprehensively promote and measure the effectiveness and true level of think tank knowledge production. Market-oriented transformation of research tasks and funding budgets, and providing policy support and encouragement for funds willing to invest in think tank construction, will greatly stimulate the vitality and credibility of new think tanks and help shape efficient, pragmatic, and responsible think tank producers.

**Reform of the global dissemination mechanism.** New think tanks with Chinese characteristics should develop an international vision and incorporate

think tank construction into the operation of the national diplomatic grand strategy. From the perspective of think tanks' international exchanges, we should create a relaxed policy environment, encourage think tanks to conduct international exchanges flexibly, and establish extensive liaison and communication mechanisms between China's foreign affairs departments and think tanks at all levels. We can also utilize China's advanced think tanks to train foreign officials, promoting the implementation and promotion of the national diplomatic grand strategy and making many international friends. New think tanks can increase cooperation with famous European and American universities and related institutions, establish European and American branches, extensively exchange ideas locally, while simultaneously dominating the agenda of European and American think tank circles' research on China, purchasing the best local intellectual products that help China's development, and promoting the country's ideas and thoughts locally.

In conclusion, China is currently in a period of economic transformation with sustained growth and a critical period of comprehensively deepening reforms. The think tank industry has great potential, and the spring of think tank development has just begun. As the saying goes, "The whole year's work depends on a good start in spring." With close cooperation among decision-makers, society, and think tanks, seizing historical opportunities and advancing various think tank mechanism reforms, new think tanks with Chinese characteristics will surely become a key force in promoting national rise.

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