

## *Original Paper*

# The Activity of the «Think Tanks» of the PRC: Problems and Current Situation

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Now this foreknowledge cannot be elicited from spirits; it cannot be obtained inductively from experience, nor by any deductive calculation.

Sun Tzu

### ***Abstract***

*The article deals with the issues of Think tanks activities of Chinese People's Republic and their role in decision-making process. The main activities of the Think tanks, their goals and objectives have been analyzed. The opinions and conclusions of Chinese experts on modernization of analytical centers have been regarded.*

### ***Keywords***

*Think tanks, establishing think tanks, official think tanks, independent think tanks*

### **1. Introduction**

Today, think tanks play a key role in ensuring national security, as by their nature and in the character of the tasks they perform, think tanks have been designed for promoting stable internal development and fulfilling an effective foreign policy. The steady preservation of high rates of socio-economic development, the growth of military potential, the active introduction of high technologies and other factors, in the whole, create conditions for the further rapid growth of China's economic and political power. The permanent fact is that, these processes are inseparably linked with the offensive activities of Chinese People's Republic Information Analytical Centers, which have an influence on the internal political processes in the country and abroad. Today, many experts predict the transformation of China

into a new main player on the world stage.

In this regard, there is a need for a fundamental study of systems, principles and mechanisms for organizing the activities of Chinese analytical and research institutions, and as for the activity of these centers, it was stated by the famous American diplomat, the former director of the Political Planning Bureau of the State Department, and now the President of the Council on Foreign Relations of the United States R. Haass, that «Brain trusts» are independent institutions created for conducting research and gaining objective knowledge, applicable in the field of policy (Haass, 2002, p. 5), that is equally related to the appropriate structures of China as well.

## 2. History and Formation of Chinese Think Tanks

A large number of articles, studies, reports, statements about the PRC's economic and political role in the world are published daily, but at the same time, there is either ignoring or rather insufficient attention to the intellectual influence of China, as a Confucian country, and the world civilization as a whole, as well as international relations in particular (Jurbei, 2011, p. 165).

The issues of «discussion» of taken decisions in the history of China are reflected in such sources as «Book of the ruler of the region Shang» by Shang Yang (Shang Yang biàn fǎ) (Xiao Gong discussed plans (of state administration)) (Shang Yang, 2017), «Treatise on the art of war» by Sun Tzu (Sun Tzu bīng fǎ) (Enlightened sovereigns and wise commanders moved and won, performed feats, surpassing all others, as everyone knew in advance gù míng jūn Xián jiāng, Suǒyǐ dòng ér shèng rén chénggōng chū yú zhòng zhòng, xiānzhī yě) (Sun Tzu, 2015, p. 32), «Zhanguo Ce» (Zhànguó cè), «Dao De Jing» (Dàodé jīng) (When terrestrial emperors rule in peace and harmony-the people are calm and peaceful too) (Lao Zi, 2010), Wen Zi (Know the fate, control the mental processes, choose the right preferences and meet the requirements of nature-and then you will understand the manner of the government) (Wen Zi, 2004, p. 17).

Reflecting on the history and principles of the formation of China's «think tanks», Irina Komissina, the Russian researcher, considers that this process took place in three stages:

- 1) 1956-1966—the creation of Soviet-type ideological «think tanks», which were designed to serve the policy of the government, was carried out according to a hierarchical principle and they were a part of the structure of government ministries.
- 2) 1976-1989—the emergence of semi-official «think tanks» (governmental), which dealt with economic issues, had greater autonomy and influence on politics, but formally existed within the framework of the government structure.
- 3) 1989-by now—an increase in the number of think tanks, especially civil (quasi-governmental) and university-affiliated research organizations (mainly for economic research), which are controlled by the Communist Party of China and the government, although they are not a part of their structure (Komissina, 2012, p. 10).

### 3. Current Situation of Chinese Think Tanks

With the advent of a new generation of leaders, and as a result of high rate of development of China, the idea of developing and defining new approaches in building a new Chinese foreign policy is more and more evolving the Chinese political leadership and expert community. In this process, there are new elements in China's foreign policy, indicating a firmer assertion of the country's national interests and intensifying not only economic, but the military power for these purposes.

The Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on a number of key issues related to the comprehensive deepening of reforms adopted at the third plenary session of the 18<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (November 12, 2013) aimed to «strengthen the construction of new types of think tanks with Chinese peculiarities, as well as the creation and improvement the systems of consultation for political decision-making» (Gov.cn, 2013.11.15).

At the same time, it is emphasized the need for «creating a consultative and democratic system with reasonable procedures and full connections, as well as expanding channels of consultation between government agencies, organizations of the People's Political Consultative Council of China (Zhōngguó rénmin zhèngzhì xiéshāng huìyì), party groups, as well as between primary organizations and community groups» (Gov.cn, 2013.11.15).

Today, there are 512 «think-tanks» in the PRC (McGann, 2017; CCG, 2018), that allowed to take the second place after the United States. According to K. Matyugulina, the Russian scientist, a significant number of the currently functioning «think tanks» are directly related to state structures and only 5% are considered to be «independent», whose staff does not exceed 30 people (Matyugulina, 2016). However, Chinese scientists indicate that more than 100 people are employed by 42% of PRC's analytical centers, and from 10 to 100 people by 58% of them (CTTI, 2017).

According to the 2017 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report (McGann, 2017), prepared by the University of Pennsylvania, Chinese think tanks have begun to play a significant role in the political decision-making process. The following «brain centers» of the PRC are noted in this index:

1) Chinese Academy of International Studies Zhōngguó guójì wèntí yánjiū suǒ, was established in 1956, the President of the Academy is Qi Zhen hong (戚振宏), Academy's website is: <http://www.ciis.org.cn>.

2) Shang hai Academy of International Studies Shànghǎi guójì wèntí yán jiù yuàn, was established in 1960, the President of the Academy is Chen Dong xiao (陈东晓), Academy's website is: <http://www.siis.org.cn>.

3) Chinese Academy of Contemporary International Relations Zhōngguó xiàndài guójì guānxì yán jiù yuàn, was established in 1965, the President of the Academy is Ji Zhi ye (季志业), Academy's website is: <http://www.cicir.ac.cn>.

4) Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Zhōngguó shèhuì kēxuéyuàn, was established in 1977, has a complex of research centers with branches in the largest cities of the PRC, the President of the Academy is Xie Fuzhan (谢伏瞻), Academy's website is: <http://cass.cssn.cn>.

5) Center for Development Research of the State Council of China Guówùyüàn fāzhǎn yánjiū zhōngxīn, was established in 1980, the Director of the Center is Li Wei (李伟), Center's website is: <http://drc.gov.cn>.

6) Tianze Economic Research Institute (Unirule) Tiān zé jīngjì yánjiū suǒ, was established in 1993, the Chairman of the Institute is Wu Si (吴思), the Director of the Institute is Cheng Hong (盛洪), Institute's website is: <http://www.unirule.cloud/>.

7) Center of China and Globalization Zhōngguó yǔ quánqiú huà zhìkù, was established in 2008, the President of the Center is Wang Huiyao (王辉耀), Center's website is: <http://www.ccg.org.cn>.

8) Chunyang Institute of Financial Studies Chóngyáng jīnróng yánjiū suǒ, was established in 2013, is managed by the Executive Board, consisting of 4 people, Institute's website is: <http://www.rdcy.org/>.

Particularly, in the column «The best brain centers of the world (except the USA), the Chinese Academy of Contemporary International Relations ranks 9<sup>th</sup> place, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences 23<sup>rd</sup> place, Center for Development Research of the State Council of China 53<sup>rd</sup> place, Center of China and Globalization 98<sup>th</sup> place, Shanghai International Academy Research 91<sup>st</sup> place, Tianjie Institute of Economic Research 115<sup>th</sup> place, Chunyang Institute of Financial Research 116<sup>th</sup> place.

In the column «The best think tanks of China, India, Japan and the Republic of Korea», the Chinese Academy of Contemporary International Relations ranks 4<sup>th</sup> place, China Academy of International Studies 8<sup>th</sup>, Center for Development Research of the State Council of China 10<sup>th</sup>, China Academy of Social Sciences 12<sup>th</sup>, China Center and globalization 22<sup>nd</sup> place, Shanghai Academy of International Studies 23<sup>rd</sup> place, Unirule Institute of Economics 28<sup>th</sup> place.

**Table 1. Top Chinese Think Tanks Ranks (According Global Go to Think Tank Index Report)**

|   | Best think tanks of China (Except the USA) | Best brain centers of the world (The USA and other countries) | Best think tanks of China, India, Japan and The Republic of Korea | Best think tanks in the field of defense and national security | Best think tanks in the field of foreign policy and international relations | Best think tanks in the field of international development | Governmental analytical centers |
|---|--|---|---|--|---|--|---------------------------------|
| Chinese Academy of Contemporary International Relations | 9  | 27  | 4   |  | 6   |  | 6                               |
| Chinese Academy of Social Sciences                      | 23   | 36  | 12  |  |   | 29   | 17                              |
| Chinese Academy of International Studies                |  | 47  | 8   | 47   | 30  |  | 9                               |

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|---------------------------|-----|-----|----|-----|----|
| Center for Development    |     |     |    |     |    |
| Research of China's State | 53  | 55  | 10 | 9   | 14 |
| Council                   |     |     |    |     |    |
| Center of China and       |     |     |    |     |    |
| Globalization             | 98  | 89  | 22 |     |    |
| Shanghai Academy of       |     |     |    |     |    |
| International Studies     | 91  | 91  | 23 | 38  | 21 |
| Tianze Economic Research  |     |     |    |     |    |
| Institute                 | 115 | 100 | 28 |     |    |
| Chunyang Institute of     |     |     |    |     |    |
| Financial Studies         | 116 |     |    | 104 | 68 |

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Comparing two documents—«The Global Think Tank Report 2014» (USA) and «Report of China's Think Tank Influence for 2014», which was published by the Zero Point International Development Research Institute, Chinese scientists cited the following characteristics:

Firstly, the old domestic analytical centers still have their influence, which can be called the «aircraft carrier» in the Chinese think tank. The influence of the old official think tank should not be underestimated.

Secondly, new domestic analytical centers are on the rise. Several new Chinese think tanks have emerged over the past two years.

Thirdly, the gap between the Chinese brain centers and world brain centers is still wide. ... Currently, Chinese think tanks are still ask for in terms of specialization, funding and decision making (Renmin, 2015).

Taking into consideration the structure of the PRC's think tanks, Ruslan Izimov, the Kazakh scientist divides the min to 3 conditional categories: 1) State analytical centers. 2) Specialized academic research institutes. 3) Analytical centers associated with universities (Izimov, 2015).

#### **4. Chinese Scientists' Point of View Concerning the Construction of Chinese Think Tanks!**

Some Chinese experts in their articles note that they «have to look calmly» at discussions regarding the activities of Chinese think tanks, where it is said that «more than 90% of Chinese think tanks are official, and the starting conditions for competition between the mare not fair» (CCG, 2017.05.03). According to them, the influence of the current Chinese analytical community is mainly determined by the scale of the think tank, which depends on the intensity and the amount of investment of capital in the country. Thus, the official rating of the brain center, in general, corresponds to the same indicators on the country's intellectual base (CCG, 2017.05.03).

There are many problems and difficulties in the activity of «think tanks», which should be explained by the presence of a number of interest groups and departments today, primarily formed by economic considerations that were virtually absent in China three decades ago. At the same time, government «think tanks» are busy with developing and introducing new forms into the activities of ministries and departments that are directly related to each other (CCG, 2017.05.27).

Evaluating the activities of think tanks, the Chinese expert Tang Min (汤敏) notes that there are huge differences between the think tanks of China and other countries, i.e., government think tanks are much stronger than civilian ones. However, the predominance of government think tanks does not mean that «the government likes to listen towards». In their opinion, the government has a wide range of views on certain issues related to the principles of activity and the use of the potential of such structures (CCG, 2017.05.27).

Setting the task «To straighten out the internal propaganda system and support key means of mass-media with the purpose of domestic and international development, Chinese government focuses on the export of cultural enterprises, there by facilitating the opening of new markets abroad» (Gov.cn, 2013.11.15).

## 5. Conclusion

The influence of trends such as globalization and democratization on the PRC think tanks, as well as ambiguous processes in the international arena, is constantly increasing. In this regard, the need for independent and reliable information, the concentration and large amounts of data processing, as well as the analysis based on the new problems that will be dealt with the PRC government and relevant departments of the country systematically.

Hereby, basically, the desire of China's «think tanks» experts can be explained at resolving actual foreign policy and socio-economic issues of the country.

Meanwhile, in reality, there are a number of issues in practical activities of the Chinese and international intellectual community. This is, above all, a large gap retaining between them from the viewpoint of the quantity and quality of analytical structures products. However, with a certain degree of optimism, it can be stated that the ideological and technological gap between researchers of brain centers concerning volume and quality of analytical materials preparation is decreasing. In this, not the last role belongs to a new generation of Chinese leaders who prefer pragmatic approaches in decision-making process. The «ideological» basis for the success of Chinese analysts is the confidence in that «China's position strengthening in the world» depends not only on the economic growth and military power, but also on an adequate assessment of certain events, accounting risks and opportunities (CPC, 2013.09.12).

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