

Thai Think Tank Current Situation Research

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ABSTRACT. According to the “2018 global go to think tank index report”, which is the most authoritative report about think tank, explains that think tanks are public-policy research analysis and engagement organizations that generate policy-oriented research, analysis, and advice on domestic and international issues, thereby enabling policy makers and the public to make informed decisions about public policy. Think tanks may be affiliated or independent institutions that are structured as permanent bodies, not ad hoc commissions. These institutions often act as a bridge between the academic and policymaking communities and between states and civil society, serving in the public interest as independent voices that translate applied and basic research into a language that is understandable, reliable, and accessible for policy makers and the public.

KEYWORDS: Thailand; think tank; Analysis

1. Introduction

A think tank or policy institute is a research institute which performs research and advocacy topics such as social policy, political strategy, economics policy, military suggestions, technology, and culture policy and so on. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, think tank means that “a group of experts brought together, usually by a government, to develop ideas on a particular subject and to make suggestions for action”. According to the “2018 global go to think tank index report”, which is the most authoritative report about think tank, explains that think tanks are public-policy research analysis and engagement organizations that generate policy-oriented research, analysis, and advice on domestic and international issues, thereby enabling policy makers and the public to make informed decisions about public policy. Think tanks may be affiliated or independent institutions that are structured as permanent bodies, not ad hoc commissions. These institutions often act as a bridge between the academic and policymaking communities and between states and civil society, serving in the public interest as independent voices that translate applied and basic research into a language that is understandable, reliable, and accessible for policy makers and the public. (James G. McGann, 2018 global go to think tank index report, p12)

Think tank play an important role in the country and is a crucial key to understand the country’s policy making. The roles of the think tank can be summarized as follows:

- 1) As a medium between the government and the public, collect public opinion and convey to policy makers.
- 2) Provide objective, fair, and highly credible reference information in the policy development process.
- 3) Research, analyze, and define related issues, especially those that have recently happened or are likely to happen in the future. These issues have not been noted at the government level. In addition, think tanks will conduct follow-up research and evaluation of government policies.
- 4) Think tanks are the medium between the government and the public, so they can provide relevant policy information to the public and can be regarded as direct education to the public.
- 5) The process of developing a policy for a think tank is like providing a platform for government supporters and opponents to exchange ideas.
- 6) The number of think tanks is huge and the members are numerous, and its members often in both academic and political circles, providing the country with a large number of high-quality legislative and administrative talents, and enabling academic knowledge to be directly converted into policies.
- 7) Think tanks are not directly managed by the government and can therefore exist as challengers to traditional experience and traditional forces.

Thai think tanks started late and developed slowly. In Thailand, national research institutions were first established after World War II, but they have a small number and not independent institutions, either subordinate to government departments or subordinate to universities. Since about 2009, Thailand has begun to pay more

attention to the development of think tank-type institutions, because the Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI) conducted a more extensive and comprehensive survey of think tanks around the world, and found that Thailand has reached its goal.

In this essay I will correct data about think tank's current situation in Thailand and conclude the Thai think tank's current distinguishing features, which is large numbers but low level and have a diversified source of funding.

2. Feature 1: Large Numbers

Nowadays, Thailand claims that there are over 100 think tanks in Thailand and this essay has corrected 85 think tanks as follows:

1	Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI)
2	Institute of Neurology
3	Siam Intelligence Unit
4	Biotec
5	Scientific Research Center for Advanced Research
6	International Institute for Trade and Development(ITD)
7	KASIKORN Research Center Company Limited
8	Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI)
9	KlangPanya
10	National Institute of Development Administration
11	NIDA Poll
12	Research Centre for Social and Business Development Co., Ltd.
13	NSTDA
14	National Pest Control Research Center
15	Research Institute, Assumption University
16	Institute for Special Education and Research, Srinakharinwirot University
17	PIER puey ungphakorn institute for economic research
18	STRI,Chiang Mai Univeristy
19	Traffic and Transport Research and Development Center
20	Bureau of Science and Technology Research and Service
21	The Thailand Research Fund
22	Applied Economics Research Center, Kasetsart University
23	Synchrotron Light Research Institute (Public Organization)
24	Intellectual Strategy and Research Institute, Srinak University
25	Kasetsart University Research and Development Institute
26	TEI Thailand Environment Institute
27	NARIT
28	Thammasat University Research and Consultancy Institute
29	ASEAN Studies Center Thammasat University
30	Green Economic Policy Research Center
31	Law TU
32	Office of the National Anti-Corruption Commission
33	(FIT) Future Innovative Thailand Institute
34	Business Information Center(BIC)
35	Research Institute Of Rangsit University
36	Thailand Institute of Scientific and Technological Research
37	Thailand Future Foundation
38	Centre for Energy Environment Resources Development (CEERD)
39	(Area-based-Social Innovation Research Center (Ab-SIRC))
40	Asian Research Center for International Development (ARCID)
41	(TSEO) Thai social Enterprise office
42	(CTBS) National Research Policy and Strategy
43	Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board
44	Office of International Development Cooperation
45	The Chulalongkorn University Intellectual Repository (CUIR)

46	policy and management development Institute Faculty of Political Science Chulalongkorn University
47	Center for Social Development Studies Faculty of Political Science Chulalongkorn University
48	The Institute of Asian Studies (IAS)
49	The ASEAN Studies Center of Chulalongkorn University
50	Institute of Security and International Studies (ISIS)
51	Chulabhorn Research Institute (CRI)
52	Institute for Population and Social Research of Mahidol University (IPSR)
53	Institute for Population and Social Research Mahidol University
54	Asian Language and Culture Research Institute Mahidol University
55	CDG Technology for better society
56	Freshwater Aquaculture Research and Development Center
57	Chiang Mai University Service and Academic Research Center
58	Chiang Mai University Service and Academic Research Center
59	Social Research Institute Chiang Mai University
60	Tourism Research and Development Center
61	Research and Development Office
62	PSU Strategy
63	Institute of Security and International Studies
64	Center for Energy environment resources development
65	Office of the National Anti-Corruption Commission
66	Research Support Fund Office
67	knowledge Network Institute of Thailand (KNIT)
68	(Siam Piwat Academy)
69	King Prajadhipok's Institute
70	(Chula Global Network)
71	The Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT)
72	suandusitpoll
73	Bangkok University Research Center
74	Super Poll
75	Thailand Poll
76	Electronic Transactions Development Agency (Public Organization), ETDA
77	PeoplePoll Thailand
78	Gallup Thailand
79	BrandAge Online Poll
80	Office of Academic Promotion and Support
81	Hatyai Poll, Hatyai University
82	THE STANDARD POLL
83	Thai-Chinese Strategic Research Center
84	SWRI: Strategic Wisdom and Research Institute Srinakharinwirot University
85	(National Research Council of Thailand, NRCT)

It is undeniable that since 2009, the number of national think tanks in Thailand has increased significantly. Although these institutions all claim to be national think tanks, the quality is uneven and the activity is very different. Most of the think tanks are not recognized by the international community.

3. Feature 2: Low Level

According to the think tank index report by University of Pennsylvania, a stander think tank should meet the following criterias:

- The quality and commitment of the think tank's leadership (chief executive and governing body). This involves effectively managing the mission and programs of the think tank, mobilizing the financial and human resources necessary to fulfill the mission and monitoring the quality, independence and impact of the think tank;
- The quality and reputation of the think tank's staff. Ability to assemble a critical mass of highly skilled, experienced and productive scholars and analysts who are recognized as either emerging or established experts in their respective area of research;

- The quality and reputation of the research and analysis produced. The ability to produce high quality, rigorous, policy-oriented research that is accessible to policy makers, media and the public; • Ability to recruit and retain elite scholars and analysts;

- Academic performance and reputation. This involves the academic rigor associated with the research conducted. This includes formal accreditation of a think tank's scholars and analysts, the number and type of scholarly publications produced such as: books, journals and conference papers and the number of presentations delivered at scholarly and other professional meeting and the number and type of citations of the think tanks scholars' research in scholarly publications produced by otherscholars;

- The quality, number, and reach of its publications;

- The impact of a think-tank's research and programs on policy makers and other policy actors. Policy recommendations considered or actually adopted by policy makers, civil society or policy actors;

- Reputation with policymakers (name recognition associated with specific issues or programs, number of briefings and official appointments, number of policy briefs and white papers produced, legislative testimony delivered);

- A demonstrated commitment to producing independent research and analysis. This involves standards and policies for producing rigorous evidence based research and analysis that are posted and monitored by the organization, research teams and individual researchers. This includes disclosure of conflict of interest (financial, institutional or personal) and a commitment 32 32 to nonpartisanship and established professional standards for research in the social sciences;

- Access to key institutions. The ability to reach and connect with key audiences and personnel such as government officials (elected and appointed), civil society, traditional and new media, and academia;

- Ability to convene key policy actors and to develop effective networks and partnerships with other think tanks and policy actors;

- Overall output of the organization (policy proposals, web visits, briefings, publications, interviews, conferences, staff nominated to official posts);

- Utilization of research, policy proposal and other products. The effective transmission and utilization of policy briefs, reports, policy recommendations and other products by policy makers and the policy community, number of current and former staff serving in advisory rolesto policy makers, advisory commissions, etc., awards given to scholarsfor scholarly achievement or public service;

- Usefulness of organization's information in public engagement, advocacy work, preparing legislation or testimony, preparing academic papers or presentations, conducting research or teaching;

- Ability to use electronic, print and the new media to communicate research and reach key audiences;

- Media reputation (number of media appearances, interviews and citations); • Ability to use the Internet including social media tools, to engage with policy makers, journalists and the public;

- Website and Digital presence. The quality, accessibility, effective maintenance of the organization's web presence, as well as, the quality and level of digital traffic and engagement (quality, accessibility and navigability of web site, number of website visitors, page views, time spent on pages, "likes" orfollowers);

- Level, diversity and stability of funding. The ability of an organization to mobilize the necessary financial resources to support and sustain the think tank over time (endowment, membership fees, annual donations, government and private contracts, earned income);

- Effective management and allocation of financial and human resources. The ability of a think tank to effectively manage its money and people so that they produce high quality outputs that achieve maximum impact;

- Ability of the organization to effectively fulfill the terms of the gifts, grants and contracts from government(s), individuals, corporations and foundations who have provided the financial 33 33 support to the think tank (financial stewardship);

- The organization's ability to produce new knowledge, innovative policy proposals or alternative ideas on policy;

- Ability to bridge the gap between the academic and policymaking communities; • Ability to bridge the gap between policy makers and the public;

- Ability to include new voices in the policymaking process;
- Ability of organization to be inscribed within issue and policy networks;
- Success in challenging the traditional wisdom of policymakers and in generating innovative policy ideas and programs; and,
- The impact on society. Direct relationship between the organization's efforts in a particular area to a positive change in societal values such as significant changes in the quality of life within respective country (amounts of goods and services available to citizens, state of physical and mental health, quality of environment, quality of political rights, access to institutions).

According to the think tank index report In 2009 by University of Pennsylvania, there are only 8 standard think tanks in Thailand, accounting for 0.016% of the global total, including the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI), the Institute of Security and International Affairs of Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, Institute of Security and International Studies (ISIS), Chulalongkorn University, Chulalongkorn University International Network (Chula Global Network), Resources ring Centre for Energy Environment Resources (CEERD), TEI Thailand Environment Institute, The Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT), Thailand International Institute of Trade and Development, International Institute for Trade and Development (ITD)).

This number grow up in the 2018 global go to think tank index report, Thailand have 15 standard think tank, meanwhile several think tank have a remarkable performance in this year. Such as in the Top Think Tanks in Southeast Asia and the Pacific section, Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) (Thailand) ranks 16, Institute of Security and International Studies (ISIS) (Thailand) ranks 36, Institute of Public Policy Studies (Thailand) ranks 80, Future Innovative Thailand Institute (Thailand) ranks 100 and Asian Institute of Technology (Thailand) ranks 105. (James G. McGann, 2018 global go to think tank index report, p89 p90). In the Top Education Policy Think Tanks section, Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) (Thailand) ranks 19 (James G. McGann, 2018 global go to think tank index report, p120). In the Top Energy and Resource Policy Think Tanks section, Centre for Energy Environment Resources Development (CEERD) (Thailand) ranks 22 (James G. McGann, 2018 global go to think tank index report, p123). In the Top Environment Policy Think Tanks section, Thailand Environment Institute (TEI) (Thailand) ranks 59. (James G. McGann, 2018 global go to think tank index report, p128). In the Top International Development Policy Think Tanks section, Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) (Thailand) ranks 51. (James G. McGann, 2018 global go to think tank index report, p142). In the Best Government Affiliated Think Tanks section, Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) (Thailand) ranks 30. (James G. McGann, 2018 global go to think tank index report, p177). In the Best Think Tank Conference section, Chulalongkorn University (Thailand) ranks 53. (James G. McGann, 2018 global go to think tank index report, p192) and in the Best Think Tank Network section, Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT) (Thailand) rank 26 and Chula Global Network (CGN) (Thailand) ranks 43 (James G. McGann, 2018 global go to think tank index report, p194).

In general, Thailand think tank is still in a low level. In the year 2019, Thailand has 15 standard think tanks, while United States has 1871, India has 5093, and China has 507. In south east Asia, Indonesia has 31 standard think tanks, Malaysia has 23 and Philippines has 21 standard think tanks.

4. Feature 3: Diversified Source of Fundins

Another feature of Thai think tanks is diversified source of fundings. The main sources of funding for Thai think tanks include government financial budget, foreign government funding, institutional funding, and domestic and foreign corporate funding, and a small number of royal background funding, such like the King Prajadhipok's Institute in Thailand. Besides, take the National Development Institute of Thailand (TDRI) as an example, one of Thailand's most famous and authoritative think tanks, its main sources of funding are Thailand National Economic and Social Development Committee Office, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Secondly, there are donations from the society, which can be divided into two types: more than 5 million baht and more than 1 million baht. Organizations or companies which donate more than 5 million bath include Japan's Mitsui Group (including Mitsui & Co., Ltd., Toyota Motor Corporation, Toshiba Corporation, Mitsui Real Estate Co., Ltd., Mitsui Sumitomo Marine Fire Insurance Co., Ltd., Toray Industries, Lufeng Fabric Co., Ltd., Toray Textile Co., Ltd., Toray Nylon Ltd., Japan Merchant Marine Mitsui and Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation), US Unocal Corporation (Thailand) and GM Finance & Social Security Co., Ltd. Organizations or companies which donate more than 1 million bath include Siam Cement Public Company Ltd., Thai Education and Public

Welfare Foundation, Saha-union Group, Esso Mobil Corporation (Thailand), United Overseas Bank (Thailand), Pra Jewelry Public Company Limited, N.T.S. Steel Group, Ban Chang group, Star Block Group, Mr. Canli Ma (President of Kwong Siew Association of Thailand), Chinnawat Group (Former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra), Thailand Banpu Group, Srithai Superware Co., Ltd., Seng Thong Rice Co., Ltd., Ekthanakit Financial Co., Ltd., Founder of KPN Group and so on.

The sources of funding for other think tanks are also characterized by diversity. Most institutions have funding from the government and related institutions, and some think tanks have backgrounds from foreign funding, which is mainly from Western countries and Japan.

5. Thailand Think Tank Status Analysis

To sum up, Thailand think tanks have 3 features, including large numbers, low level and diversified source of funding. Thailand think tank is still in a low development, which can explain into 3 reasons.

Firstly, Thai society do not attach great importance to the thought, Thai people do not like argue, most Thai people do not have the idea about pursuing knowledge, do not encourage to have Thoughtful thinking, in the meanwhile, they don't have the platform and liberty to comment freely. However, all these factors are the most important condition of establishing and developing a think tank.

Secondly, Thailand think tank lack of funding. Although Thailand think tank have diversified source of funding, however, the budget is very limit and most funding is allocated to the research institutions which are affiliated with a public university. According to the statistics of the National Bureau of Statistics of Thailand in 2003, the amount of research funding in Thailand was very small. The total amount of government and private investment only accounted for 0.3% of that year's GDP, and more than 80% of it was invested in science and technology research, leading to a very small amount of investment in policy research. Therefore, folk think tank lack of stable funding. Besides, most Thailand Private enterprises and institutions ignore the importance of think tank research. All these factors lead to the low development of think tank and inferior quality of the research, which is lack of depth, lack of detail and lack of data.

Thirdly, most Thailand think tank research is not for the government, but only do for the business. Therefore, they do not consider the international situation and turbulent changes. Most of the reports are lack of forward-looking construction of the country and new ideas. That's why these reports can not be applied into public utilities or national strategies. Besides, the results of policy research cannot be directly converted into academic research results, which has greatly hampered the enthusiasm of the majority of researchers, which in turn made the development of Thai policy research seriously slow.

Fourthly, an unstable government and wrong political idea means that the governor do not realize the importance and value of think tank, so think tanks have little influence over government decisions.

Actually, Thailand nowadays has already realized the inadequacy of the development of its national think tanks and has begun to develop various types of think tanks in Thailand. This task is mainly carried out by the Thai Fund Research Association. Considering that universities have high-quality research talents, the Thai Fund Research Association will first promote the establishment of professional think tank in major universities and slowly change to a policy-based think tank. In this way, a memorandum of cooperation was signed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand to select some colleges with corresponding qualifications to cooperate in the construction of the International Policy Research Institute. Besides, promote the exchange of policy research-based think tanks and policy makers through various events, allowing researchers and policy makers to communicate face-to-face and promote the results of think tank research into policies more quickly and efficiently, such as monthly "Thailand Fund Research Forum (TRF Forum)". The forum has exact themes every month. In addition, the Thailand Fund Research Association will also conduct a policy brief on policy research results to form decision-making opinions compile into the opinion magazine which is directly to the decision makers.

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