

Research on the Participation of the Folk Think-Tanks in Chinese Government Policy

CHENG Xia^[a]; CHEN Qian^{[a],*}

^[a]Mainly Engaged in Public Policy, School of Political Science and Public Management, Southwest University, Chongqing, China.

*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

The think-tank is an important institution in modern state's policy consulting, which also is a significant component of national "soft power" and plays an indispensable role in the scientification of policy-making. When the government policy field appears the characteristics of explosive and leap-type, there needs more and more participation of folk think-tank in the government policy agenda to play its function of "policy advisory and populace inspiration". This paper analyzes the function and development obstacle of the folk think-tank and proposes related strategy suggestion to improve the evolution of Chinese folk think-tank.

Key words: Government; Folk think-tank; Policy-making

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The Eighteenth National People's Congress proposed the demand that we should insist on the principles of scientific policy-making, democratic policy-making, legal policy-making, and perfect policy-making to make the think-tank play its fully potential. Xi Jinping made an important instruction to Chinese folk think-tank construction on April 2013, this action made the development of folk think-tank to a level of national strategy, and he also proposed to construct "new think-tank with Chinese characteristic". From the perspective

of capital composition and subordination, there are three kinds of current Chinese folk think-tank: official think-tank, university affiliated think-tank and folk think-tank. The folk think-tank as a beneficial supplement of in-system think-tank is an innovative energy of national soft power. Offering advice and suggestions activity benefits to the development of folk think-tank as an emerging power, and it is also benefits to the progress of social democracy, fairness, and freedom.

1. THE SIGNIFICANT MEANING OF THE FOLK THINK-TANK PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT POLICY-MAKING

The folk think-tank participation in government policy-making is under the legal restriction and government authority, it is a hybrid discipline and function of policy research and consulting institution that made by various kinds of specialist and scholars, they take part in different kinds of administrative policy-making through legal and orderly ways to express their views and points, then make influence and pressure to the government related policy-making. The Chinese folk think-tank participation in government policy-making appears a significant meaning, mainly reflects on the following aspects:

1.1 The Folk Think-Tank Participation in Government Policy-Making Is an Inexorable Trend of Scientification and Democratization Policy-Making

The purpose to set the policy agenda is to make the integration of collective intelligence from various perspectives and levels, and then the scientific policy-making can be made in a synectics phenomenon. The related fields of government policy-making appears the characteristics of explosive and leap-type, it almost related to various aspects of social affairs. The more the government can get different kinds of suggestions,

realities and benefits, the more the policy-making can close to scientific and satisfy the public's fundamental interests. The official think-tank and half-official think-tank have sufficient financial and information, however, they are restricted by the government, such as, they are easily subject to the government's influence and get the government's implication when doing some researches, so they have a strong policy analysis. The folk think-tank participation in the public policy-making can make it possible to widely absorb various kinds of suggestions. They can collect the talent's real voice of different felids to make the decider consider the reality demand and policy outcomes with a wide horizon to make the policy-making more scientific. In a word, because the subjects of folk think-tank come from the society, they have a better understanding of social conditions and public opinions, and they can easily collect the public wisdom and voice, so they are a better representative of the public. The folk think-tank participation in public policy-making can not only make sure the public participate the government public policy-making orderly, but also benefit to the benefit balance and coordination of government policy-making, then guarantee the fair justice, comprehensive balance, and smoothly implementation of policy-making.

1.2 The Folk Think-Tank Participation In Government Policy-Making Is An Effective Route To Decrease The Policy-Making Cost

In the current government policy-making of China, there generally exists a complex phenomenon of "policy plane" and "policy-making", which leads to a high cost, low efficient and bad outcomes of policy-making. The think-tank in system still restricts by the government, so it cannot do the policy consulting effectively. The policy-making related to various aspects of political, economy, culture, and social, if the official think-tank and half-official think-tank burden the task of information collection and program research, the government need more specific institutions and talents, and this must leads to a self-aggrandizement and operational cost increasement in government institutions. On the other side, if the self-employed and self-financing folk think-tank can cooperate with the official think-tank under the related security mechanism, they widely join in the various kinds of policy-making to make their research results be transferred, and then the policy-making cost can be decreased efficiently. They are more independent and objective, they remain neutral in policy research, and this is good for the construction of diversified competition mechanism, the improvement of policy research and consulting level, what's more, they emphasis on the commonweal problems that the revenue-producing activities may ignore, and they focus more on the social public value. The development of folk think-tank also benefits to the government functions transformation and government institution reformation.

1.3 The Folk Think-Tank Participation in Government Policy-Making Is the Inner Need Of Folk Think-Tank Development

The rise and development of citizen society, the diversification and democratization of Chinese society need the development of the non-profit sections. The folk think-tank, as an independent and non-profit research institution, belongs to the category of non-profit section. In a policy-making process, from the need of self-benefit protraction, the public will know the related law and policy to bargain with the government to strive for their benefits. With the high speed of government reformation, the practice of Chinese policy-making needs more and more folk think-tank to play its role of advocating. Firstly, the folk think-tank has no political pressure, and less political burden, so, they can focus their attention on how to resolve public problems, and its independence can make they provide more scientific policy suggestions. Secondly, the folk think-tank is not restricted by the government and bureaucrat, they have more flexibility and creativity to integrate the talent resources, and they can collect the different opinions with it largest limitation to make each one work hard towards the resolution direction. They are good for the government to apply a new type to serve society, and improve the cooperation of government and public to realize the good governance. The folk think-tank participate in and promote the public policy-making process through the ways of policy research, policy suggestion, and so on, it make the government close to the public, and show their professional ability, certify the necessity and important function of their existence, strive for more understanding and support of their development.

2. THE PRACTICAL BARRIER OF FOLK THINK-TANK PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT POLICY-MAKING OF CHINA

As a very important kind of the think-tank, the folk think-tank plays a significant role in Chinese policy-making process. In the transaction time of society, our country appeal to a scientific, democratize, and legal policy-making agenda. However, the reality goes against with will, comparing with the western folk think-tank, the Chinese folk think-tank lacks of fully function in the government policy-making agenda.

2.1 The Legitimate Crisis of Corporate Organization

The *General Rule of Civil Law* said that there are mainly four kinds of corporation: institution, enterprise, public institution, and social group. However, the folk think-tank is not in these kinds, and this makes the folk think-tank lacks of clear right and obligation. According to the *Registration Management Rules of Social Group*,

the private non-enterprise organization must affiliate the government or the public institution, and then it can be registered as a social group. According to the rules, these institutions are forbidden to make profit from their affiliate groups, and they must take responsibility of these social groups operational outcomes. There is small amount of folk think-tank can registered successfully under such difficult conditions, and they have to go to the industrial and commercial bureau to register as enterprise. The embarrassed situation makes the folk think-tank in a hard time, it not only increases their tax burden, but also makes they cannot accept the donation legally. And it wastes a large amount of time to deal with the supervision of industrial and commercial bureau and tax department.

2.2 The Low Degree of Acceptance and Trust

Although, the folk think-tank have some advantages that the official think-tank and half-official think-tank don't have, such as, high work efficiency, reasonable charge, feasibility decision and so on. However, the government departments, enterprise and public institutions still prefer the official think-tank and half think-tan, whereas, the folk think-tank always be ignored. The reason why this situation appears firstly because the Chinese deep-rooted opinion of "official standard", so, there is low degree of acceptance and trust of the folk think-tank. The Chinese trust the authority of official organizations subjectively, they even consider that the high cost deserves to the value of research outcomes. On the other side, they can develop some hidden business through this route, so that they can get some special "care". The second reason that the folk think-tank always be ignored is that some official think-tank and half-official think-tank use their system background to exclude them, and hold the think-tank market.

2.3 The Shortcomings of the Folk Thin-Tank

According to the related materials, there are 2500 think-tank organizations in China, and the folk think-tank accounts for 5%, that is to say there 120 folk think-tanks. The folk think-tank whose operational capital reaches 2 million yuan with some social influence just account for 20 to 30. Facing the problem of independent management and self-financing, some policy consultant expert with high professional quality don't want to devote to the work of folk think-tank; they hold a position in the government departments, and just take a part-time job to join the programs of folk think-tank. And this make the problem of talent lack of the folk think-tank, so that the folk think-tank can not build an expert team with prominent research ability and high popularity. At the same time, the folk think-tanks in China hard to design some policy-making with high level of theory and feasibility, and at this moment there just a small number of policies was designed by the folk think-tank which reformed by government and public institutions. Last, the folk think-

tank in China lacks the awareness of team operation and brand effect, and they mainly depend on "individual talent", to some extent, this reflects the problem of management system and organization cultural in the folk think-tank.

2.4 The Lack of Steady and Various Resources of Financial

In the foreign country, the folk think-tank can get the financial support from the companies, government, foundation, personal donation, and the longer-term programs or commercial projects with government. The folk thin-tank in China hard to get this kind of support, the government give little programs to them, and there nearly no government foundation to support them, the company donation and contract also ignore the need of them, so, this situation make their financial recourses tend to drain and appear a tried situation. The financial problem must bring the series problems of human resources team construction and other related ones, so it makes the folk think-tank development more difficult. In this situation, some folk think-tank have to accept or seek for the financial support from oversea organizations and international corporations, and by doing so, the government will feel more suspicious about them. Last, the lack of abundant and various sources of financial support must influence the independence, research persistence, and research outcome reliability of the folk think-tank.

3. THE STRATEGY TO IMPROVE AND PERFECT THE FOLK THINK-TANK PARTICIPATION MECHANISM

Nowadays, the Chinese folk think-tank appears a low extent of marketization, and a low speed of development, so, it can shows us that the living environment of the folk think-tank is extremely bad. For living through the crevice between official think-tank and half-official think-tank, the folk think-tank must locate its location reasonably, integrate the various kinds of resources, and establish the folk think-tank with Chinese characteristics.

3.1 The Good Political and Law System Is the Basic Protection of the Folk Think-Tank Development

The government ought to set a scientific opinion of policy-making, and establish an open political environment. On the other side, the government should regard the folk think-tanks as a drive force to improve the policy-making quality, encourage they propose the different opinions and suggestions to make they can deliver their thoughts of independent, real, and freedom in time. The government should establish a policy-making ruler with the principle of open, fair, transparency, and Participatory to realize the separation of "plan" and "decide", build the system connection among decision-making subsystem,

administrative policy research organization and folk policy research organization to absorb the out-system expert consultation in policy-making agenda from the perspective of system. Meanwhile, the government ought to make clear the legal and social situation of folk think-tank in time, perfect the ruler of non-profit legal personal, and establish the legal system of register, tax payment, and donation acceptance that suitable for the folk think-tank. Only remove the unfair situation that the folk think-tank compares with the in-system think-tank, broke the monopoly of in-system think-tank to policy research, can promote the fair competition among different kinds of think-tanks to make they offer a better recommendation.

3.2 Flexible Management and Achievement Market Mechanism Is the Necessary Condition of the Folk Think-Tank Development

Nowadays, China has went into the “deepwater area” of reformation, the speed and complexity of policy problem become obvious, some existing think-tanks lack the “interdisciplinary” reflection ability to deal with the complex problems, and the expertise and creativity decreased, whereas, this situation is a development chance to the folk think-tank. The folk think-tank should adopt the matrix organization form to construct a perfect team, and promote its financing routes, so that they can research the new policy problem with its unique and flexible characteristic. The folk think-tank can deliver their viewpoints to the public through the media and social network to encourage discussion and influence their opinions. Taking part in the international cooperation is an important to build the new folk think-tank with Chinese characteristics, the folk think-tank can join or hold various kinds of discussion meeting in domestic and foreign countries, borrow the successful experience of the foreigner folk think-tanks, introduce the consulting advisory service to the society and other related methods to strengthen the academy communication and promote the acknowledges of each other. After improving their academic level, they should introduce their achievements to the government to promote the achievement application by the government departments. The folk think-tanks ought to spare no effort to establish some systematic connection among policy maker and political elites to open the “revolution door” of think-tanks with Chinese characteristics.

3.3 The Complete Talent Team and Brand Characteristics Are the Main Task of the Folk Think-Tank Self-Construction

It is hard to afford a complete full-time program research team with the current finance of Chinese folk think-tank, and the expectation that the in-system talent’s activity join is not realistic, so, the feasible way is build a perfect organization mechanism of part-time workers. The folk think-tank should connect the talent who wants to be

the part-time experts to build a various kinds of talent team involves in various fields. And in the next research programs, the folk think-tank can build a flexible research organization according to the needs of related talents in a short time. Once someone can not take in, there has another person can replace. The folk think-tank ought to keep its independence to avoid being a decoration, and it is not the echo chamber of the government. In the aspect of self-construction, the folk think-tanks must create even have a core advantage to integrate the theory research, policy analysis, and company consultation, form the characteristics of independent programs, government tasks, and enterprises commissioned, construct the business chains of deepen cooperation, talent cultivation, and information publish related to research consultation to establish the subjective business framework that different with then ordinary social science institutions.

3.4 The Perfect of Financing Mechanism Is the Important Support to Establishing and Improving the Folk Think-Tank

The financial lack is the main obstacle to the folk think-tank development, so the emergency task is broaden the financial sources to folk think-tanks from various routes and methods. According to the foreign experience, the financial resource of think-tank is various, so does the financial mechanism of domestic folk think-tank. On the one hand, from the perspective of government and society, the country should put forward preferential policy to help build the financial resources folk think-tank through the government grant, authorized programs, company help, and foundation donation and so on. On the other hand, from the perspective of folk think-tank, it should broaden its business scope, improve its consulting ability and influence, get more financial resources through providing high quality, broaden fields, and interdisciplinary service. The most important thing need to be resolved is the dependence of folk think-tank to the foreign foundation, the folk think-tank should decrease the dependence on the foreign foundation, and apply the thought of marketing to keep the financial increase, and realize the independent and persistent development.

CONCLUSION

The appearance and development of folk think-tank in China is the inexorable outcome of the scientific development of policy-making, they can provide a reasonable expressing and conscious integrating route for the society. The folk think-tank in China needs the acceptance and support of the society to release its potential wisdom. With the background of economic society development and social reformation, the folk think-tank ushered the development opportunity. And the folk think-tank should seize the chance, and be bold in practice to abundant the connotation of Chinese think-tank

models, and contribute its own contribution to the national “soft power” improvement.

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