

Research on the Mechanism of University Think Tanks Influencing Public Policy Process in New Media Environment

—A Case Study of “The Belt and Road” Initiative

Ling Zhang, Jia Guo

School of Government Management, Beijing Normal University, Beijing, China

Email: 849990906@qq.com

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Abstract

As a critical component of Chinese think tanks, university think tanks of China have become an important bridge between policy communication and academic research for their professional research capacities and positive social influence. Hence, university think tanks, which have significant influences in the research field of “the Belt and Road” policy, were selected as the subject of this paper, in which their research orientations, research findings, and academic trends are analyzed from the perspective of new media. On this basis, the participation mechanism of university think tanks in “the Belt and Road” policy field is summarized according to the research features and functions of different types of university think tanks, such as think tanks established by comprehensive universities, foreign studies universities, or other local universities. The research findings reveal that university think tanks tend to spread their opinions and suggestions to the public or decision makers through various media methods (e.g. website, microblog, WeChat, forum construction, and news reports), mainly aiming at influencing public opinions and decisions. Furthermore, new media and university think tanks can have effective communication with the public and the government in accordance with their specific features, thus creating a mutually accessible and influential policy network structure. In this network structure, media exposure and public opinions become the problem flow during the research on “the Belt and Road” policy. Then, university think tanks and media comments put forward feasible solutions in response to relevant problems, thus forming the policy flow. Next, related policy suggestions driven by public opinions and social interest groups will become a political flow to affect policy activists. Eventually, strategic decisions will be made, realizing the expression of public opinions and

the communication of policy output.

Keywords

New Media, University Think Tanks, Policy Process, The Belt And Road, Multiple Streams

1. Introduction

Since 2008, the number of global think tanks has shown a rising trend, and the globalization is also affecting China. According to *Global Go To Think Tank Index Report 2016*, there are totally 6846 think tanks in the world. The United States ranks the first, which has 1835 think tanks. China has maintained its second place since 2008. In 2016, the number of China's think tanks has reached 435, and nine of them are listed as World Top Think Tanks. However, this proportion is still less than 1/4 of that in the United States. Domestic statistics have shown that the current number of China's think tanks may have exceeded 2500 [1]. This estimation may be different from international statistics. But the big difference showed that, although China has a large number of think tanks, the influences of most think tanks are not recognized internationally, and the development of China's think tank is still at the start-up stage compared with the United States who ranks the first either in quantity, quality or influence.

In early 2017, CTTS of Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences released 2016 Chinese Think Tank Report: Influence Rankings and Policy Suggestions, which divided think tanks into four types according to the growing environment and properties presented during the operation of the think tanks. These four types are government and military think tanks, social sciences think tanks, university think tanks and folk think tanks. Government and military think tanks, and social sciences think tanks are official think tanks, which have strong dependence during the administrative process, and are quite closed; folk think tanks are of insufficient information sharing mechanisms, and lack long-term and stable capital resources. On the whole, these three types of think tanks are in short of independence. Compared with official and folk think tanks, university think tanks present more autonomy in research field and orientation. Additionally, they can also enjoy the financial support from the country. Hence, university think tanks have the advantages of independence and durability. But the development of university think tanks in China is lagging behind foreign think tanks. Although there are a large number of university think tanks in China, most of the top-level think tanks are not founded by universities. Chinese university think tanks are still at their start-up stage, and most of them have obtained comprehensive achievements in basic theoretical research. However, they are lack in methods for converting their research results into practical operational capacity.

With the development of internet technology, new media such as microblog, WeChat and forum have become new ways for the public to express their opinions, to proceed with social mobilization, and to participate in policy researches. As an auxiliary body for policy decisions, university think tank plays a crucial role in political spreading. Hence, it has become a new subject for think tank construction and political spreading of how to make an effective use of university think tanks to involve public opinions into formal political structure to arouse the attention of policy makers and public administrators in new media environment. During the process of public policy making and political spreading, China not only needs to learn from advanced overseas experience, but also needs to consider the new media environment based on the national conditions of China to give full play of the influence of think tanks on policy making and spreading.

At present, our country attaches great importance to the study of “the Belt and Road” policy. In order to reduce decision-making errors, a large number of policy research teams participate in it. According to the “the Belt and Road” big data report, we can see that more than 20 think-tanks research team participate in the study of “the Belt and Road”, including many well-known university think tanks. Therefore, this paper will rely on the report of the University of Pennsylvania think tank, the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences think tank report, zero point think tank report and think tank China’s think tank directory, selected in “the Belt and Road” areas have outstanding research university think tanks. From the perspective of multiple stream theory to discuss the research trends, research directions and research subjects of these university think tanks in the field of “the Belt and Road” policy, and then summarizes the mechanism for university think tanks to participate in major public policies. University think tanks are required to provide powerful and solid intellectual support for the foresight and complexity of “the Belt and Road” strategy. Therefore, it is urgent for university think tanks to become more professional and refined. It is known that university think tanks have the advantage of complete disciplines, large research teams, and extensive international cooperation. But the results of separate researches could be incomplete and shallow. China-Arab States “the Belt and Road” Research Center of Zhejiang Gongshang University founded in 2016 strives to solve the economic problems of Arab states, which can be seen as a good start of in-depth and comprehensive research among Chinese university think tanks.

2. Policy Research Advantages and Development Situation of University Think Tank

Since the 18th CPC National Congress of China, the new session of the CPC central committee has attached great importance to think tank construction. Xi Jinping, the General Secretary of the Party, also made a series of important instructions on the construction of think tanks with Chinese characteristics. During

the deliberation of the Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of New Types of Think Tanks with Chinese Characteristics at the 6th meeting of the Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reform in 2014, Xi called for an integration of wisdom and power from all walks of life when managing state affairs, and the construction of new types of think tanks with Chinese characteristics has set off a national craze, of which the university think tank serves as one of the important carriers.

The construction of new types of think tanks with Chinese characteristics should emphasize the establishment of modern think tanks. The openness, interactivity, independency and public opinion characteristics that can guide social topics of think tanks should be emphasized and cultivated for the construction of modern think tanks. First, the construction of modern think tanks requires independency of think tanks. Different from official think tanks and social sciences think tanks, university think tanks do not have independent corporation position. However, they do not rely on the Party and government authorities, and are seldom restricted or interfered by the government. Thus, they can maintain the objectivity and independency of policy researches to the maximum. Meanwhile, university think tanks are also different from folk think tanks which are completely separated from the government and exist in a drifted state. Owing to the personnel management system, project cooperation and business connection with the government, university think tanks normally have a good relationship with the government, and have the advantages of obtaining the overall situation, data information, micro dynamics and information feedback, etc. The unique characteristics of both independence and friendliness with the government of university think tanks have provided a good policy research environment during the policy research process of university think tanks. Secondly, university think tanks are also featured with complete subjects, a galaxy of talents, well-equipped science and research facilities and extensive external exchanges, which can help university think tanks conduct independent and autonomous researches, form objective and evidence-based research results, and spread the results widely through various forms of mass media such as magazines, periodicals, forum and networks, etc. In this way, a wide range of interaction between university think tanks and social groups can be realized. As a result, the real opinions of the public can be timely transferred to the researchers of university think tanks, helping them further improve their research capability and recognition for their research achievements. During the process of repeated conveyance of public opinions, university think tanks can get dependence and obtain actual discourse power. Hence, university think tanks are featured with strong information openness and social interactivity, which can guide public opinions, expand the influence, and provide effective intelligence and manpower support for government's decision-making as well as the social development.

According to *Global Go To Think Tank Index Report 2016*, nine Chinese think tanks are listed among World Top 175 Think Tanks. Six of them are official

think tanks, two are university think tanks and one is folk think tank. Research findings have shown that the number of official think tanks and university think tanks accounts for 95% of China's think tanks, while the rest 5% are folk think tanks. 2016 *Chinese Think Tank Report* ranked think tanks based on their comprehensive influence, itemized influence, intra-system influence and professional influence. Among the top 30 comprehensive influence think tanks, university think tanks hold four seats; in the top 10 system influence think tanks, National School of Development at Peking University (NSD), Institute of Contemporary China Studies of Tsinghua University, Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies of Renmin University, and National Academy of Development and Strategy of Renmin University are the top four university think tanks; in the eight-classes ranking of professional influence think tanks, there are 15 university think tanks; in the four-classes rankings of itemized influence think tanks, there are 5 university think tanks.

The above data shows that, although university think tanks are less influential in decision-making compared with official think tanks, they have huge social influence. First, university think tanks ranked highly in professional influence and itemized influence rankings with a large proportion; secondly, the first *Chinese Think Tank Report* is made and released by Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences in 2013. This report only listed five seats for professional influence think tanks, while 2016 *Chinese Think Tank Report* listed at least five seats, including many new university think tanks such as Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies of Renmin University, National Defence University of People's Liberation Army, NDU, PLA, Party School of the Central Committee of C.P.C. and National Academy of Development and Strategy, RUC; at last, university think tanks frequently appeared in various rankings. For example, National School of Development at Peking University (NSD) repeatedly appeared in seven rankings, National Academy of Development and Strategy, RUC repeatedly appeared in three rankings, and Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies of Renmin University of China repeatedly appeared in two rankings; this shows that the influence of university think tanks is growing, with a wide penetration, this shows that the influence of university think tanks is growing, with a wide penetration.

3. Current Situation of University Think Tanks Using New Media

The forms of media mainly include traditional media, new media, we-media and all-media. All-media is a macroscopic description of current media forms; we-media is a description of how individuals participate in media activities from the perspective of microstructure; new media is a contrast to traditional media. Traditional public affairs consultation and discussion as well as citizens' opinion expressions are realized mainly through traditional media such as newspaper, television and radio. The expressions of public opinions are facing various problems

as limited channels, ineffective communication and time lags. Moreover, in modern market economy, traditional media is bound by their own interest demand and value guiding responsibility, which cannot adequately and completely reflect real public opinions and value preferences of the public. Compared with traditional media, new media has turned from “send-receive” unidirectional information transmission to bi-directional communication and sharing, which changed the one-way information transmission status of the traditional media age [2]. In new media environment, people can get the latest information of the formulation and implementation of the public policies made by relevant authorities through various carriers such as outdoor mobile LED display, bus-mounted LED screen, microblog online and offline activities, information push of official microblog or WeChat. The public can use fragmented words, cyber-words and network on looking to express their own opinions and standpoints. This way, the communication and feedback between the public and the executive body can be strengthened, and policy bodies can be aware of the public’s interest demand timely, which can reduce the difficulties during the policy execution as well as the violations of law and regulations caused by enforcement of policies. It can also enhance the change of public agenda and assure smooth execution of policies. Through new media, the public can connect the mass communication and interpersonal communication tightly during the execution of public policies, and create a new phase of public policy-making.

Dr. James G. McGann, director of the Global Go To Think Tank Rankings launched by the University of Pennsylvania, believed that social media is a common way for think tanks to transfer and publish their research achievements [3]. Think tanks from the United States showed that the primary purpose of think tanks is to influence government’s decision-making. To realize this, they should first influence the media, let decision-makers and the public know the policies and opinions made by the think tanks through media buildup, spreading and guidance, and form strong public opinions indirectly to put pressure on decision-makers. There are over 2000 think tanks in China. With respect to website construction, most of the think tanks have established their own website. Although the websites have different layouts and contents, related information about think tanks can be easily obtained through search engines. Regarding the website construction of university think tanks, Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies of Renmin University set out its website construction in January 2013, and launched the website in March 2013. After one year of operation, they upgraded and revised the first version of their official website. Now the new website has a specific classification and clear entries, which mainly focuses on real-time comments and the opinions of institutes with research achievements and projects as its hefty support. Now the website is highly ranked among the domestic think tank websites, only behind the websites of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, CASS and Development Research Center of the State Council. As for forum construction, the NBER-CCER Annual Conference on China and the

World Economy held by the National School of Development at Peking University (NSD), “CMRC China Economic Observer (CEO)” Quarterly Seminar Annual Conference, and HSBC-PKU Economic Forum have great professional influences [4]. According to the investigations on the organizations of forums and university official websites by highly ranked university think tanks, influential university think tanks all have their own official website and have organized forums (See **Table 1**).

Although forums and official websites can enlarge their influences on public opinions, they have limited interactions with the public. For example, some audio or video modules on the website cannot be watched or listened normally; most policy reports are presented in form of official documents; although some websites have interaction or communication modules, there are very few comments and the date information of the comments is also not found. This shows that the function of interaction and communication of these online interaction platforms are invalid. Young students are the main audiences of the official website of National School of Development at Peking University (NSD), but the website still lacks spreading interactivity. In the era of social media, microblog and WeChat are popular new media for the spreading of public opinions which are of good interactivity. From 2013 to 2017, the top ten university think tanks have created their own WeChat Official Account (See **Table 1**). According to TNS’s investigation in 2017, the popularity of WeChat among Chinese netizens aged from 16 to 65 has reached as high as 68.6%, which shows that WeChat is an effective way of the communication between think tanks and the public; compared with WeChat, microblog presented weaker performance in construction and spreading ways.

Among the top ten university think tanks, only three have established their own microblogs. Of them, the microblog of Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies of Renmin University has attracted almost one million fans. Totally 9599 microblogs were published from its foundation in January 2013 to July 2017, showing that the construction of National School of Development at Peking University (NSD) on and interaction with its fans are stable; has initiated its official microblog since 2010, but the number of its fans is less than 10,000. Only 120 microblogs were published before 2012. The official microblog stopped updating on August 21, 2012 but restarted on September 14, 2015. Till now, the total number of microblogs published is 350. Microblog is supposed to be a social media with wide content, high timeliness and interactivity. But they are not well used by university think tanks.

4. Research Trends of University Think Tanks in “The Belt and Road” Strategy Realm

The global economic crisis in 2008 completely disclosed the dependence of Chinese economy system on overseas market demands, which is a caution that China should overcome the problem of excess production capacity and enhance

Table 1. Public opinions transmission ways of China's university think tanks.

University think tanks	Forum	Website	Microblog	WeChat
National School of Development at Peking University (NSD)	NBER-CCER Annual Conference on China and the World Economy, "CCER/CMRC China Economic Observer (CEO)" Quarterly Seminar Annual Conference, HSBC-PKU Economic Forum, etc.	http://www.nsd.pku.edu.cn/index.html	Microblog @ National School of Development Peking University (2796 followers)	Official account "National School of Development Peking University" was created and approved in 2016.
Institute of Contemporary China Studies of Tsinghua University	None	http://www.sppm.tsinghua.edu.cn/	None	Official account "Institute for Contemporary China Studies, Tsinghua University" was created and approved in October, 2016.
Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies of Renmin University of China	"To strengthen global economic growth" Forum, "Southeast Asian Economy, Social Status, and China" Chongyang Forum, Second Annual G20 Think Tank Summit, etc.	http://rdcy-sf.ruc.edu.cn/	Microblog @ RDCY (970,000 followers)	Official account "RDCY" was created and approved in October, 2013.
National Academy of Development and Strategy, RUC	"Asian Political Development: China's Thinking Under Comparative Studies" Biweekly Forum, China's Religion & Rule of Law" High-end Forum, etc.	http://nads.ruc.edu.cn/	Microblog @ National Academy of Development and Strategy, RUC (372 followers)	Official account "National Academy of Development and Strategy, RUC" was created and approved in May, 2017.
the Institute of International and Strategic Studies (IISS), Peking University (PKU)	The Third Annual Meeting of "North Pavilion Dialogue"	http://www.ciss.pku.edu.cn/	None	Official account "Institute of International and Strategic Studies Peking University" was created and approved in May, 2017.
the Institution of Modern International Relations (IMIR), Tsinghua University	The 6 th World Peace Forum on Challenges to International Security: "Joint Efforts, Responsibility, and Reform", The 15 th Tsinghua International Security Forum: "Rise of Great Powers and International Support" Seminar, etc.	http://www.imir.tsinghua.edu.cn/	None	None
The Center for American Studies (CAS), Fudan University	None	http://www.cas.fudan.edu.cn/view_en.php?id=2569	None	Official account "The Center for American Studies, Fudan University" was created and approved in May, 2017.
The Center for China in the World Economy (CCWE) at the School of Economics and Management of Tsinghua University	The Forum for the 30 Years Reform and Opening-up of China, The 31st CCWE Macro Economy Forum, etc.	http://www.ccwe.tsinghua.edu.cn/	None	Official account "CCWE" was created and approved in March, 2015.
Yangtze River Delta Economic and Social Development Research Center, Nanjing University	High-end National Seminar on the Socio-economic Development of Yangtze River Delta Region	https://nubs.nju.edu.cn/	None	None
Institute of International Law, Wuhan University	The 23rd Lecture of Yangtze Tribune	http://translaw.whu.edu.cn/	None	Official account "Institute of International Law, Wuhan University" was created and approved in April, 2017.
Fudan Development Institute	2017 Shanghai Forum: a Focus on Cross-strait Relations and Peace in East Asia	http://fddi.fudan.edu.cn/	Microblog @ Fudan Development Institute (1658 followers)	Official account "Fudan Development Institute" was created and approved in June, 2014.

Note: the university think tanks listed in **Table 1** are the top 10 most influential university think tanks presented in 2015 *China Think Tanks Report — Influence Rankings and Policy Suggestions* published by Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences.

technological competitiveness in global market during the new round of economic development [5]. On this basis, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed a well-known development strategy about “the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road”, also known as “the Belt and Road Initiative” or “the Belt and Road”, in September and October 2013 during his visits to Central and southeastern Asian countries. The exploration into “the Silk Road Economic Belt” (SREB) dates back to the late 1990s when some government officials and scholars made appeals to strengthen the communication and cooperation between relevant domestic areas and overseas economies through the construction of Silk Road. The research into “Maritime Silk Road” (MSR) was first conducted in the 1980s; most of relevant literatures focus on the history and culture of MSR. New era significances are attached to SREB and MSR from the perspective of time and space in the 21st century. Silk Road is a road for the development of both economic trade and culture. Recent researches on “the Belt and Road” policy mainly focus on hot topics as development of reciprocal economic and trade cooperation, cooperation between China and Arab countries, cooperation between China and India, regional economy development, China’s economic growth, the construction of economic belt, maritime strategy layout, religion and culture exchange, synergetic development of the minorities [6].

In the four years after the proposal of “the Belt and Road” policy, this policy has gradually gained general consensus in the world. China has signed cooperative agreements with more than 30 countries along the Silk Road and established production cooperation with over 20 countries up to October 2017. All the deployments are in execution step by step, and international organizations as the United Nations made positive response to the policy. Many of the Chinese universities have also made positive response to “the Belt and Road” policy; various research institutes are founded focusing on the Silk Road Economic Belt to study this policy in coordination with Chinese innovation centers. Incomplete statistics reveal that think tanks established by Chinese universities concerning “the Belt and Road” policy are mainly located in Beijing, Shaanxi, Fujian, Zhejiang, Tianjin, and Hainan Province. And the number of university think tanks in Beijing ranks the first. Besides, these think tanks are basically supported by “985” and “211” universities and founded in 2015 (see **Table 2**). This way, they can all play an effective role of scientific research institution according to their own discipline advantages. For example, university think tanks related to foreign languages mainly involve cultural communication; comprehensive “985” university think tanks concern cooperative innovation and integrated studies; local university think tanks mainly focus on researches into certain fields.

The university think tanks listed in **Table 2** are selected for the following reasons:

- 1) Outstanding university think tanks proposed in “2014-2015 *China Think Tanks Report—Influence Rankings and Policy Suggestions*”;
- 2) Authoritative university think tanks posed on the official website of “think.china.com.cn”;
- 3) All the data are collected from the Internet.

Table 2. Current status of think tanks involving the research into “the Belt and Road” strategy.

NO.	Name	University	Location	Time of establishment	NO. of scholars	Research scope	NO. of monograph, book series, special column, report, and publication	Representative research results
1	Silk Road Research Center	Beijing Jiaotong University (211)	Beijing	2015.5	12	Researches into strategy for economic development of the regions along the Silk Road	20 monographs	FY Satellite data have served 37 countries and regions along “the Belt and Road”; Yang Guangpu: PPP-assisted national infrastructure interconnection related to “the Belt and Road”; Risk assessment of countries along “the Belt and Road”
2	“The Belt and Road” data analysis platform	Peking University (985)	Beijing	2015.5	25	This platform is a collection of various data and information related to the politics, economy, culture, science and technology, diplomacy, and military of the countries along “the Belt and Road”	14 research reports	The proposal of “Five Criteria” for evaluating the development of countries along “the Belt and Road”, including “policy coordination”, “facilities connectivity”, “unimpeded trade”, “financial integration, and “people-to-people bond”.
3	China Academy of “One Belt and One Road” Strategy	Beijing International Studies University	Beijing	2015.1	6	Serve directly for the national strategy of “the Belt and Road”	7 reports	“ <i>The Belt and Road</i> ” proposes enhancement of tourism opening-up and cooperation; “The Belt and Road” investment and security forum
4	Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies	Renmin University of China (985)	Beijing	2013.1	81	Focus on global governance, the Belt and Road, relations between major powers, and the construction of think tanks	37 publications and 7013 special column articles	<i>To construct Silk Road economy: prospect and methods; Research into the “Go Globally” international business anti-corruption rules</i>
5	The Silk Road Research Institute	Northwest University (211)	Shanxi	2015.1	32	Research into the history and culture of the Silk Road, the practical problems, and development strategy	2 projects and 1 book series	<i>Book Series of the Silk Road</i>
6	China(Xi’an) Silk Road Research Institute	Xi’an University of Finance and Economics	Shanxi	2014.12	8	Fundamental researches into the Silk Road Economic Belt, such as statistical data	2 conferences, 2 forums, and 1 academic report	International Forum on Silk Road Economy: Cooperation and Sharing; Multilateral economic cooperation strategy and game theory international academic conference based on “the Belt and Road” framework
7	Coolaborative Innovation Centre for Silk Road Economic Belt Studies	Xi’an Jiaotong University (985)	Shanxi	2015.1	Not listed on its website	Research into the cooperation and innovation of laws, politics, society, and culture during the construction of Silk Road Economic Belt	5 reports	Announcement NO. 1 at the 10th anniversary of SRIICL; Announcement NO. 2 at the 10th anniversary of SRIICL
8	The Collaborative Innovation Center for the Belt and Road Initiative	Zhejiang University (985)	Zhejiang	2015.6	34	To interlink with the important national strategic demands of “the Belt and Road”	15 special reports on achievements	Develop cross-border e-commerce to construct “Internet Silk Road”; Help agriculture to go globally by innovating financial support modes
9	Maritime Silk Road Institute	Huaqiao University	Fujian	2014.3	5	“The Belt and Road” and free trade zone construction	8 articles about academic trends	<i>Blue Book of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Construction; News Report of Maritime Silk Road</i> , High-end Forum for the 21 st Century Maritime Silk Road in Quanzhou, Fujian

5. The University Think Tanks Use the Multiple Streams Theory to Influence of “The Belt and Road” Strategic Process

The impact of think tanks on public policy can be analyzed from multiple perspectives, such as various types of think tanks how to affect for different types of policy, or how the various types of think tanks have an impact on the development, implementation, evaluation and supervision of public policy processes, may also from the various types of think tanks on the policy formulation of different periods of the way and extent to analyze how to have an impact. Through the classification study can be more clearly see how the think tanks affects public policy, but the type and number of Chinese think tanks are too many and huge. Based on this situation, this paper chooses the multiple streams analysis framework as the theoretical basis of the analysis. Through the above research, we can see that the university think tanks basically realized the diversification of information dissemination in the use of new media, and have a lot of contributions in “The Belt and Road” policy areas. Therefore, this article takes the new media environment as the background, takes the university think tanks as the research object, starting from the perspective of the public policy process, and takes the “The Belt and Road” strategy as the research case to analyze how the university think tanks affects the public policy.

The theory of multiple streams is proposed by the famous American scientist Kingdon John. Kingdon thinks that a public issues become a public policy need to problem stream, policy stream, politics stream to converge at a point together to open the window of the policy, and then the policy problem will be put on the agenda and promote the policy change. The three streams have the different focuses, the problem stream is focus on how to raise the visibility to let the research problem into the research topic, the policy stream is focus on how to make their own research program to get the core right’s of attention, the political stream is focus on how to guide public opinion, and obtain the support of interest groups and the power of the core staff. University think tanks can enjoy the national support in the source of funds, and their policy research programs can get the attention and support of government officials. Therefore, colleges and universities have unique advantages in influencing the politics stream. The university think tank’s disciplines and scientific research facilities are complete, and gathered a group of outstanding expert research team, their academic research ability is other think tanks can not catch up, and they have more energy to put their research goals on the scientific and objective nature of the results. Therefore the university think tanks can create more valuable research results, and its impact on the policy stream also has a strong advantage. After the above description draw analysis model shown in **Figure 1**, the analysis of the following case will be based on this theoretical model framework to explore how the university think tanks affect the public policy process.

“The Belt and Road” strategic planning has been obtained 64 foreign countries'

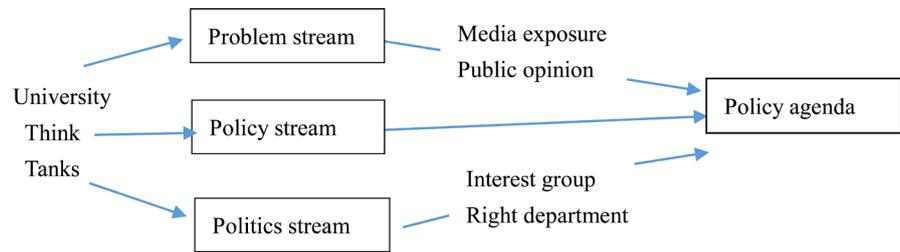


Figure 1. A multiple stream model diagram of University think tanks influencing public policy process.

along the country's positive response, "The Belt and Road" initiative take the "policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration, people-to-people bond" as the construction of the main objectives and tasks, the "people-to-people bond" is the "The Belt and Road" construct social foundation, which shows that in the diplomatic system the public communication should take as an important part in public diplomacy. According to the statistics provided by IZP Technologies Group, from September 2013 to December 2015, the world's major news websites, social media, forums and other channels have directly related with "The Belt and Road" 36 billion data. The global media and Internet users on the "The Belt and Road" concern more than 35 billion people, the media published more than 650 copies of the relevant articles [7], and every event will form a milestone attention peak, such as "push to build Silk Road Economic Belt and twenty-first Century Maritime Silk Road vision and action", "China on the Arab national policy document" and so on. In the process of promoting the development of the "The Belt and Road" strategy, the university think tanks should take the lead. Because of its professionalism in policy research, it has a good influence in the media and public opinion. Compared with the Chinese government through its own official media to promote the policy, the university think tanks can be targeted to disseminate and share information, the university think tanks are the best choice for policy propaganda. University think tanks are actively spreading their views and opinions through media means. Firstly, the website of Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies of Renmin University (RDCY) lists a series of "The Belt and Road" books, that published by their think tank team. Such as "*The Belt and Road*" big data report", *To construct Silk Road economy: prospect and methods* and so on. The research results of these publications will be held through the press conference or forum, invited the relevant media and well-known experts to participate in the meeting to promote the publication of their research results. At the same time in its official microblog or WeChat public number will be simultaneously released and updated research results. Secondly, Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies of Renmin University also with 16 more influential media have a cooperative relationship, will regularly carry out forums and research reports to ensure that the research results in the mainstream media with a high rate of appearance. Finally, the scholars of the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies of Renmin University

will choose to promote their research results and perspectives through the development of scholar columns or program interviews, and thus promote the direction of public opinion.

In the aspect of influencing the policy stream, the university think tanks is as far as possible to ensure that their research programs are objective, independent and high, but also requires its research results are feasible in terms of technology and value. Because of the fact that the researchers of the university think tanks are mostly a combination of intellectual elite groups, they have a set of models of their own policy analysis methods. They are good at defining problems, collecting information, designing options and suggestions, assessing the results, and based on scientific surveys to study the policy. In the presentation of the research results, the majority of University think tanks not choose to hard-to-pronounce, difficult-to-understand terminology, papers or monographs to show the research results, instead select the newsletters, annual reports, blue books, expert advice, policy-making journals and other forms of display of results, in order to policy makers and the public to think about the research results in times of limited time and knowledge. At the same time the university think tanks attaches great importance to cross-disciplinary research and cooperation, such as the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies of Renmin University with more than 30 countries to carry out cooperate and hired 96 dignitaries from more than a dozen countries, bankers and scholars as a senior researcher in the Institute members, the majority of resident researcher have doctoral degrees. For the same subject, experts from different fields will give different solutions to play their complementary advantages. All of these are the basis for the University think tanks to ensure its programs are feasibility and stand out.

Influence of the university think tanks on political stream mainly lies in how to maintain close contact with the rights center, interest groups and the media, establish an effective communication network, so that the policy program can be in a certain political situation, thus affecting the policy activists on the policy program attention. Therefore, when the university think tanks held public discussion and dialogue activities, the form of the meeting was not as seal as ever, but invited the policy makers, the public, the media and the interest groups to participate in, set up effective communication bridge between the government and the people. Related policy programs can influence the development of government public policy in the participation of all parties in cognition. Let relevant policy proposal can influence the government public policy formulation on the situation that all parties to participate in cognition. China-Arab States Expo and the Second China-Arab States Think Tank Forum was held in Yinchuan, Ningxia during September to October of 2016, the forum has a dedicated committee in the China-Arab States Expo, which includes 31 diplomats from China and Arabia countries, well-known experts and scholars and entrepreneurs. The meeting around the supply side reform and China-Arab cooperation in international production capacity, China-Arab States Expo and the “The Belt and Road”

national economic and trade cooperation, “The Belt and Road” strategy and China-Arab pragmatic cooperation and other issues to discuss, Participants in this forum include researchers and scholars from the Political and Strategic Research Center of Al-Ahram Newspaper, University of Beirut, Arabic Translators Association, Morocco Hasan I University, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Commerce Department, People’s Daily, Xinhua News Agency, China Council for Promotion of International Trade, and other Chinese universities [8]. Therefore, the promotion of policy agenda can not be separated from the participation of all parties. Among them, the participation of university think tanks and media plays an important role in promoting the topic, providing good political communication background for the implementation of “The Belt and Road” strategy.

In the new media environment that the university think tanks through influence problem stream, policy stream and politics stream to promote the public policy operation, combined with the “The Belt and Road” strategy to analyze the important way of public policy to promote the university think tanks. Through the study found that the university think tanks mainly through the media propaganda and public opinion to influence the problem stream, based on the problem-oriented proposed a series of research topics. The university think tanks also use their research capabilities and media effective comments to guide policy stream, its take solve the problem as the goal proposed the relevant feasible solutions. The university think tanks also through communicate with the interest groups and the core personnel to influence the political stream, its take promote the policy as the goal and form the political background of influencing policy, and finally trigger the decision-making. This multiple stream theory policy network development process in turn helps to improve the research results of the university think tanks and the influence of its think tank itself.

6. Conclusion

Through analysis we know that a good soft environment carrier should be established to transmit the spirit and cooperation idea of Silk Road, thus improving the influence of the university think tanks serving for “the Belt and Road” strategy. This kind of influence consists of many aspects, which involve political parties, governments, the public, and various interest groups. The development of our country’s think tank has its own advantages and characteristics, whether it is the official think tank, the folk think tank or the university think tank, and has its own research field and works, but the powerful think tank also has its own limitations and shortcomings. The funds to support the development of the university think tank in our country mainly come from the government support. Therefore, the development of the university think tank needs the recognition of the government first, and then participates in the public policy process. In addition, university think tanks should pay attention to decision-making departments in order to create good policy network structure; attention should also be

given to public views. More specifically, Internet forums, microblogs, WeChat, and other social network should be used to conduct public opinion analysis. This way, the communication of policies can be enhanced, an impartial social environment for discussion can be created, and a general consensus can be reached through joint discussions. Consequently, the conversion rate of think tank achievements can be truly improved. Finally, the development of university think tanks also needs to strengthen the use of new media. The influence of university think tanks on public policies is to a large extent through cooperation with the media, through strengthening the use of media environments such as forums, Weibo, WeChat, and the Internet. Then guide public opinion, collect public opinion, strengthen the effectiveness of public policy solution. Therefore, in the modern decision-making environment under the new media, it is necessary to establish a multi-level network of communication, interaction and cooperation among the government, enterprises, think tanks, the public, the media, etc. Whether the public can understand and obtain public policy information through the new media environment, and take the initiative to participate in policy discussion to the formation of collective action and public opinion ability which also indirectly reflects the degree of social democratization of a country, to the development of the school think tank is also important support.

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