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Think tanks in the United States and in China

History and contemporary roles of Policy
Research Institutes in two 'major powers'

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INTRODUCTION

Historical evolutions are the result of interplays among concurrent factors melting the social, cultural, intellectual, economic, and political spheres. Transitional moments represent the most doubtful stages in the history of an individual, a country, the world, since they bear in themselves the seeds of both potentially positive and negative evolutions, which will be disclosed only in a later moment. Similarly, transitional phases represent a prolific ground for the appearance of innovative solutions to seasoned problems; for the emergence of unforeseen precepts and ideals; for the materialization of adequate and custom-made political leaders and outstanding personalities.

In times of transition, intellectual communities have generally recorded an increase in their function, visibility, and formal and informal accreditation. This can be argued to have been a common feature in most countries worldwide, since such moments stand out as uncertain and unexpected phases in the lifespan of a country or person, and intellectuals might arise as the most appropriate figures to provide viable responses.

Such an assumption was one of the starting points of this dissertation, whose objective is to analyze and examine the influence exerted by a peculiar manifestation of the intellectual community, that is think tanks, and to show how think tanks have, in fact, displayed increased activity and relevance at moments of particular instability and uncertainty.

Broadly speaking, think tanks are non-profit, independent research institutes that conduct in depth and professional research on specific, relevant issues. Their research efforts range from economics, politics and law amendments, to environment and climate-related issues; whatever their research topic, these are all policy-relevant matters, missing a sure and winning approach or response. Their activities have, in fact, unfolded with several exceptions and multiple varying nuances, according to the country and the specific background in which they emerged. As far as American-based think

tanks are concerned, it can be argued that, unlike lobbying and interest groups, and due to their legal form, think tanks are excluded from direct political brawls, and any direct support for political parties or candidates is beyond their allowed functions. Nevertheless, the channels used by think tanks in the battle to promote ideas, though varied and less direct, may turn equally triumphant and apt in the end. Publishing specific topic-related books; financing journals and magazines as part of the think tank's marketing activity; participating in formal and informal conferences and seminars; organizing public speeches with leading figures of the intellectuals community: all this can be summarized in their investment in the 'marketplace of ideas', that is think tanks' most common and shared feature today. Despite this, their role has not remained perpetually unaltered: think tanks have, in fact, evolved over time, following to a certain extent the political changes of their home country, resulting in the diverse evolution in different countries. Indeed, beginning as an American phenomenon, and initially tied to the United States only, think tanks have progressively spread worldwide, reaching European, Asian, and South American countries.

Disparate studies have been conducted on the specific forms taken by think tanks in diverse countries, and scientific literature on European and North American think tanks abounds. On the contrary, trustworthy data on Asian think tanks, Chinese think tanks in particular, have remained limited and lacking in number and thoroughness, due to the difficult access to official informative channels.

The aim of the present dissertation is therefore to provide an examination of the simultaneous developments of think tanks in the United States, with the description of the pivotal role exerted by liberalism, market economy, and civil society in this country, and in the one-party, authoritarian China. Different features will emerge from the two countries, starting from the independent or dependent relationship with the political leadership.

The two countries will be examined separately at first, adopting an historical approach aimed at reconstructing the subsequent stages of think tanks' development in the two diverse environments.

Once the histories of the United States and China will be covered up to 1989, which will be taken as the first match point between them, the analysis will proceed jointly, and each chapter will be divided in two parts, one dedicated to the United States, and the other to China. By so doing, the goal is to underline that, even though profoundly different in their structure, think tanks have similarly experienced evolutions as far as their function and formal organization concerns, during turning points of each country's history, as well as during thorny periods of uncertainty and instability.

Chapter one of the dissertation will begin with an introductory part on Ideas and their evolution into policy proposals within the political agenda, where they become capable of producing policy changes or proposals. This part will be followed by a brief recapitulation of the different channels and organizational frameworks concretely usable to enter the status of policy alternatives, namely under the guise of 'Policy Communities', 'Transnational Advocacy Coalitions', and 'Epistemic Communities'. Right after this, the history of American think tanks will be retraced, from their ancestral and most basic forms in the early 1900s to their following evolutions throughout the century. Traditional think tanks' categorizations, mainly the threefold partition proposed by Kent Weaver ('studentless universities', 'contract research organizations', and 'advocacy tanks'), will be exposed, in order to understand how their developments were linked to precise political changes. This evolutionary trend was marked by a gradual impoverishment of the scientific, neutral, and objective nature of the academic research issued by think tanks. Along with the growth in think tanks' number and specialization, academic research institutes were less inclined to provide purely academic studies, and rather more prone to issue politically and ideologically oriented ones, starting in particular from the 'Republican revolution' by President Ronald Reagan.

Chapter Two will shift completely the focus of interest from the United States to China and its problematic institutional environment. The lack of transparency has affected the quality and quantity of research that has been produced so far; however, enough material exists to trace similar

categorizations of think tanks. Categories introduced for Chinese think tanks differ from those adopted for the American ones, since the attention, in the former case, has focused primarily on the diverse degree of independence from the official political structure, namely from the Central Government, the Chinese Communist Party, and the People's Republic of China. As a consequence, government-affiliated think tanks, semi-official think tanks, and civilian think tanks will be explored through concrete examples. As in Chapter One, the span of time covered will run until 1989, with the gradual appearance of the 'first' and 'second' generation think tanks, both of them interrupted by the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown, when think tanks and individual scholars were for the most part forced to shut down or flee from China, as they were perceived as emblems of 'counterrevolutionary' standpoints.

Chapter Three will deal simultaneously with North American and Chinese trends. Historically relevant events circumscribe the time limits of the chapter: 1989 represented, for the United States as its major winner, and for the whole world as the stage of indirect but continuous confrontations, the end of the Cold War, and the implicit confirmation of the United States as the uncontested global *hegemon*. That same year, Chinese students protesting for the adoption of political reforms along with the economic ones were brutally repressed by the Chinese army forces, in the explicit negation of any sparks of civil society. The year 1989 was especially important for China in particular: only following two years of intellectual silence, did think tanks reemerge again and gave rise to the 'third generation' think tanks. This followed Deng Xiaoping's Tour to the South in 1992, and it inaugurated a wholly diverse approach to the 'marketplace of ideas'. Despite occasional repression, think tanks were given enough space to embrace the *credo* of marketization and commercialization of their own research products, and economic think tanks were the most representative examples of such new trend. China's growth, which was coming to the fore those years with particular vim, pushed a further development in the American continent, since more and more US-based think tanks set up affiliated branches focused specifically on China and its 'peaceful

rise'.

Chapter Four will follow a similar path to Chapter Three. The departure point will be 2001, a revealing year of the growing uncertainty concerning global power and the hegemon might. The terrorist attacks directed against the North American seemingly uncontested power, followed right after by China's admission to the WTO, emerged as meaningful signs of a probable, imminent change in the balance of power, and all this became a recurrent hot issue discussed at think tanks in both countries. Chinese think tanks have increasingly tried to emerge as positive proponents of policy theories and ideas, with the introduction of significant definitions, including the 'Three Represents Theory', 'Scientific Development', 'China's Peaceful Rise, and 'Chinese Dream'. American think tanks have devoted a considerable portion of their research efforts to the examination of US-China relations, proposing in some cases expectations of cooperation, and in others more pessimistic anticipations around an unstoppable downturn spyrals in their relations. Keeping an historical perspective throughout the whole course of the dissertation, we will examine the parallel evolutions of think tanks as 'Idea Brokers', seeking evidence of the domestic and international circumstances under which they have disclosed increased function and influence in the two countries.

1. IDEAS AND PUBLIC POLICY: THE BIRTH AND DEVELOPMENTS OF AMERICAN THINK TANKS FROM EARLY EXPERTS TO THE LATE 1980s

1.1. Ideas and Public Policy. Introduction

Ideas and Actions. The question which one plays the major role in our life is difficult to answer, given their necessarily strong interconnectedness. It is an even more problematic connection when we focus on the International Arena, because of the greater amount of issues, participating figures, and stakes involved. Therefore, it is not surprising to notice that significant research has been carried out about the possibilities and manners in which people, either as individuals or as units of specific issue-oriented institutions, may be able to affect high-level political decisions, whether with ideas, actions, or both of them simultaneously. When we consider the relevance and weight of ideas if adequately disseminated, cohesively presented, and shared by a sizable group of users, we may find a further validation of the assumption that ideas, even if not necessarily identifiable with a precise ideology, do exert pressure on the policy-making process and are likely to influence policy decisions.¹

1.1.1. Various kinds of ideas within the Public Policy arena

Acknowledging the importance of ideas in the policy making process is a first, fundamental step in understanding how policies are generated.

It is the first step because it removes the temptation of considering public policies as a pure and direct result of the policy maker's self-interest and individual considerations. To follow this latter

¹ On the importance of ideas in the policy-making pre-decision and decision process see John L. Campbell, "Ideas, Politics, and Public Policy", *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002): pp. 21–38; John Wells Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (New York: Harper Collins, 1984); Robert C. Lieberman, "Ideas, Institutions, and Political Order: Explaining Political Change", *American Political Science Review* 96, no. 4 (2002): pp. 697–712.

path would mean to leave limited space to the production of objective and largely sharable policies. Though fundamental, the primary recognition of ideas as fundamental tiles in the final political outcome is nevertheless not sufficient, since loads of difficulties persist in terms of reconstructing how ideas concretely enter the policy domain, how they manage to concretely shape policy, and what are the causal mechanisms that link ideas to policy making outcomes.² Ideas are not tangible tools that can be easily measured or classified; they are intangible instruments whose role cannot be neglected, but which are hard to gauge, thus leaving a considerable cognitive lacuna. Notable comments on this have been left by Peter Hall, who observed:

... Ideas are generally acknowledged to have an influence over policy making... But that role is not easily described. Any attempt to specify the conditions under which ideas acquire political influence inevitably teeters on the brink of reductionism, while the failure to make such an attempt leaves a large lacuna at the center of our understanding of public policy.³

The majority of the literature on ideas, politics, and policy making now tends to avoid extreme positions, such as the purely idealistic or materialistic ones, since the first elects ideas as the unique source of policies, the second pinpoints the strongest role of self-interests. On the contrary, the new literature tends to work on the basis of an alleged interplay between ideas and self-interest, assuming that both ideas and interests can simultaneously affect public policy. The result is that a consequential relationship is established between the ideas that form the ideological frame of a policy maker, and the self-interests that he supports, which will guide the choices embraced and the politics abandoned, in other terms, the policy agenda pursued.

2 Many scholars agree upon the persistent difficulties of tracing clear-cut lines connecting ideas and their political outcomes. See, for instance, Campbell, "Ideas, Politics, and Public Policy", p. 21; Andrew Rich, *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and The Politics of Expertise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 8.

3 Peter A. Hall, *The Political Power of Economic Ideas: Keynesianism across Nations* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 4. Comments on the dilemmas of searching for a definite connection line between ideas and policies abound in literature; see, for instance, Peter Schuck, who stated, "There are pitfalls in emphasizing the causal role of ideas in politics. Compared with votes, institutions, interests, events, and other palpable phenomena that political analysts can observe and even measure, ideas are elusive and their outcomes are hard to gauge. Ideas may simultaneously alter what political actors perceive and what they pursue.[...]" Peter H. Schuck, "The Politics of Rapid Legal Change: Immigration Policy in the 1980s", in Marc K. Landy and Martin A. Levin, eds., *The New Politics of Public Policy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 51.

Ideas are therefore attached considerable importance in the public policy making process. Other past accredited scholars like Max Weber maintained this assumption by arguing that, “Ideas have profound effect on the course of events, acting like switchmen who direct interest-based action down one track or another”⁴ and that, “We are wise to be skeptical of such evidence [the absence of a clear-cut causal mechanism between Ideas and policies], but we would be foolish to ignore it simply because it is less tangible and quantifiable”.⁵

Ideas enter the policy arena in different forms and with different intensity. They all share an incredible strength that might lead to political change, impulsive responses, as well as mitigation of risky actions.

Ideas act in the backstage of the theater where decisions are taken, emerging to the surface as economic, national security, welfare, energy security, or international relation policies.

The type of ideas lying in the backstage of decision makers' activity have been analyzed diffusely, and they have been classified according to their extension, nature, and function.

Political actors are susceptible to be guided by paradigms that are held as true, inviolable, and ascertained, whose validity is taken for granted because of their functionality and effectiveness revealed in past events and under similar conditions. The resulting “cognitive paradigms” guide the political actor's moves in a way that may engender self-fulfilling paths, and that may constrain the adoption of different policies. The adoption of these taken-for-granted paradigms can nevertheless be discussed at times in the occurrence of crises, rumors, or disturbances of any kind, that might require more updated and effective choices.

Not only concrete and functional patterns act as lighthouses for political actors. Similarly, normative frames enter the political sphere and fix the ethical norms, ideologies, values, attitudes, and identities that filter the adoption of potentially new and innovative policies. These frames taken together make up the “collectively shared expectations” that limit the range of policy alternatives

4 Max Weber, “The social psychology of the world religions,” in H. Gerth and C. W. Mills, eds., *From Max Weber* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 267–301.

5 Schuck, “The Politics of Rapid Legal Change: Immigration Policy in the 1980s”, p. 51.

that the political leader as a high-level representative, but the whole citizenry in the large, perceive as morally acceptable or legitimate.⁶ These “legitimacy imperatives” are not to be undervalued, considered that they “enable, shape, and constrain politics”, and that they may be so deeply entrenched in culture that may even override the self-interests of the policy makers themselves.⁷

Normative frameworks vary considerably across space and time, and they obviously maintain durable connections with the identities of the political actor, primarily, and of the governed populace, in general.

Apart from “cognitive paradigms” and “normative frameworks”, ideas can become the basis of the political agenda as “World views”, that is, as sets of geographically shared paradigms and conceptions of economics, politics, and institutions. The “World Culture” may include those transnational cognitive paradigms, normative frameworks, or both, which a large number of nation-states adhere to, becoming the basis for action, for non-action, and for action changes. Some examples include the appearance of a world environmental culture, or the weapons systems, that have engendered homogenized expectations, rules, and mutual constraints grounded on shared beliefs and patterns.⁸

All the typologies of ideas briefly analyzed above, which are not the only ones, have received attention not only in terms of positive research, but also of critical research, or at least, they have encountered several black holes in the research.⁹

It is difficult, for example, to ascertain how old cognitive paradigms can be overridden by new ones at the occurrence of unforeseeable crises or chances, as well as the reason why political actors sometimes stick to old paradigms even if there is evidence of greater efficiency of new ones. Similarly, it is controversial to understand where World Culture originates, and who are its creators; moreover, the concept of World Culture receives abundant criticisms in that it often merely reflects

6 Peter J. Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 8.

7 John D. Skrentny, *The Ironies of Affirmative Action* (New York: Cambridge University Press 1996), p. 9.

8 Campbell, “Ideas, Politics, and Public Policy”, pp. 23–25.

9 For other types of ideas considered important factors to shape policy, see Campbell, “Ideas, Politics, and Public Policy”, pp. 21–38.

the Western political culture, which has spread around the world and has vaguely homogenized national political institutions and policy making apparatuses.¹⁰

Not only do abstract paradigms, theoretical, and moral norms exert effects on the political domain; policy making can also be affected by much more concrete ideas, whose appearance is linked to the sudden arrival of unpredicted events or changes. The resulting “Programmatic Ideas” offer “more precise guidelines about how already-existing institutions and instruments should be used in specific situations according to the principles of well-established paradigms”.¹¹ Therefore, they differ from the more generic cognitive or normative paradigms, which stand in the foreground of the policy debate, and they represent immediate tools for immediate choices. The selection of one programmatic idea instead of another depends on the quality and clarity of the idea itself: policy makers may select the ideas that are more understandable and comprehensible to them; alternatively, they may embrace those ideas that offer more linear or quicker outlets to troublesome situations, rather than others that more directly point to a unique focal point.¹²

The above digression on some of the types of ideas was provided to reiterate the concept that, despite a scrutinized knowledge on the issue, the matter further complicates when we get to the analysis of the mechanisms in which ideas concretely shape policies. In other words, one thing is to have clear in mind what are the ingredients required to generate a policy; knowing how these elements are blended to ensure the final result, however, is another story. In particular, much research has concentrated on the actors that give voice to such ideas, and on the institutions where ideas are engendered.

Actors and Institutions, even if separate entities, can at times overlap and be considered as just one unity. The definition of 'actor' may include intellectuals, individual researchers, academics, members of epistemic communities; the term 'institution' can refer to those filters of the formers'

10 On the concept of World Culture, see J. W. Meyer, J. Boli, et al., “World society and the nation state”, *American Journal of Sociology* 103, no. 1 (1997): pp. 144–8; J. W. Meyer, D. Frank, A. Hironaka, E. Schofer, N. B. Tuma, “The structuring of a world environmental regime, 1870-1990”, *International Organization* 51 (1997): pp. 623–51.

11 Peter Hall, “Policy paradigms, Social Learning, and the State: the Case of Economic Policymaking in Britain”, *Comparative Politics* 25, no. 3 (1993): pp. 275–96.

12 Campbell, “Ideas, Politics, and Public Policy”, p. 29.

ideas in the political arena, such as research institutes, epistemic communities, think tanks, and universities.

Actors and Institutions, the heralds of ideas, proposals, alternatives of policy change, will be the following paragraphs, in the attempt of conducting a comparative analysis of the various models that they can assume, across nations and times.

1.1.2. The decision making process in the domestic and in the foreign policy domain: the greater difficulty of the International Sphere

Loads of studies have been carried out about the ways the political agenda is set and determined. According to Durant and Diehl, when considering agenda setting and alternative specification, a major distinction line must be traced between the domestic and the foreign policy domain.¹³ The foreign policy domain differs from the domestic one in many aspects, all of them contributing to make it a much more vulnerable and variable field.

The two aforementioned authors based their research uniquely on the United States, since it displayed peculiar national characteristics and dynamics that could not be easily detected nor replicated in other circumstances.

In both the domestic and foreign policy domains, the sequence followed by policy-makers in their search for policy alternatives normally proceeds from the appearance of a problem, to the mushrooming of policy opportunity windows, to the final selection of what is seen as the best viable solution to confront the given issue. In both domains, the political agenda results from the confused mess where problems, ideas, and alternative solutions struggle to be included in the high priority list of decision-makers.¹⁴ The final drawing of the agenda setting and alternative specification differs in

13 See Robert F. Durant and Paul F. Diehl, "Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policy: Lessons from the U.S. Foreign Policy Arena", *Journal of Public Policy* 9, no. 2 (1989): pp. 179–205.

14 See Yehezkel Dror, who defines policy making as "an unstable casino where the rules of the game, their mixes of chance and skill, and [their] payoffs change in unpredictable ways during the game itself, where unforeseeable forms of external 'wildcards' may appear suddenly [...] [and where] it is impossible to draw conclusions on the quality of policy making from its results". Yehezkel Dror, "Policy Gambling: A Preliminary Exploration", *Policy Studies journal* 12

the domestic and foreign policy spheres because of the varying constraints, degree of freedom, and margins of intervention allowed to decision makers, as well as to other members of the policy community. When the policy agenda and the issues worth of attention are being decided, some parameters need to be ascertained, and the combination of them varies from state to state, and from the domestic and foreign policy domain. Depending on how they have been integrated within the 'Institutional Filters' of the political structures, the organizational choices will follow as a result.¹⁵ Some of these variables include decision structures, access structures, entry times, energy loads, and energy distribution. 'Decision structures' and 'Access structures' inform about the participants in policy decision making process, and how do alternative choices relate to pending issues and to policy makers.¹⁶ Variations in the openness and permeability of decision making structures and institutions result in different policy outcomes. Policy alternatives can be classified as unsegmented, if they can be accessed by all issues and participants; hierarchical, when only influential actors and problems are allowed into the decisional choices; specialized, in the event that the problem considered can only be matched by one particular policy choice. The voice 'Entry times' refers to the rhythm and speed one specific problem is confronted by the policy makers in charge. 'Energy loads' and 'Energy distribution' respectively refer to the amount of effort devoted to the issue at hand (in terms of time, energy, expertise, and costs), and to the repartition of policy makers' attention to that specific issue compared to others.

A quick exposition of the above paradigms was necessary to have some insight into the process of policy pre-decision. The main assumption of this paragraph is that the parameters above occur in a far more complex combination in the foreign policy scale than in the domestic one. The reasons for the greater complexity are several; moreover, the challenges undermining the national sphere, like bipartisan disagreement or interest groups struggles, differ from those that jeopardize the foreign

(1984): pp. 9–13.

15 The term 'Institutional Filter' to indicate the filtering role played by institutions around which political actors are organized has been used by Campbell, "Ideas, Politics, and Public Policy", p. 30.

16 See Cohen, Michael D., James G. March, and Johan P. Olsen, "A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice", *Administrative Science Quarterly* 17 (1972): pp. 1–25.

policy domain, where, at least theoretically, national groups line up to form more compact and uniform national interests. The occurrence of unpredictable international crises requiring immediate solutions; revolutionary breakthroughs in military technologies fomenting new international competitions; the randomness of most choice opportunities, all stand as risk factors that leave space for unexpected and even covert operations, and that complicate the organizational choice.¹⁷

¹⁷ Durant and Diehl, “Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policy: Lessons from the U.S. Foreign Policy Arena”, pp. 179–205.

1.2. Epistemic Communities

It has repeatedly been asserted that the world has become a 'Global Village': distances between countries, societies, and cultures have dramatically decreased, the global planet is perceived as smaller, and we can contact different cultures more easily and at lower expenses than in the recent past.¹⁸ In terms of policy agenda setting, the increasing interconnectedness of the world has engendered both positive and negative aspects. Compared to the purely domestic level, a growing number of actors can today aspire more concretely for much more influential positions within the policy setting.¹⁹ Most figures with ambitions of policy-influencing positions can benefit from the fact that today policy makers face issues of global concern that go beyond national boundaries, and engender transnational bonds. For those whose target is to influence governmental choices, the advent of such interstate links creates unprecedented opportunities for a large-scale influence capacity.

Actors with similar ambitions have benefited from the globalization process, and from the resulting transnationalization of several issues, for another important reason. The easier chances to get in touch and communicate with experts, advisers, scientists, and broadly speaking, with people from other countries, have made it possible to establish “new networks of knowledge” across nations.²⁰ Experts are not restrained to the national level anymore; they are pushed into the international domain not only because the issues they are questioned about have become transnational in nature, but also because they have found the manners to develop efficient connections with colleagues working abroad on the same target. Experts have therefore mingled national issues with

18 The term 'Global Village' is commonly associated with Marshall McLuhan, the well-known Canadian philosopher of communication theory, whose work has contributed to the research on media theory and on the television and mass media industries. Even though McLuhan was probably not the first to conceive the concept of an increasingly smaller planet, with more blurred borders and shorter distances, he was nevertheless the first one to adopt the term “Global Village”, that he popularized in his books, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962), and *Understanding Media* (1964). In all likelihood, McLuhan derived the framework of his doctrine from Wyndham Lewis' *America and Cosmic Man* (1948) and James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* (1939).

19 On the spread of Policy Networks see also Diane Stone, “Think Tanks Across Nations: The New Networks of Knowledge”, *Policy Community* (2000): pp. 34–39.

20 Stone, “Think Tanks Across Nations: The New Networks of Knowledge”.

international expertise, and national expertise with international expertise.

How did they manage to do so? How did experts engage in the activity of policy networking to establish policy networks, and how did they link the domestic and the international domains?

The methods have been various, from the establishment of person-to-person relationships, to the organizational networks, the research networks of think tanks, and the most contemporary development of virtual networks.²¹ As a result, knowledge actors, including professionals, researchers, think tanks on the whole, have developed some strategies to fix policy networks, which are “sets of relatively stable relationships which are of nonhierarchical and interdependent nature, linking a variety of actors who share common interests with regard to a policy and who exchange resources to pursue these shared interests acknowledging that cooperation is the best way to achieve common goals”.²² Policy networks have, in turn, assumed various shapes, including that of 'Policy Communities', 'Transnational Advocacy Coalitions', and 'Epistemic Communities'.²³

Among the board of actors that work primarily for policy setting, 'Epistemic Communities' occupy a primer position. The broad term 'Epistemic Communities' refers to all those groups of experts in the most diverse subjects, including political science, social sciences, philosophy, history, economics, whose primary activity is to conduct in depth research on a given area.²⁴ 'Epistemic communities' act as vehicles for the elaboration of theoretical and potentially useful premises that precede the formulation of collective or 'élitarian' choices.²⁵

21 Person-to-person relationships, organizational networks, research networks of of think tanks, and virtual networks are the networking styles exposed by Stone (2000). An example of virtual networks, which could emerge only in recent times due to developments in information technology, is OneWorld., which allows access to several think tanks on the Web.

22 Tanja Börzel, “Organizing Babylon: On the Different Conceptions of Policy Networks”, *Public Administration* 76 (1998): pp. 253 –273.

23 Diane Stone, “Think Tanks Across Nations: The New Networks of Knowledge”, p. 37.

24 Another definition of Epistemic Communities is provided by Haas, who defined them as “Networks of knowledge-based experts [...] [that] play [a role] in articulating the cause-and-effect relationships of complex problems, helping states identify their interests, framing the issues for collective debate, proposing specific policies, and identifying salient points for negotiation”. Peter M. Haas, “Introduction: epistemic communities and international policy coordination”, *International Organization* 46, no. 1 (1992), pp. 1–35.

25 A worthy clarification of the definition, functions, and organizational *iter* followed by Epistemic Communities in the political domain is offered by Emanuel Adler and Peter M. Haas, “Epistemic Communities, World Order, and the Creation of a Reflective Research Program”, *International Organization* 46, no. 1, (1992): pp. 367–390; Peter M. Haas, “Introduction: epistemic communities and international policy coordination”.

Even at a time when many have voiced their opposition against the globalization tendency of reinforcing international connections at the expenses of national autonomy and the primacy of nation-states as primary units of the International System, the declared target of 'Epistemic Communities' is by no means that of substituting nation-states, whereas to supply them with reliable expertise and niche knowledge, and to contribute to the elaboration of rational choices.

'Epistemic Communities' play an important role in policy coordination and evolution. They are “networks of professionals and experts with an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge, who share a set of normative beliefs, causal models, notions of empirical validity, and a common policy enterprise”.²⁶ 'Epistemic Communities' bargain and negotiate ideas and proposals within their group, or occasionally with outside participants, aware that coherence and consistency within their own beliefs are a good business card for policy makers to trust and take advantage from them. The range of influence they can exert on policy decision making depends on several factors, among which the timing, feasibility, and novelty of their proposals; the occurrence of external, unforeseen crisis, or particular economic, political, and social developments requiring specific competences; historical evidence of credibility, due to the fact that 'Epistemic Communities' that have already proven successful in the past are more likely to be considered by policy makers.

Thanks to their high-level and skilled expertise, 'Epistemic Communities' play a role in policy coordination both at the national and international level, where their role is to help generate and disseminate new ideas across policy elites.²⁷ Their contribution ranges from 'policy innovation', in that they show up to national or international leaders with new proposals on problem-solving; to 'policy diffusion', an equally important task for them, since the more broadly spread their ideas, the more visibility and credibility they can achieve; to 'policy persistence', if ideas promoted by 'Epistemic Communities' evolve into permanent points of the official policy agenda and gain the status of 'orthodoxy', which occurs whenever their knowledge is suitably socialized.²⁸

26 Peter Haas, cited in Campbell, “Ideas, Politics, and Public Policy”, *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002): p. 30.

27 Campbell, “Ideas, Politics, and Public Policy”, p. 30.

28 Adler and Haas, “Epistemic Communities, World Order, and the Creation of a Reflective Research Program”, pp.

1.3. Knowledge and Power, Knowledge and Ambition: An historical reconstruction of the role of the Expert

'Epistemic Community' is one of the many labels we can give to the organized groups of experts, intellectuals, and social scientists that orbit around the governmental scope, and whose function is to help the ruling class to administer the government in a more conscious and rational way. The existence of interest groups that back the leadership in their policy-agenda setting, or that advocate specific ideological positions dates back to centuries ago. The specific topic of the present dissertation, think tanks, is nevertheless a much more recent phenomenon. The topic has already been object of abundant attention not only from the academic environment, but also from the public audience, mass media, and ordinary citizens.

Due to the continual globalization-driven developments, and to uncertain future evolutions, the issue is nevertheless open to fresh research. Consequently, the aim of the present thesis is certainly not to provide ultimate explanations or answers, whereas to prod the interest in the subject, and to encourage future research, in particular in those points that still represent enigmas on the current knowledge.

The birth of think tanks is largely a 20th century phenomenon, with a specific historical background. Nevertheless, the basic logic underlying such research institutes is not a new one; on the contrary, it dates back to several centuries ago. Think tanks represent the modern rationalization of a phenomenon whose roots can be traced far away in the past: it is the governor's hope to be able to use expertise, knowledge, and wisdom at the service of a better leadership. At the same time, it is the expert's ongoing search for a government to help, influence, and shape in his likeness. It is the intellectual's research for the best way to let research findings and ideas enter the political arena as

374–378.

uncontested ideologies.²⁹

The historical realization of such a relationship, or reciprocal search, has been a varied one, with regard to the degree of influence attainable, to the number of advisers or advocates actually admitted into the policy-making process, to the organizational structure of advisers (presented as individual claims or as demands enhanced by organized groups of experts, for instance), to the various degree of visibility of such figures or institutes.

Thinking about the policy advisers who have always operated in the “shadows of power”, we can go back to the Greek culture calling to mind the philosophers who trained future generations of rulers from their early childhood.³⁰ Some examples would help us remember the tutorial relationship between Aristotle and young Alexander; or between Seneca and Nero, in the ancient Roman empire.³¹ Trying to elude the European-centered viewpoint, similar relationships can also be easily recovered from outside the old continent. In imperial China, for example, the mission of educated Mandarins was precisely that of equipping emperors with advice about which policies to abandon, which ones to adopt, and how to adjust them to obtain the best outcomes.

The undeniable strong link between the expert and the leader, beyond receiving attention from the academic world, has equally permeated the popular view and entered the general wisdom, achieving the fiction literature, as well. Leafing through the pages of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, we read about the author's ambiguous position toward the adviser's role in the Academy of political innovators in Lagado. As we read in the novel, Gulliver experienced disdain and almost despair when, entering the Academy, he realized that all professors “were completely out of mind, [...] proposing schemes for persuading monarchs to choose favourites upon the score of their wisdom,

29 On the complex but continuous interrelation between knowledge and power see the whole work by Michel Foucault. The French philosopher maintained the existence of a pervasive connection linking the two spheres, with power not identifiable with a single government, institution, or formal structure, but understandable as an extremely pervasive regulatory condition. According to Foucault, power is socialized, since it derives from the diffusion of accepted norms, knowledge, and scientific, or non scientific truths; it is everywhere, and it can be even positive and constructive, not only made of bans and denials; power, in turn, shapes knowledge, which contributes to maintain the “microphysics of power” that gives the world its order.

30 James Allen Smith, *The Idea Brokers. Think Tanks and the Rise of the New Policy Elite* (New York: The Free Press, 1991).

31 Further examples of the relationship between philosophers/intellectuals and rulers can be found in the Prologue of Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. xvi.

capacity and virtue, [...] of rewarding merit, great abilities, and eminent services, [...] of choosing for employments persons qualifies to exercise them”.³²

Despite their similar role, a necessary distinction must be traced between philosophers and experts counseling political leaders. On the one hand, the philosopher's main aim is the search for truth: their superior, academic objective places them in a *quasi* detached sphere, which has a lot to do with moral ends, and little, almost incidental, with political power. On the other hand, the expert, who shoulders the regnant for purposes others than mere education or training, has the declared target of inflating his own standpoints into the interlocutor's mind, and of observing them being translated into concrete policies.³³

Therefore, a sort of Ariadne's thread connecting all the advisers' over time is the strict bond between knowledge and power. In other words, a permanent feature of the prince-counselor relationship has remained constant: the mutual need and support that the two sides have been searching one from the other. As Smith reminds us, this pattern was already conceptualized in Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*, that not only broke through the engaged literature of the time and afterward as a useful mirror for the Prince looking for the most appropriate values to govern, but it also implicitly displayed the author's search for a power to serve diligently and to court (in this case, Lorenzo de Medici's family).³⁴

The role of advisers, be they individual experts, or members of a research institution, has, in fact, evolved over the course of time. It started as the provision of academic knowledge to be transferred to incoming political leaders as part of their childish education hoping that they would promote a better kingdom. Evolving through numerous passages, it has come to represent a much

32 Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (Milano: Oscar Mondadori, 1982), p. 181.

33 See James Allen Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. xviii. Smith maintains that the philosopher or cloistered intellectual is “free of the ambition to serve a leader directly, can speak with an authority that does not need to bend the truth to justify pressing political ends or personal ambitions”; in addition, for him “political power is merely incidental”. On the contrary, the policy expert and the adviser “must speak to power in a political and bureaucratic context”, and their “claims to speak the truth must always be viewed in light of their relationship with power”.

34 As reported by Smith in *The Idea Brokers*, p. xvii.

more institutionalized function, whose target is to influence policy choices and the whole decision making process.

Nonetheless, as the growth in the number of research institutes demonstrates, the policy adviser is not the only policy-involved actor whose role and functioning have changed over time. The political leader himself demands today greater expertise and knowledge to let the governmental machine function properly, and to face in an adequate manner unprecedented issues determined by globalization. As a result, many researchers, including Smith, underline the fact that the greater opportunities created for policy advisers have further nourished the experts' ambition and hunger for power, regardless of their explicit or implicit acknowledgment. Remarkably, the political leaders' response to such a contribution from policy experts has varied a lot, from irrepressible lust for advocacy and expert's counseling, to abrupt dismissal of the advocacy centers, considering them the expression of too much an intruding function. In one case or the other, political leaders have struggled to remain the leading figures in the policy making process, and their tough resolution not to be overwhelmed by advisers has been continual. We can have insight of it from a statement pronounced by Nelson Rockefeller, temporary assistant to President Eisenhower for foreign policy issues. After listening carefully to the discourses of the academic advisers summoned in Washington, he bluntly addressed them and said: "I did not bring you here, gentlemen, to tell me how to maneuver in Washington. That is my job. Your job is to tell me what is right".³⁵

35 Quoted in Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years* (New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1979), p. 4.

1.4. Think tanks and how to study them: Controversial Definitions and Methods

Contextualize the role of think tanks is not an easy task, for several reasons.

First of all, the label 'think tank' itself arises considerable problems, not so much when we consider the Anglo-American tradition, but rather when we try to explain or describe the functioning of think tank-like institutes that have burgeoned outside the United States. Even though originally a North American phenomenon, think tanks have, in fact, soon expanded abroad. First, they appeared in European countries, where the divergences in the political, economic, and cultural backgrounds were reflected in the diverse functions or structuring frameworks of such institutes. Later on, research and advocacy centers under the label 'think tanks' also developed in non-Western countries, including China, Japan, and Malaysia among others.

The organizational patterns of the recently founded institutions vary a lot depending on the domestic historical, political, and social context. Therefore, even though named in the same way, the kind of institution actually conceived is a varied lot, sometimes with strikingly different characteristics. In particular, stunning divergences appear when we compare the classical American definition of think tanks with their counterparts in non-democratic countries, or in countries that are undergoing a process of gradual, sometimes contrasted or muted, democratization process, including the People's Republic of China. In these countries, the restraints posed to the creation of supposedly independent organisms are so restrictive that the resulting outcomes are often just varied forms for the government's executive arms.

Sticking to one of the original Anglo-American definitions, think tanks are “relatively autonomous organizations engaged in the analysis of policy issues independently of government, political parties, and pressure groups”.³⁶ In fact, it could be argued that they are “relatively autonomous” organizations, since they are often in “resource-dependent relationships with these organizations”.³⁷

36 Diane Stone, *Think Tank Traditions: Policy Research and the Politics of Ideas* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 3.

37 Ibid.

Secondly, there is not uncontested agreement upon the period the term 'think tank' first appeared.³⁸

A widely accepted trend wants it to have been introduced by American theorists during World War II, when it referred to the special sections of scientists, officials, and experts created by the US Department of Defense. These sections were supposed to build an isolated and shielded environment where experts could produce their insights about the war evolution and trends.³⁹

A third problem that arises when dealing with research on think tanks concerns the methodological approach to take. According to various researchers (Stone, Diletti), two approaches have been adopted so far in think tanks analysis.⁴⁰

The first one has centered on the analysis of the organizational shape of such institutes, including the analysis of the reasons why think tanks have emerged, and of the models followed to achieve an influential position within the fierce “battle of ideas”.⁴¹ According to this approach, scholars have distinguished among academic research centers, government research units, or lobbying groups, for instance.

The second approach focuses on think tanks as “Idea Brokers”, contributing to channel new or innovative ideas to change or overthrow the barriers of public policy. According to this model, think tanks should be included into the broader concept of 'policy network', or 'policy community'. The term policy is a controversial one, since it may be confused with politics, while meaning something different, and including different actors. Rich reiterates this distinction, citing primarily Kingdon and his work,

38 According to the Oxford English Dictionary Supplement, around the end of the nineteenth century the term 'think tank' was initially used as a British slang for brain. As James Allen Smith reported in *The Idea Brokers*, p. 241, during World War I the phrase started to be used within a military environment to refer to secure, isolated places where to think, but its use spread widely only during the World War II.

39 Other terms were used for a limited period of time with the same meaning: *brain boxes*, *brain banks*, *think factories* among others. Nevertheless, none of them had the same astonishing success of the later adopted think tanks, given its more explicit reference to the military jargon.

40 Mattia Diletti, *I Think Tank* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2008); Diane Stone, *Think Tank Traditions: Policy Research and the Politics of Ideas*.

41 The concept of “battle of ideas” was used by Peter Leeson among the first. The terms “battle of ideas” or “war of ideas” have later become of public knowledge, and have been frequently adopted by following authors, i.e. Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House, as reported in *The Heritage Foundation 1994 Annual Report* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 1995), p. 2; John Campbell, “Think Tanks, Public Policy, and The Politics of Expertise”, p. 2.

As to the policy and political stream, I still find it useful to portray them as independent one another, but then sometimes joined... The policy community concentrated on matters like technical detail, cost-benefit analysis, gathering data, conducting studies, and honing proposals. The political people, by contrast, paint with a broad brush, are involved in many more issue areas than the policy people are, and concentrate on winning elections, promoting parties, and mobilizing support in the larger polity.⁴²

Rich reports the distinction outlined by Kingdon and others in order to justify the topic of his own book, that is the influence exerted by think tanks as examples of public expertise in the American policy making process.⁴³

Think tanks evidently fall under the 'policy network' group, that is formed of policy elites, epistemic communities, advocacy coalitions, and other vehicles for policy ideas' transmission.⁴⁴

1.4.1. Definitions of think tanks

Think tanks can be defined using different parameters, and the lack of a clear-cut categorization is probably the cause of so much confusion, disorder, or ignorance about the matter. As we read above, think tanks represent the contemporary shape assumed by the long-standing figure of the political adviser, or expert; they can be conceived as the specific, contemporary form assumed by experts, as their role changed from providing “technical detail, cost-benefit analysis, [and] gathering data” in a detached and objective manner, to a more direct and aggressive work.⁴⁵ In 2004 Rich observed:

... many contemporary policy experts do seek an active and direct role in ongoing political debates. Far from maintaining a detached neutrality, policy experts are frequently aggressive

42 Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies, Second Edition*, p. 228.

43 Rich cites other authors who focused on the distinct roles of policy experts, or policy scientists, and political actors, such as Charles Merriam, C. Easton Rothwell, and Harold D. Lasswell.

44 See Stone, *Think Tank Traditions: Policy Research and the Politics of Ideas*, p. 2.

45 Rich, *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and The Politics of Expertise*.

advocates for idea and ideologies; they even become brokers of political compromise. Many of these most aggressive experts are based at think tanks; think tanks have become an infrastructure and an engine for their efforts.⁴⁶

As stated more than once above, the difficulty with providing a fixed definition of think tank derives from their blurred nature, which has led many scholars and researchers to confound them with government research organizations, university-based research centers, or generic interest groups.

In fact, some definitions provided by accredited scholars state that think tanks are “independent, non-interest based, non-profit organizations that produce and principally rely on expertise and ideas to obtain support and to influence the policy making process” (Rich, 2004); “non-profit public policy research industry” (Weaver, 1989); a more critical definition provided by Kelley in 1988 was that think tanks are “an arrangement by which millions of dollars are removed from the accounts of willing corporations, the government, and the eccentric wealthy and given to researchers who spend much of their time competing to get their names in print” (Kelley, 1988).⁴⁷ Other definitions are provided by other authors, focusing on either a “single definition” or “a classification”.⁴⁸ Yehezkel Dror, providing a single definition, claimed that, “A think tank can be described as an island of excellence applying full-time interdisciplinary scientific thinking to the in depth improvement of policy making, or as a bridge between power and knowledge”.⁴⁹ Donald Abelson maintained: “think tanks [are] independent, non-profit organizations composed of individuals concerned with a wide

46 Ibid., p. 6.

47 The definitions provided are respectively derived from Andrew Rich, *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise*, p. 11; R. Kent Weaver, “The Changing World of Think Tanks”, *Political Science and Politics* 22, no. 3, p. 564; Peter Kelley, “Think Tanks Fall Between Pure Research and Lobbying”, *Houston Chronicle* 23 (March 1988).

48 See Xuanli Liao, *Chinese Foreign Policy Think Tanks and China's Policy Towards Japan* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2006), p. 55. Definitions by classification are mainly those provided by Weaver, “The Changing World of Think Tanks”, in which he distinguished among Universities without students, contract research organizations, and advocacy tanks; James McGann, *The competition for Dollars, Scholars and Influence in the Public Policy Research Industry* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1995), in which he identified seven categories of think tanks; Richard Higgott and Diane Stone, who similarly pointed out three types of Think Tanks: ‘the Old Guard, Cold War Tanks, and the New Partisans’. See Richard Higgott and Diane Stone, “The Limits of Influence: Foreign Policy Think Tanks in Britain and the USA”, *Review of International Studies* 20 (1994), pp. 15–34.

49 Yehezkel Dror, “Think Tanks: A New Invention in Government,” in Carol Weiss and Allen H. Barton, *Making Bureaucracies Work*, (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1979), p. 141.

range of issues”.⁵⁰

1.4.2. The relatively limited study on think tanks

In the previous paragraph, we ascertained some of the persistent difficulties regarding the study of think tanks, including the definition of think tanks, the varying institutional forms they can assume across space and time, and the standpoint from which to observe them, whether through descriptive eyes, or through analytic tools.

In fact, the research on this kind of research institute, though mushroomed parallel to the growth in think tanks numbers, is not so easy to be found. It is easier for the researcher who tries to reconstruct the history of think tanks that developed in North America, since the literature in this case is more copious. On the contrary, despite the emergence of similar institutes in almost every corner of the world, it is more complex for historians, or academics, to find complete and vast literature on their development elsewhere.

Probably, the number of works on the issue have flourished in the past years, but only in 2004 Andrew Rich reported that “fewer than a dozen books published since 1970 focused on American think tanks. No articles specifically about think tanks have appeared in the *American Political Science Review*, the *American Journal of Political Science*, or the *Journal of Politics* in the past thirty years, nor in the major policy or sociology journals”.⁵¹

According to the author of *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and The Politics of Expertise*, the reasons for this apparent scanty interest in think tanks, compared to other interest groups, including university-based research centers, lobbying groups, or government research organizations, are twofold. On the one hand, it is controversial to quantify and measure the role of the think tanks' main product, ideas, for the reasons outlined above. On the other hand, it is in the very nature of think tanks, at least

50 Donald E. Abelson, *American Think-Tanks and Their Role in US Foreign Policy* (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), p. 3.

51 Andrew Rich, *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and The Politics of Expertise*, p. 6.

originally, to adopt a low-profile doctrine, to conduct research, and to produce expertise in the foreground of the political debate, without entering the chaos of politics, where the risks of losing objectivity would be enormous.⁵²

The relative lack of literature on think tanks, not so much in North America, but elsewhere, has inspired this thesis, with the certainty that a careful investigation of these centers in a globally relevant country as the People's Republic of China will be beneficial for the general public interested in the issue, and will be strategic for the United States, as well.

1.4.3. Permanent features of think tanks

Despite the variability of definitions, there are some persistent features.

First of all, think tanks have traditionally attempted as hard as possible to maximize their independence.⁵³ Maintaining independence is not always an easy task for think tanks, considering the strong ties that they develop with the individuals, private foundations, or the governments financing them.⁵⁴ From their early inception, the great part of think tanks has relied largely on governments for initiation, development, and sustaining; others have managed to remain independent from official governmental funding, but have, on the other hand, been insatiable containers of private donations, thus creating unbalanced relations with philanthropic environments.⁵⁵

Think tanks' struggle for independence is nevertheless directly connected to their legal nature.

Think tanks are legally registered as non-profit organizations, which means that they are not totally

52 Ibid.

53 Rich, *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise*, p. 12.

54 Diane Stone, for example, refers to think tanks as to “relatively autonomous organizations engaged in the analysis of policy issues independently of government, political parties and pressure groups”. Stone, *Think Tank Traditions. Policy Research and the Politics of Ideas*, pp. 2–3.

55 A common feature of North American think tanks has been to have received initial financial support from private foundations or wealthy individuals. It was the case, for instance, of the Russell Sage Foundation, one of the earliest think tanks, which saw the light thanks to the generous endowment of \$10 million by the widowed Margaret Olivia Sage; or the Brookings Institution, which received \$1.55 million from the Carnegie Corporation.

excluded from the ideological and political struggle, but they cannot use “more than an insubstantial part of activities to attempting to influence legislation”, nor can they “directly or indirectly participat[ing] in, or interven[ing] in (including the publishing or distributing of statements), any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office”.⁵⁶ Think tanks have, for the great part, struggled to support a specific public image for themselves, that of “impartial, non-partisan research organizations that investigate problems and then arrive at conclusions, rather than providing justifications for conclusions that have already been set by researchers or funders”.⁵⁷

However, starting from the mid 20th century in particular, the number of ideologically identifiable think tanks has multiplied, and more defined categorizations have been introduced to classify think tanks as liberal, conservatives, or centrist organizations.⁵⁸ Therefore, the so attentively pursued impartiality of think tanks is often put into question, not only because of the increase in number of ideologically sided think tanks, but for other social reasons, as well.⁵⁹ Among these, the rising importance of modern means of communications has surely played a role. For many hesitant think tanks, the visibility that contemporary mass media can provide has represented an incentive to display a more distinctive, easily recognizable standpoint.⁶⁰

Still, given their legal registration, think tanks are forced to maintain a 'low profile' politics, which partially confuses the real public perception of these organizations' political and ideological

56 Internal Revenue Code of the United States, Section I. 501(c)(3)- I (b)(1)(v). As far as the first constrain is concerned, “Insubstantial part” of the organizations' expenditures has been fixed in past instances as 5% or less of their incomes. With regard to the second limitation, 501(c)(3) organizations are not allowed to participate directly in any partisan campaign activity, nor can they actively and explicitly support any political candidate. Think tanks have often eluded this restraint by giving support not to the physical political candidate or its representative party, whereas to the issue supported, or participating, for example, in candidate and public education. See, for instance, Diletti, *I Think Tank*; Rich, *Think Tank, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise*, p. 18.

57 Weaver, “The Changing World of Think Tanks”, p. 571.

58 Andrew Rich conducted a research on more than 300 US-based think tanks in order to ascertain whether the role of policy experts and expertise has changed over time, from their participation in policy making process as “producers of credible expertise”, to “aggressive advocates for ideas and ideologies; [and even] brokers of political compromise”. Rich, *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise*, pp. 2–6. On the basis of a series of characteristics that he abundantly explains at the beginning of his work, Rich categorizes the think tanks analyzed in liberal, conservative, and centrist or no identifiable ideology think tanks, that “did not readily place [...] in either broad ideological category or qualified [...] in both categories”. Rich, *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise*, p. 19.

59 Think tanks that have distinguished ideological beliefs and political preferences will be later referred to as 'advocacy tanks'. See Smith, *The Idea Brokers*; Weaver, “The Changing World of Think Tanks”.

60 Weaver, “The Changing World of Think Tanks”, p. 571.

position. This is valid at least in the US, but there are relevant exceptions in politically different countries like China, as it will further be exposed later in the thesis.

A third common feature shared by think tanks is their perpetual search for credibility and reputation, which they try to obtain through the systematic production of scholarly relevant works.⁶¹ The type of academic products they issue varies considerably, according mainly to the problem addressed and to the nature of think tanks addressing it. Due to their long-standing relationship with the academic world, and to their tireless search for completeness and thoroughness, some think tanks privilege book-length studies, whereas others mainly translate their work into brief reports.⁶² For the same reasons that have induced newly established think tanks to display more overtly their ideological or political orientation, think tanks nowadays are, in fact, prone to adopt a more varied lot of “product lines”, as Kent Weaver names the type of research products used to present finished research.⁶³ In hopes of having their work more easily read and brought to practical implementation, an increase in more promptly available works has been registered, including brief analysis on pending legislation aimed at producing effects in the short time, journals, and articles for periodical op-eds.⁶⁴

61 According to Diane Stone, the complexity related to the term 'think tank' is not purely connected to its definition, whereas the controversial attitude that think tank-like organizations have toward the term itself, as well. Some organizations strive to gain that label, as a guarantee for credibility and stature, whereas others intensely refused that name, and prefer to call themselves otherwise, like “analytic guerrilla group” in the case of the Progressive Policy Institute. Diane Stone, *Capturing the Political Imagination: Think Tanks and the Policy Process* (Portland, Ore.: Frank Cass, 1996), p. 9. Conversely, and paradoxically, “pretentious little groups often invoke the term to look important”. Paul Dickson, *Think Tanks* (New York: Atheneum, 1971), p. 27.

62 The first type of think tanks refers to the University-without student type, while the second type refers to contract research organizations. See the following paragraphs for a more detailed analysis of the two types.

63 Weaver, “The Changing World of Think Tanks”, p. 572.

64 Some of the most known journals issued by think tanks include, for instance, *Foreign Policy* by the Carnegie Endowment for Peace and Development; *Policy Review* by the Heritage Foundation; the *Brookings Review* by the Brookings Institution; the *Cato Journal* by the Cato Institute; the *Rand Journal of Economics* from the RAND Corporation; *Foreign Affairs* by the Council on Foreign Relations.

1.5. An overview on the development of North American think tanks

I firmly believe that in order to understand the functioning and the role of think tanks in a country like China, with peculiar cultural, political, and economic characteristics, it is overriding to have a well-grounded knowledge of how these organizations first originated, the evolutions they have undergone over decades, and the varying roles they have carried out over time.

As aforementioned, the definition of 'think tanks' is controversial and disputed among scholars. Similarly, it is not a taken-for-granted information the time when they first made their appearance. There is agreement, however, on the fact that they first appeared in the US. Even though the prevailing literature tends to date the birth of the term to the World War II, the dynamics that lay beneath their occurrence trace back much earlier, at least at the time of the Civil War.⁶⁵ In fact, if we had to compare the figures of the experts, or amateurs, that occupied the political scenario at the turn of the nineteenth century with those that work in the ranks of the contemporary think tanks today, we would find stunning differences.

A very broad and summarized review can be given here to portray the trend of the expert's position throughout the past century.

⁶⁵ Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 24. Smith identified some of the features that were essential for the later development of think tanks already in the immediate years following the end of the Civil War. Among these, the experts' "attitudes toward social sciences, an infrastructure for graduate training and professional careers, well-organized large-scale philanthropy, and an expansive conception of the state and its functions".

1.5.1. The Early Experts-Amateurs

Before their formal organization within organizations like think tanks, experts already contributed their expertise and knowledge to the society. Most of them operated individually, and the knowledge they provided was mainly that of 'amateurs' with a boundless faith in science, scientific methods and analysis, in the wake of the unimaginable scientific and industrial successes of the Industrial Revolution.⁶⁶

By the first decade of the twentieth century, when the early 'experts-amateurs' started to be oriented by governments toward more organized structures, their role came to be more easily identified as that of social doctors.⁶⁷ The experts and their institutions fulfilled the task of finding viable solutions to the compelling social problems, such as poverty and unemployment. Their job in the society equaled that of scientists and medical doctors with regard to health problems, and corresponded to the diagnosis of problems and the search for answers and cures.⁶⁸

This was exactly the function assumed by the first think tanks in the United States in the first decades of the 20th century, namely the Russell Sage Foundation, the Carnegie Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation, just to cite some examples.

The Russell Sage Foundation, founded in 1907 with an initial funding of \$10 million by Margaret Olivia Sage, was named after the founder's deceased husband, and it paved the way for the following, similar institutions. The Foundation charter stated its purpose to prepare the ground for “the permanent improvement of social conditions”, and to fulfill the mission of “the improvement

66 Examples of singularly operating intellectuals at the end of the nineteenth century are provided by Smith: Richard Ely, who, skeptical of the *laissez-faire* doctrine, supported a state-sponsored social development through the use of science; Lester Ward, whose criticisms of both the *laissez-faire* doctrines and Darwinism brought him to wish for a legislation serving as laboratories, and laws as social experiments. A common feature of many early experts was their faith in science and factual data, and their skepticism for abstract theories. Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, pp. 28–33.

67 The term “amateur” with regard to the experts of the late nineteenth century, who had not yet been formally organized within structured organizations, is borrowed from Ibid., p. 24.

68 The metaphor of the early Institutes of experts as locus of diagnosis and cures for social ills is taken from Smith, where he interestingly defined the advisers' role as “science of preventive philanthropy,” that coincided with a shift from “alleviating hardship through old-fashioned individual charity” to “eliminating collective ills through sustained social research”. Ibid., p. 38.

of social and living conditions of the United States of America”.⁶⁹

The Foundation was rooted in the charity movement of the time, and in the philanthropic and humanitarian nature of its founder.⁷⁰ It did not look for knowledge *per se*, whereas for relevant discoveries that could be concretely applied to help solve some of the more widely spread social problems.⁷¹ As a result, knowledge had to be spread out to reach the broad public, and to offer concrete measures, based on factual data, not on theories. Knowledge and efficiency stood as “watchwords for the evolving movement and were at the core of Russell Sage's original mission”.⁷² Registered with the label of 'Foundation', the function of the Russell Sage may be debated with regard to its belonging to the world of think tanks, since Foundations do relate to them, but normally as their financial supporters. Nevertheless, the Russell Sage Foundation's agenda was since its onset extremely active in terms of both basic social science research and public divulgation of their social and political alternatives.⁷³

1.5.2. Two competing metaphors: Experts-Doctors and Experts-Engineers

Other examples of early forms of think tanks are provided below.⁷⁴ One common feature of these organizations was that their founders' guiding principles were inspired by the Progressive Ideals of the time: resolute faith in scientific and objective knowledge that could procure solutions for social ills, beyond providing valid alternatives to make governmental mechanisms work more

69 John M. Glenn, Lilian Brandt, and F. Emerson Andrews, *Russell Sage Foundation, 1907–46*, 2 vols. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1947), p. 25; David C. Hammack and Stanton Wheeler, *Social Science in the Making: Essays on the Russell Sage Foundation, 1907 – 1972* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1994).

70 For a colored summarized bibliography of Margaret Olivia Sage see Smith, 1991. Margaret Olivia Sage “had devoted much of her life to charitable and educational work, teaching school after her graduation from the Troy Female School; working for the U.S. Sanitary Commission; and serving as one of the three chief administrators, though a volunteer, of Women's Hospital in New York City. She quickly seized the opportunity to apply her vast fortune of \$70 to \$90 million to the many social caused that intrigued her”. Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 39.

71 Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 40.

72 Rich, *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise*, p. 34.

73 Diletti, *I think Tank*, p. 19.

74 Apart from the examples provided below, other policy research organizations were established at the time, a varied lot in terms of their moving principles and issues debated. Among these, particularly important were the Carnegie Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, which played an important role in backing financially the new, burgeoning institutions.

efficiently. The experts' efforts were simultaneously directed at another target, that of depoliticizing the process of decision making. The words by Donald T. Critchlow, an expert working at Brookings Institution, help understand the positioning of think tanks at the time:

These scientific reformers, as social sciences and businessmen saw themselves, hoped to restore political order and representative government to American society. All of the measures proposed by the reformers [...] were intended to accomplish a single goal: the depoliticization of the political process. In response to machine politics and other perceived excesses, reformers sought to take power away from the partisan politicians who dominated the government in the post-Civil War period and to place government administration in the hands of non-partisan experts.⁷⁵

Their purpose being that of supplying trustworthy alternatives based on factual parameters about issues such as “child welfare, tuberculosis, and women's working conditions”, but also “low-income housing, urban planning, social work, and labor reform”, the Russell Sage Foundation was nothing like an elite-targeted foundation; on the contrary, it aimed at spreading to the wide public the output of its employees, experts formed through practical experience, more than academic training.^{76 77} Pamphlets, books, magazine and journal articles, and public exhibitions publicized the outcomes of inquiries and let them enter the public life. The foundation's original spirit committed to “educational and propagandistic work” made it “the most successful policy research institution in the quarter century before the Great Depression”.⁷⁸

Indeed, another metaphor soon surfaced and substituted that of social scientists as doctors. It was the metaphor that equalized social scientists to engineers and physicians, representative of a highly admired and required quality: efficiency.⁷⁹ Resulting from the scientific and physic discoveries of

75 Donald T. Critchlow, *The Brookings Institution, 1916–1952: Expertise and the Public Interest in a Democratic Society* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1985), p. 17.

76 Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 40.

77 As stated in the official Website of the Foundation, <http://www.russellsage.org/about>

78 Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 40.

79 Smith extensively describes the advent of the new metaphor of efficiency: from its original use in the domain of natural sciences and physics (thermodynamics in particular), to its further employment in the more human sphere, the industrial domain first, and the social and governmental areas lately. Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, pp. 46–51.

the Industrial Revolutions years, the concept of efficiency required a short span of time to enter the social and governmental spheres, and brought about a new reflection on the role of experts, their organizing patterns, and their relationship with the public and the government. As Smith states,

... if concepts of efficiency could be applied to men, machines, and money in the business environment, it was not long before political reformers thought of adopting the concept to society and government. Reformers concluded that democratic government might be improved if it adopted more of the centralized and hierarchical traits of the modern business corporation and if better trained managers took over its administrative tasks. Expert administrators would take decisions not on the basis of patronage but according to criteria of competence and efficiency, defining the public interest in ways that elected officials, through partisan processes and back-room deals, could not.⁸⁰

The first expression of this slight change was the New York Bureau of Municipal Research (BMR). The BMR was the most fortunate and best known municipal agency among those that bloomed in several American cities in the early 1900s, sometimes privately backed by businessmen, sometimes receptacle of local governments' support.⁸¹

Established in 1907 and funded primarily by businessmen who had made their fortune during the Second Industrial Revolution, the Bureau's main objective was not to have direct access to political debates, whereas to provide useful knowledge to fight the misadministration of many American municipalities, and to implement a more efficient government. The New York Bureau of Municipal Research, which is here recorded mainly because of the promoter role it had in laying the groundwork for the following economic research institutes, set up reform programs for the government based on economics and business standards: its wealthy backers, among which John D. Rockefeller, Fulton Cutting, Andrew Carnegie, E. H. Harriman, and J. P. Morgan, maintained that “bringing clear and objective standards – akin to business standards – to government might create

80 Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 48.

81 The Institute received major initial support from Henry Bruère and William H. Allen, both academically trained professionals: the former was a Progressive public administrator, with academic degrees from the University of Chicago, Columbia University, and Harvard; the latter held a Ph. D. From the University of Pennsylvania.

an environment that would enhance their success and ameliorate the social problems caused by industrialization”.⁸² The cornerstone of their arguments was that, in order to give birth to a successful reform government, then the centers of the innovative reforms should depend “neither upon politics nor on average public intelligence... The Supreme need is for an Intelligence center that will substitute facts for calamity or scandal”.⁸³

Bruère and Allen had admirable inspiring ideals, and they fervently strove to build an “efficient democratic society, in which independent experts would help public officials to act rationally and would guide the public to choose wisely, as in a modern Platonic Republic, in which a contemporary class of Guardians would be schooled in techniques of accounting, economics, and public administration”.⁸⁴

Partially from the ashes of the New York Bureau of Municipal Research and of its unlucky attempts to reform federal budget, the Institute for Government Research was established in 1914.⁸⁵ After a series of evolutions, the institute was later renamed Brookings Institution, and it was initially examined quite suspiciously because of its strong economic and personal bonds with the Rockefeller family and Foundation.⁸⁶

Contrarily to the New York Bureau of Municipal Research, which had been criticized because of its intrusive inference in the executive branch, the Institute for Government Research maintained from

82 Rich, *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise*, p. 36. According to Rich, approximately one half of the total budget of the Bureau during its first seven years of existence was supplied by these rich businessmen, who were obviously partly moved by personal interests, but also managed to constrain potential outbursts of social malcontent and protest.

83 Donald T. Critchlow, *The Brookings Institution, 1916–1952: Expertise and the Public Interest in a Democratic Society*, p. 25.

84 Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 51.

85 In 1910 President William Howard Taft instituted the Commission on Economy and Efficiency (later referred to also as Taft Commission), devoted to set controls on the federal budgetary process. Headed by Frederick Cleveland, the Commission in fact produced twenty reports on the financial and accounting operations of federal agencies, but it was nevertheless dismantled because of the criticisms for its allegedly excessive inference within the executive programs, and its work promptly forgotten. See Rich, Rich, *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise*, p. 37; Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 52.

86 John D. The Rockefeller and the circle of his advisers had tried to establish their own Institute since 1910, but his family had been legally prosecuted and criticized because of some industrial stakes they had in Colorado. Therefore, their financial backing of the Institute for Government Research was at first condemned as a whipping boy to distract attention from the legal issues, and acted as an initial source of suspect for the Institute for Government Research.

the very onset a strict separation between the administrative and the political domains. Once freed from suspicions and allegations, the Institution's staff, and primarily its leading figure, William Willoughby, asserted time and again that the institute should remain neutral and detached from the fray of political debates; on the contrary, it should engage in preparing well trained and specialized experts that would fill the administrative and legislative lines.

One peculiar feature of the New York Bureau of Municipal Research, and one reason for his dismissal, had been its perceived intrusive participation in the executive practices, which had not been appreciated by some partisan groups. On the contrary, the Institute for Government Research was vowed to mingle various political forces; using Smith's words, the sponsors of the Institute sought to “assemble a board that would represent a balance between liberal and conservative, businessmen and academic, and even east and west”.⁸⁷ Its financial backers, at least in the early period, were not formal institutions, but individual wealthy men, mainly overachievers in the business and industrial domains moved by philanthropic interests, including Rockefeller, Carnegie, Cutting, and Cleveland.⁸⁸ Moreover, with a board of trustees selected from the academic environment and not from the political rows, the ideal of non-partisanship could be pursued by the Institute, which was the first Washington-based and domestic-focused think tank. Nonetheless, because of its active engagement in social reforms, the Institute was not completely immune from political battles, even though its anchorage did remain its claim for neutrality and for the separation of the administrative and political spheres.⁸⁹

To sum up, early think tanks in the United States flourished as low-profile research institutes, consecrated to the production of scientific expertise and objective knowledge. Originally,

87 Ibid., p. 53.

88 Rockefeller, who was among the more recurrent personalities who distinguished himself for his financial support to the new burgeoning think tanks, beyond broadly financing the Institute for Government Research and others, had set up his own Institution in 1913: the Rockefeller Foundation. The Rockefeller Foundation's Charter stated that the Foundation's focus was “to promote the well-being and to advance civilization... in the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge, in the prevention and relief of suffering, and in the promotion of any and all of the elements of human progress”. Raymond B. Fosdick, *The Story of the Rockefeller Foundation* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1952), p. 15.

89 Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, pp. 52–56.

such detached research would contribute to solve social ills, whereas, in a second moment, it would become an ingredient to maximize government functioning.

1.5.3. Think tanks in times of crisis: World War I

The role of think tanks and policy advisers was to evolve time and time again over the twentieth century, receiving particular emphasis and impulse during times of particular instability, partisan frictions, political tensions, and substantial uncertainty.

It is conventional wisdom that the proliferation of think tanks be generally connected to changes in the organizational patterns of a country. Transformations in the institutional, economic, political, and social structures may beget more interstices for open public debate; it may lead the political elites to be more permeable to the experts' counseling; it may demand for a change in political forces; it may induce a stronger availability for philanthropic patronage and sponsorship.⁹⁰

The outburst and the developments of the Great War represented a rich soil for the unveiling of the experts' capabilities and skills. During the first World War, think tanks had the opportunity to conduct joint research with other specialized technicians in order to accomplish tasks available only because of the emergency situation. Among others, they queried how to employ profusely the work of women domestically, how to whip-up the popular support for the war, and how to train military recruits.⁹¹

Among the organizations that saw the Great War as both a reason for ideological combat and of further development was the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.⁹² Founded in 1910 with

90 Many scholars, including Ricci, Smith, and Rich, are supportive of the theory that the number of think tanks may increase, or their role may evolve, in cases of political uncertainty. See David M. Ricci, *The Transformation of American Politics: The New Washington and the Rise of Think Tanks* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993); Smith, *The Idea Brokers*; Rich, *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise*.

91 See Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 56.

92 The Carnegie Endowment was one of the many recipients of Andrew Carnegie generous philanthropic donations. Inspired by a profound sense of charity and altruism, Andrew Carnegie permeated all the corporations he founded with the ideal that they should pursue the goal of “real and permanent good in this world”, in addition to creating “ladders on

an initial endowment of \$10 million by Andrew Carnegie, the Institution chartered target was to “hasten the abolition of war, the foulest blot upon our civilization”.⁹³ Its President and early trustees, including Elihu Root and Nicholas Murray Butler, believed their goal was actually attainable, and promoted several studies on International Law and on the causes of war, which resulted in a 152-volume historic and economic book on the Great War.⁹⁴ The Carnegie Endowment has received particular attention since its onset because it is by its own trustees and members considered to be the 'first global think tank', whose range of interests was vast and intended to promote peaceful engagement and cooperation among nations. In particular, the Institution has progressively adapted its reflections to the changing times, in order to be constantly updated and conformed to the most urgent issues.⁹⁵

1.5.4. Early think tanks' categorizations: Studentless-universities and Contract Research organizations

So far, we have analyzed those Institutes that can be considered as progenitors of think tanks as we know them today. In fact, they set the stage for an increase in the role and credibility of experts, and they represented early examples of later categorizations. Think tanks of the early days shared a tough faith in knowledge and expertise, which they conceived as founding elements of an efficient government. Contrarily to think tanks that would develop later, they did not have specific ideological nor promotional goals, even though the policies and procedures of some of them did

which the aspiring can rise”. In his book *The Gospel of Wealth* he maintained that wealthy people are the trustees of their own richness, and they are morally obliged to reinvest it in manners that can enhance the welfare and happiness of the common men. By the time of his death in 1919, Andrew Carnegie had invested almost his entire wealth, an impressive sum of about \$135 million in philanthropic work, which he referred to as “scientific philanthropy”. Nowadays, twenty seven independent organizations bear his name, all of them associated by the target of advancing education, science, culture, and international peace. All this information is retrieved from <http://carnegie.org>

93 A summarized, though complete, history of the Carnegie Endowment can be retrieved from http://issuu.com/carnegie_endowment/docs/centennial_essaybook/1?e=3035200/2913287

94 Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 275.

95 The Institution, still operative, has issued, since 1970, the quarterly journal *Foreign Policy*. It has over time maintained a multifaceted nature, as reflected in the eclectic composition of its board of experts and of the issues targeted. Among the resident trustees, there are experts on nuclear power proliferation, arms control, economic and social development in the East Asian Region, and immigration policy among others.

connect more explicitly to specific interests.⁹⁶

Starting from the mid-twentieth century, however, the scenario of existing and still embryonic think tanks was changing. The stakes at issues becoming more relevant, and the resonance of the think tanks itself growing wider with the introduction of new means of communication and transport, think tanks proliferated in number and types. Some of them generated from the merge of already existing institutes (as the Brookings Institution), some others made their brand-new appearance to face new global problems.

Even if each think tank is a unique entity and too different to be paralleled to others, attempts to categorize think tanks have been made, and think tanks up to the mid-1950s have generally been labeled under two possible categorizations: Universities without students (or Studentless-universities), and Contract Research organizations.⁹⁷

The first type of think tanks was described by Weaver

... as characterized by heavy reliance on academics as researchers, by funding primarily from the private sector (with varying mixtures of foundation, corporate and individual funding), and by book-length studies as the primary research product. Although these organizations often address specific legislative proposals, their horizons have traditionally been long-term, focused on changing the climate of elite opinion.⁹⁸

The earliest, and most representative example of such an Institution was the already mentioned Brookings Institution. The history of its establishment was a complex one; however, it displayed since the beginning its strong ties with the academic environment.

In fact, the label given to this type of think tank must not mislead to confound them with universities. Universities without students differ from specifically university-based research centers at least for two reasons. First of all, being private organizations, they have wider incentives to

96 The majority of the supporters of the Bureau of Municipal Research were, for examples, rich businessmen. Rich, *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise*.

97 Weaver, "The Changing World of Think Tanks", pp. 563–78.

98 *Ibid.*, p. 564.

produce marketable and relevant knowledge and research, which often take the shape of book-length studies and pamphlets; secondly, they are more likely to establish relationships with relevant policy makers. In addition, grounding their own success on the research they produce, think tanks belonging to the category of Studentless-universities are more inclined to consecrate efforts on current policy issues, rather than on scholarly relevant broad topics.

The history of the Brookings Institution exemplifies well some of the characteristics of the Universities without students-type think tanks. The historical figure giving the name to the Institution was Robert S. Brookings, a versatile businessman who had also chaired the Institute for Government Research in 1919. Brookings had been wandering looking for supporters for his projects in Washington. Specifically, he was convinced of the necessity to educate “better trained civil servants—'efficient workers,' in his language”, that aptly replicated a new sort of efficiency.⁹⁹ Complaining about the well-rendered wastes and frictions of the economy, Brookings was eager to establish an Institution that he dreamed as a place where to “assemble and interpret economic data, study for reasons for waste, and try to eliminate them [...] [reflecting] a new view of efficiency, not as a criterion applied to the individual firm or governmental office, but as a general standard that was applicable to the overall functioning of the economy”.¹⁰⁰ Receiving considerable financial backing from the Carnegie Corporation, Brookings was among the organizers of the Institute of Economics, which operated in conjunction with the already existing Institute for Government Research in terms of staff and board members. The combined leadership of the two Institutes, closely tied, was at first difficult to manage because of the differing views in regard to the independence from the outside.¹⁰¹ In 1924, a further attempt was made to create a graduate Department of government and economics at Washington University, St. Louis, that however became soon the primarily soil of contention between the members of the Institute for Government

99 Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 59.

100 Ibid. 58. derived from Institute of Economics, “Prospectus”, (1922), in the Brookings Institutions Archives (BIA).

101 In particular, Harold G. Moulton, the first chairman of the Institute of Economic Research, was inflexible in requiring the board of trustees of the Institute to have full independence from both its founders and the manufacturer world that backed it. See Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 59; Critchlow, *The Brookings Institution*, p. 29.

Research and the Institute of Economics, in addition to the increasingly differing views on the meaning of efficiency and non-partisanship. Affiliates of the first Institution maintained the primacy of non-partisanship, to be reflected in the academic programs, which should be mainly historical and theoretical in nature; colleagues of the latter Institution claimed, on the other hand, that the academy should form experts capable of permeating policy with new efficiency, and should not neglect applied government.

Because of the irreconcilable standpoints, the established graduate program was finally dismantled in the late 1920s, and the surviving Institute for Government Research and Institute of Economics were merged to form the Brookings Institution. Smith writes of it,

Brookings and his associates envisioned a center of practical research that was to be neither a university nor an advocacy and reform organization, but a pool of disinterested experts serving the public good. The institution promised to fill a void in Washington, and although it would never become a prestigious national university capable of training public servants, as some had hoped, it has served for much of its history as an unrivaled national center for applied research in the social sciences.¹⁰²

According to Smith, the Brookings Institution has become “the model of private expertise organized for public ends”, and it has played a decisive role in all the important turning points of the American politics.¹⁰³ For instance, it acquired “a reputation first as a conservative foe of the New Deal, later as a liberal proponent of the Great Society, and most recently as an institution that strives for the center”.¹⁰⁴ Although Brookings has done at times substantial work on contract with the federal government, it has well represented, over the years, those features that Weaver identified as the main characteristic of Studentless-universities. First of all, a deep reliance on academics as

102 Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 62.

103 Ibid., 58.

104 Kent Weaver, “The Changing World of Think Tanks”, p. 565.

researchers.¹⁰⁵ Secondly, the substantial private nature of their funding.¹⁰⁶ Third, the production of book-length studies as outcomes of their research and studies, more than journal articles, or brief pamphlets.¹⁰⁷

Other think tanks entering the first type of think tanks identified through Weaver's classification include the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, the Cato Institute, the Institute for Policy Studies, and a series of later established smaller institutes like the Institute for International Economics, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Resources For Future, World Watch Institute.¹⁰⁸

The second type of think tanks that was first outlined by Weaver in regard to think tanks of the first half of the twentieth century referred to contract research organizations, which he referred to as “non-profit government research contract”.¹⁰⁹

The Brookings Institution was taken as an exemplification of the 'University without students' model; the RAND corporation will here be adopted as a paradigm of government research contract organizations.¹¹⁰

Arisen from the developments of the Second World War, this kind of think tank has been less aimed at producing academically relevant works. On the contrary, its focus has remained to conduct research on behalf of specific government agencies, which commission various projects to

105 As reported by Weaver with regard to the Brookings Institution, “most of the research staff are Ph.D. political scientists and economists, some are former journalists and government officials, and some staffers have a mixed background”. Weaver, “The Changing World of Think Tanks”, p. 565.

106 Private funding may include corporate, individual, or foundation financial support. In the case of the Brookings Institutions, an imposing initial grant of \$ 1.65 million was furnished by the Carnegie Corporation to settle down the new structure.

107 This is a particularly distinguishing feature about Brookings, that has engendered a frequent joke among the experts working at the Institution, which says “our books are written for policymakers and read by college students”. Indeed, the wish to gain academic remark on the one hand, and the desire to produce thorough and objective work on the other, necessarily collide with the brevity and conciseness required to gain immediate political access and appeal.

108 Some of these institutes will be treated more in detail in the following pages.

109 Weaver, “The Changing World of Think Tanks”, p. 564.

110 The real acronym RAND is sometimes disputed in literature. Most scholars consider it as the acronym for Research ANd Development, even though a few academics have maintained that in fact it would stand for Research And No Development. See David Hounshell, “The Cold War, RAND, and the Generation of Knowledge, 1946-1962”, *Historical Studies in the Physical and Biological Sciences* 27, no. 2 (1997), p. 240.

specialized institutions, and which are prone to give financial support on the basis of the interest they have for the issue. Therefore, compared with Studentless-university like think tanks, this kind of think tank had depended more extensively on externally commissioned work, and it has enjoyed less freedom in determining the research scope. Not only is the relationship with the commissioning governmental agencies strong in financial terms; contract research organizations also depend largely on agencies as far as their research margins are concerned. As a result, they tend to issue pamphlets, journal articles, or concise recommendations, rather than book-length studies, in order to make their research more useful and usable in the immediate future.

The RAND Corporation has been defined as an entirely 'Cold War' organization, meaning that its whole history and the content of its research have been influenced from the very onset by developments of the US and the Soviet Union frictions.¹¹¹ To revive here some of its history will be interesting, since it may clarify the very origins of the term 'think tank'.

As highlighted by many, RAND Corporation and 'think tank' have become synonymous since the founding of the former in 1948, and all the patterns of how expertise and knowledge provided by experts to policy relevant actors have been revolutionized by the new model embodied by RAND.¹¹² Already in 1944, before the Second World War had come to an end, General Henry Harley “Hap” Harold, Commander of the US Army Air Forces during the World, maintained the urgency of setting up a durable institution that could “ensure the continuance of teamwork among the military, other government agencies, industry, and the universities” even after the end of the war.¹¹³ Various members of the War Department agreed upon the necessity of searching for ways, or developing appropriate institutes, that could ensure the continuity of the “successful partnership between the

111 For a thorough presentation of the history, early works, and further developments of the RAND Corporation see David Hounshell, “The Cold War, RAND, and the Generation of Knowledge, 1946 – 1952”, pp. 237–267.

112 The term 'think tank' was, thus, introduced during the Second World War, emerging as the most appropriate definition to refer to the institutions that conducted research on the behest of government or governmental agencies, and winning against other proposed labels, such as 'brain box', 'brain bank', 'think factory'. However, the term has later been applied to all the similarly organized and patterned institutions that had been operating since the late 19th–early 20th century. The term 'think tank' has in this way been used in this thesis dissertation, that is why we find it from the very first pages.

113 Quoted in *40th year: The RAND Corporation* (Santa Monica, CA, 1989), p. 3. Retrieved from Smith, *The Idea Brokers*.

military and scientific communities”.¹¹⁴ After meeting with consultants and representatives from the Air Force and the Douglas Aircraft Company, Harold was among the beginners of the original nucleus that would later form the RAND Corporation, which was originally named the Project RAND.¹¹⁵ This one was defined as a “continuing program of scientific study and research [...] established to provide the Air Force with independent objective analyses”.¹¹⁶ Until 1948, the Project RAND operated as a distinct division of the Douglas Aircraft on the contract basis with the Army Air Forces, and all the works it carried out were funded and commissioned by the latter. Between the RAND and the governmental Department developed a client-agency relationship, which placed more emphasis on the contractual connections, more than on the public responsibility experts had always held to have.¹¹⁷

For this reason, the RAND Corporation, that would have arisen from the Project RAND in 1948 as a private, free-standing, and non-profit organization, would later be considered the first model of a contract research organization.¹¹⁸

Using Smith's words,

RAND became the prototype for a method of organizing and financing research, development, and technical evaluation that would be done at the behest of governmental agencies, but carried out by privately run non-profit research centers. The contractual arrangement placed the expert

114 Indeed, Smith supported the belief that the importance of scientists had grown immeasurably during the War, because of the great and scary advancements made in warfare weaponry, and that “the next war would be won or lost by the nation's scientists”, and that a greater percentage of the national budget should be devoted to research on the national security. Several contractual relationships and direct links had already been set up during the last years of war, including the highly fruitful connections with the Radiation Lab of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 114.

115 Among the other counselors who made up the original board of trustees of the Project RAND were Edward Bowles, an Army Air Force's consultant and scientist at the Radiation Lab, Donald Douglas, president of Douglas Aircraft Company, Arthur Raymond and Franklin Collbohm, both engineers at Douglas Aircraft Company. See David Hounshell, “The Cold War, RAND, and the Generation of Knowledge, 1946 – 1952”, p. 241.

116 Quotation from an attachment by Albert Wohlstetter to Management Committee, M-953, 22 Feb 1960, Robert Specht Papers, RAND Corporation Archives, Santa Monica, CA: “RAND's continuing program of broad policy study: Problems and incentives”, p. 1960. Retrieved from Smith, *The Idea Brokers*.

117 Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 116.

118 Actually, according to Hounshell, members of the RAND Corporation repeatedly identified their own organization as a “University without students”. Nevertheless, the close relationship it maintained with the Army Air Forces, at least during the first fifteen years of existence, justifies its classification as a “contract research organization”. See Hounshell, “The Cold War, RAND, and the Generation of Knowledge, 1946 – 1952”, p. 241.

in a relationship to the government that was neither fully independent nor completely free.¹¹⁹

The RAND Corporation gave rise to an organizational model for think tanks that would flourish during the 1950s, and that, despite giving mainly technical support to its commissioning agencies, was influential in the policy making process, as well.

It contributed to change the experts' role and position not only with regard to the government, but with regard to the use of expertise, as well. Indeed, technical experts working at RAND perceived the importance of marketing the ideas, the products, the skills, and the methods they were championing, in order to make their research attractive and gain the chance to continue and broaden the pool of commissioners.

In its early days, the RAND Corporation mainly focused on national security matters, including operations research and systems analysis, of which it soon became the most important champion.¹²⁰ Because of its systematic and highly mathematical planning and structuring, RAND became a pioneer in rational studies, including those on anti-ballistic missiles, theory of air warfare, feasibility of constructing earth satellites, just to cite some examples.

After losing ground in space research because of the greater achievements accomplished by other recently established agencies, the RAND Corporation enlarged its fields of interest, and it produced relevant research in Applied Mathematics, Economics, and Social Sciences.¹²¹ In these fields, it soon became synonym of innovative techniques and theories, such as systems analysis, game theory, dynamic programming.¹²²

119 Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 116.

120 Systems analysis refers to the set of rational procedures used to evaluate what policy means are best to be adopted to pursue particular goals. Its focus being on methods rather than ends, it freed the contract adviser from evaluating the manners to chase the targets posed by the client. Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 118.

121 In 1958, for instance, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) was founded.

122 Game theory, or the theory of games, consists in calculating rational strategies to respond to uncertain, unpredictable moves of the enemy. Starting from the assumption that each player of a game will try to behave as rationally as possible, game theory permits the analyst to fancy the most rational moves on the basis of equally rigorous and mathematical previsions about the other player's moves. The theory appears at once pessimistic and hopeful, in that it permitted, at least, to be predictive about the enemy's behavior, though negative or painful. The theory was made more complete thanks to the work of the Hungarian mathematician Von Neumann, who exposed it in his *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior* (1944).

As it was the case of the Brookings Institution, the RAND Corporation marked with its presence the most relevant moments of the American politics since the mid-twentieth century. For example, it was constantly present during Kennedy's campaign centered on the necessity to fill up the “missile gap” with the Soviet Union; it managed to permeate the Kennedy administration, thanks to McNamara being appointed as Head of the Department of Defense.¹²³

1.5.5. From Brain Trusts to Policy Advocates

Providing a description about the functioning of the RAND Corporation, we have disclosed in advance some developments of the 1940s and 1950s. Nevertheless, the chances for them to happen were made possible thanks to the political and social environment prepared by events in the 1930s. Experts at that time were exploited out of despair for the economic crisis and stagnation of the Great Depression. Experts were extensively consulted by President Roosevelt to come up with viable solutions to stop the overwhelming lack of employment, the rising inflation, and other negative consequences of the depression. The pragmatism that characterized Roosevelt was reflected in the choices he made about the type of experts he wanted around him. The board of experts was expected to prove prone to produce quick, positive results, rather than focusing on scientific, yet abstract, methods.

As supporters of his electoral campaign, Roosevelt established the Brains Trust, whose original core, the Brain Trusters, was later fattened with other experienced political advisers, who sustained the incoming President throughout the whole campaign.¹²⁴ Facing compelling difficulties, Roosevelt required them to introduce new ideas, and to expose new programs. The Brains Trust was untied right after Roosevelt's presidential victory, but it remained in people's memory as a clear example of

123 McNamara, while presiding over the Department of Defense, later appointed many researchers of the RAND Corporation to work at the Pentagon.

124 Some of the original experts making up the core of the Brain Trust included Rexford G. Tugwell, Adolf A. Berle, and Raymond Moley, specialist in criminal justice at Columbia University.

Roosevelt's openness to new ideas. His motto remained “action and action now” and “bold, persistent experimentation”, not with regard to scientific proof, but with the attempt to take action in a moment of deep crisis. Consistency in choosing the policy was not the first criteria, as success was. “The country needs and, unless I mistake its temper, the country demands bold, persistent experimentation. It is common sense to take a method and try it; if it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something”: Roosevelt's words underlined his quest for urgent action.¹²⁵

The importance of the Brains Trust was to reveal a renewed faith and confidence in the role of experts. In fact, the position of this group of political advisers in the 1930s was yet not the one they would later assume in the 1960s, when experts, as part of advocacy think tanks, became ideologically sided and market-oriented. In the 1930s experts were still mainly administrators of political programs, and not authors themselves of innovative policies.¹²⁶

The overwhelming revolution in the 1930s of Roosevelt's New Deal years had consequences on the consideration and use of experts, as well. It was represented by the unprecedented availability of positions for experts within the government, the federal or governmental agencies, and the Cabinet. Such novelty, while opening up new opportunities for them to occupy influential administrative and political places, was detrimental to the preservation of their long-standing pursue of objectivity and detachment from political brawls.

The dispersal of the Brains Trust just after the electoral campaign was due to the absence of a proper institution or scheme where they could be received. Experts had previously been consulted by Presidents in the shape of a very limited administrative staff; Roosevelt was innovative in enlarging the consulting staff around him, and in letting social scientists occupying positions both in the new burgeoning bureaucracy, and in the rows more closely connected to policy making formulation.¹²⁷

125 Franklin D. Roosevelt, *The Public papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, ed. Samuel I. Rosenmann (New York: Random House, 1938), vol. 1, 646. Quotation from Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 251.

126 See Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, pp. 77–82.

127 *Ibid.*, pp. 77–82. President Herbert Hoover, right before Roosevelt's mandate, had doubled the administrative staff from two to four, and this had already been looked upon with suspicion.

As the intellectuals and experts' opportunities within and just outside the government burgeoned, experts were more and more exposed to partisan controversies, and the likelihood they could go on producing “scientific knowledge” to whatever legislation they served faded away.¹²⁸ As a result, experts who formed their own interest group, as well as already existing think tanks, increasingly sided in favor or against the presidential policies.¹²⁹

128 J. H. Willits, member of the social science division of the Rockefeller Foundation, was among the first to overtly criticize and denounce the dangers arising from the experts' working close to political groups, and the problems deriving from the experts' loss of objectivity. Letter from J. H. Willits to R. Warren, (August 24, 1942) in Rockefeller Archive Center, Pocantico Hills, New York, Rockefeller Foundation, Record Group 3, Series 910, Box 3, folder 17, retrieved from Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 252.

129 The Brookings Institution, for example, soon became the most aggressive opponent of the New Deal; the Russell Sage Foundation criticized the federal relief policies. Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 82.

1.6. On the eve of the Second World War

The Great Depression meant problems for the everyday life not only of government and citizenry, but also of many experts and their institutions, who had to reinterpret their role and reorganize their research.

The shrinking of the governmental and Foundations' financial means meant a drastic reduction of endowments and grants provided to most think tanks throughout the 1930s. Some of the most heavily damaged among them were the Brookings Institution and the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), which were forced to redirect the scope of their studies in order to be able to attract further funds.¹³⁰ As a result, both conceived new ways to come out of the crisis. While the Brookings Institution accepted various contract researches on behest of government and governmental agencies, the NBER turned to more academic studies, and soon became a lighthouse for academic research coordination.

In the light of a growing despair and disillusionment not for think tanks or experts themselves, but for the outcomes of their advices, there were attempts to recover the faith in social science.

In particular, the old and by then old-fashioned depiction of social sciences as diagnosis and cure of social ills was resuscitated from the past, and applied to the social dilemmas of the 1930s. The result was a considerable, though only temporary, advancement in the credibility and celebrity of the Twentieth Century Fund.

This center had been established by Edward A. Filene early in 1911, with the original name of 'Cooperative League'.¹³¹ Renamed Twentieth Century Fund in 1919, this institution was the spokesman of the never-ending faith in social sciences as the perfect medicine for social sufferings.

130 NBER's annual budget fell by 60% in just a couple of years; the Brookings Institution was particularly damaged, beyond the national economic crisis, by the death of his founder and greatest patron, Sir Robert Brookings, in 1932, and it was thereafter forced to struggle for diverse financial sources. Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 84.

131 Edward A. Filene, an active businessman engaged in several projects, displayed a deep interest and sympathy for consumers, workers, and labor unions. He founded the Cooperative League in 1911, which became Twentieth Century Fund in 1919, and clung to his faith in social sciences throughout all his life. Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 84.

Filene incited the Fund to head “a great practical movement in scientific social therapeutics” to cure the “social organism”.¹³² The formula to achieve this goal was to mingle laboratory research and experimentation, effective and practical action, in order to find incisive solutions to prevent the outburst of “radical agitation” as a consequence of the Second Industrial Revolution.¹³³

The success of the Twentieth Century Fund was nevertheless a parenthesis of short time. The prevailing mindset of those years toward the role of expertise and its spokesmen was different, and it reflected the reduced distance between power and knowledge. As we saw at the beginning of this dissertation, holders of knowledge have perpetually been tempted by the chance of obtaining more power, visibility, and notoriety. However, the strong point expressed by experts had been that of remaining as detached as possible from political wrangling. Because of the particular circumstances in the 1930s, experts proved somehow limp in the defense of their objectivity, therefore shrinking distances between themselves and policy makers. Fears for what this would mean were expressed by Robert Lynd in his work *Knowledge for What?*, where he expressed the commonly shared doubts about the acclaimed objectivity of experts, and explained, on the contrary, the evidence of their narrowed and less scientific research scope.¹³⁴

The years following the end of the Second World War unlocked great opportunities to social scientists and to the growth of think tanks.

The second postwar period displayed similarities with the first one, but also put social scientists in a position that they were previously not allowed to occupy. As it had been thirty years before, internal disputes or political controversies were temporarily put aside, in order to solve the most urgent matters. A broad policy consensus was gained around the immediate necessity of winning the war, and then providing support for the social reinsertion of soldiers and workers. Even when the

132 E. A. Filene, “President's Address” (March 17, 1932) in files of the Twentieth Century Fund.

133 Ibid. By “Second Industrial Revolution”, Filene meant the innovative management techniques introduced since the 1920s.

134 Robert Lynd, *Knowledge for What? The Place of Social Science in American Culture* (Princeton, N. J. : Princeton University Press, 1939). On the recognition of knowledge as a new instrument of power, see also Rich, *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise*; Smith, *The Idea Brokers*.

economic and most urgent social matters were accomplished, the policy consensus remained around an issue that would permeate the American politic until the early 1990s, that is the desire to defeat communism.

All types of experts faced opportunities of employment that they had previously only envisioned.¹³⁵

As it can be imagined, mathematicians and physics, engaged in revolutionary destructive inventions like the atomic bombs, were among those whose work received most attention, even if not necessarily positive. But economists soon came to the fore for the role they played within the Committee on Economic Development (CED), the research and planning center born within the Commerce Department, yet conceived as independent from government.

While the Second World War was disruptive for the economies of several countries, it was a contributory cause of economic enrichment for many American industries, beyond the positive effects it had on the inflation and employment rates.¹³⁶

Economists were among the most preoccupied about the possibility that a new economic depression similar to the one following the Great War could be engendered out of the Second World War. Therefore, discussions about how to organize postwar economy began well before its end, and brought together government agencies, individual experts, and businessmen.

As an evolved and more mature development of the commissions already set up during the war, in 1942 a core board of businessmen spawned the Committee on Economic Development, which would provide substantial support to postwar economic planning.¹³⁷ Its guiding principles, exposed in the 1944 issued work *The Economics of a Free Society: A Declaration of American Economic Policy*, exposed a mitigate position with regard to the economic policies to undertake, thus

135 The number of experts had been increasing since the 1930s, when the economic crisis first and the New Deal policies after, offered them the chance to display their pivotal role in the policy-making process. In 1942, their number had mounted up to fifteen thousands. In addition, the General Maximum Price Regulation, or General Max, managed to mitigate the widespread fear by fixing a price ceiling and preventing the rampant inflation from further rising. Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 100.

136 In 1944, the sole military production had reached the level of the entire Domestic Gross Product of 1929; in 1945, the industrial production had more than doubled the prewar levels; the inflation rate was slightly superior to 1%. Ibid., p. 101.

137 In 1933 the Commerce Department had set up a Business Advisory Commission, that proved to be the fertile ground where several businessmen got to know each other, and formed the nucleus of the following American Policy Commission and CED.

managing to bridge the gap among diverse positions.¹³⁸ As a matter of fact, the CED, one of whose most prominent exponents was Paul Hoffman, was organized to be the bridge for businessmen, its main financiers, to enter both the economic and the policy making spheres.¹³⁹

The years of Truman's presidency marked another important passage in the role of advisers, and imprinted a more concrete institutionalization of their work and contribution to governmental decisions.

In 1946 the Employment Act formalized the theories and ideologies formed in the previous years, and paved the way for the introduction of fundamental advisory councils and centers. The Act, which first of all remarked the President's role in the economic issues by requiring him to release annual budgetary reports, set the origins of the Council of Economic Advisory and of the Joint Economic Committee. Both of them permitted the President to give right visibility to economists within the government, though mitigating the most extreme positions, both in terms of support for Keynesian theories, and for competitive markets. Herbert Stein said about this period,

It was a time when sophisticated economics became used in the policy discussion process—mainly Keynesianism and anti-Keynesianism. You began to have economists in the government, so the language of the policy discussion became much more sophisticated, and everybody needed an economist if they were going to participate in the debate.¹⁴⁰

An additional push to the formal institutionalization of the use of the advisers' expertise was warranted by the establishment of the National Security Council (NSC), following the National Security Act in 1946. President Truman, after abandoning his initial suspicion for experts, drew

138 The CED's credo was an adjusted version of Keynesianism, which acknowledged the inability of the free market alone to satisfy all the social needs, and accepted a certain degree of governmental intervention in the economy. This updated version of Keynes' theories would later be labeled by Herbert Stein "Keynesianism with a Chicago spin", and became a widely accepted theory that had monetarism, tax cut, and a basically passive fiscal policy as its main features. Herbert Stein, interviewed by James Allen Smith, March 11, 1986.

139 Paul Hoffman made a great job at CED. His colleagues and himself were strong supporters of the importance of research, which, they maintained, could have prevented later losses. Paul Hoffman would later be appointed as head of the Marshall Plan and chief of the Ford Foundation.

140 Herbert Stein, American Enterprise Institute, Washington, D.C., September 24, 1997. Herbert Stein (1916–1999) was a CED economist who presided over the Council of Economic Advisers under President Richard M. Nixon; he was a senior fellow of the American Enterprise Institute, and among the board of financiers of *The Wall Street Journal*.

heavily not only on the pool of experts he had himself institutionalized (the Council of Economic Advisory, the Joint Economic Committee, and the NSC), but also on think tanks and experts who worked separately outside the government. Truman's role was, among others, to link outside think tanks to government, and to make think tanks more directly involved and affected by political issues.

1.6.1. Action Intellectuals, Bureaucratic Intellectuals, Technicians of means ¹⁴¹

The role of experts and think tanks would no longer regress to the original supply of objective research and knowledge; on the contrary, throughout the following decades, it would further walk the path toward ideological orientation inaugurated in the years of the Second World War.

In fact, the close connection between intellectuals and government did not begin as a desirable side by side cooperation within the political struggle. On the contrary, the years of Kennedy's presidency were somehow marked by a largely shared suspicion for ideologies, whichever they were and whatever belief they embodied. Due to the disastrous consequences they could bring about, including the Nazi concentration camps and the brutal repression in Eastern Europe, ideas were perceived as potentially dangerous tools of political subterfuges.¹⁴² Several historians and researchers envisaged a perfect environment where abstract ideologies, which they were wary of, were no more the guiding light.¹⁴³ The political scientist Robert Lane, on his side, was optimistic in predicting the forthcoming victory of “pure knowledge” over “pure politics”.¹⁴⁴ In other words, his

141 Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 127.

142 Ibid.

143 The historians of the Approach Consensus, for instance, maintained that the American politics was originally and traditionally non-ideological, and underlined a substantial homogeneity in American political and intellectual domains. The contingent and transitory ideological manifestations of American life were dictated, according to historians like Daniel Boorstin, Richard Hofstadter, and Louis Hartz, only by the initial urgent task to strive for survival in settling the new continent. Therefore, except contingencies, they envisaged a general intellectual uniformity in America.

144 “Pure politics” refers to the domain where decisions are made mainly on the basis of influence and power, whereas “pure knowledge” indicates the environment where rationality and efficiency are guiding principles when implementing shared beliefs. Robert Lane, “The Decline of Politics and Ideology in a Knowledgeable Society”, *American Sociological Review* 31 (1966): pp. 649–662.

rosy prevision was that, in the immediate future, pure knowledge would have expanded and overcome pure politics, ending ideological conflicts.

The concept of reducing the weight of ideas within the policy making domain was accepted and embraced by the pragmatic Kennedy, who wanted to combine it with a more concrete activism and pragmatism. Kennedy said of himself: “I want to be a President who acts as well as reacts – who originates programs as well as study groups – who masters complex problems as well as one-page memorandums... A Chief Executive in every sense of the word – who responds to a problem, not by hoping his subordinates will act, but by directing them to act”.¹⁴⁵

The election of Kennedy itself embodied the widespread desire for a new kind of leadership that could concretely bring America back to its majesty, making the world forget about the recent defeats in the technological and spatial fields.¹⁴⁶ The intellectuals, in particular, though cautious about supporting Kennedy during the electoral days, finally began to appreciate his engagement for action and quick, practical resolutions. Kennedy himself largely drew on the expertise and academic knowledge since his election, not so much from the closest Cabinet and White House Staff, were there were only a few of them, but mainly from outside advisory and regulatory agencies.¹⁴⁷ Outside experts, members of universities, or think tanks could contribute either in full time or part-time cooperation with the government. With regard to the greater informality, but also intensity of this kind of relationship, Kennedy talked about a sort of “wheel and a series of spokes” with the President at the center.¹⁴⁸

Therefore, parallel to the decrease in the ideological impact of ideas, was the increase in the number of experts appointed in various second-line governmental agencies. The role of the expert working

145 Quotation from James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), p. 394. Retrieved from Smith, *The Idea Brokers*.

146 The fears of the “missile gap” and those of being surpassed in the armament and technological race were soaked in the imaginary of citizenry and policy makers, after the USSR unexpectedly launched Sputnik in 1957.

147 The only academics appointed as “action intellectuals” by Kennedy in the Cabinet were Dean Rusk, President of the Rockefeller Foundation, who became Secretary of State, and Robert McNamara, Professor of Business and head of the Ford Motor Company, who chaired the Defense Department. Schlesinger, McGeorge Bundy, and Sorensen were the action intellectuals the President chose as part of his White House staff. A great number of academics came to occupy other sparse positions within the government, with frequent, though more informal, links with the President.

148 Ted Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 254–256.

in governmental agencies was more and more that of a “bureaucratic intellectual”, or in other terms, that of a “technician of means”, providing insights and tools for pragmatic solutions.¹⁴⁹

In particular, two think tanks were spokesmen of their new technocratic role: The Brookings Institution and the RAND Corporation. The former was among the earliest think tanks to establish direct connections with the government. After the difficulties arisen from the shrinking of financial support provided by its sponsors, the Institution had been revived by the new chairman, Robert Calkins. Even though maintaining its original nature of 'University without students' think tank, it established a considerable number of contracts and research projects on behest of the governmental agencies.¹⁵⁰

The RAND Corporation set, if possible, even closer connections with the presidency, starting from McNamara's appointing of several RAND associates within the governmental lines. The RAND Corporation embodied the particular faith in a technocratic and mathematical language, based on the vast set of techniques that it had helped create, including systems analysis, computer modeling, game theory, input-output analysis, and linear programming. The heavy drawing on RAND research depended exactly on the supposed use made by RAND of these specific analytic tools, rather than on their presumed superior academic preparation.¹⁵¹

The RAND Corporation, as well as the other think tanks operating in the late 1950s, represented the peak of the growing faith in pragmatism. According to this approach, every manifestation and event tended to be attributed to a mathematical schema or explanation, and it was considered only if measurable and solvable rationally.¹⁵²

149 The label “bureaucratic intellectuals” is attributed to sociologists who opposed historians like H. Stuart Hughes and Richard Hofstadter in their distinction between intellectuals and mental technicians. Robert K. Morton defined the increasingly dependent role of the expert in the following terms: “This sense of dependency, which is hedged about with sentiment, is expressed in the formula: the policy maker supplies the goals (ends, objectives), and we technicians, on the basis of expert knowledge, indicate alternative means for reaching those ends”. Robert K. Morton, “Role of the Intellectual in Public Bureaucracy”, in Merton, ed., *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: Free Press, 1957), p. 213.

150 The Brookings Institution conducted research on the new technical assistance programs of the United Nations and study on the impact of the 1964 tax cut. See Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, pp. 132–133.

151 Ibid., pp. 134–137.

152 Ibid., p. 138.

1.6.2. Toward the birth of a third think tank type: the route from a disoriented Liberalism to Conservatism

From the end of the 1950s to the late 1960s the American politics saw the parallel, though contrary evolution of liberalism and conservatism. Such a shift would change again the official attitude toward intellectuals, as well as the intellectuals' approach to policy issues, as it had been the case during previous political changes.

The progressive declining faith in liberal ideals and precepts was depicted by many scholars more as the result of an impasse from within, than as the loser side of a face-to-face competition with conservative precepts. Indeed, as underlined by Smith, “The intellectual undoing of American liberalism and its patterns of piecemeal reform began as a crisis from within, long before conservatism offered its alternatives”.¹⁵³

The ideological discussion over how to conduct reforms had its roots in the late 1950s, when President Lyndon Johnson had solemnly proclaimed a more intense engagement for the progression of the Great Society and an even greater effort on conducting a war on poverty.¹⁵⁴ Aware of his lack of ready answers for the most urgent problems, Johnson restricted at first his proposals to the promise of gathering “the best thought” in order to “put some flesh on those bones ... [and] to bring all those experts and put it all together”.¹⁵⁵ The joint activities by the administration and intellectuals were translated into more than four hundred items of domestic legislation being in place by the end of Johnson's tenure. Among these, were the Economic Opportunity Act, the Voting Rights Act, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the Medicare and Medicaid, which all aimed at quick achievements to be gained within a few years, and did not face insurmountable obstacles for

153 Ibid., p. 151.

154 Great Society and War on Terror were two terms that epitomized Johnson administration and his aims. The two concepts were elaborated one after the other in 1964, the former during an opening ceremony at the University of Michigan, the latter in a State of the Union message. The term Great Society, which called to the mind Walter Lippmann's *The Good Society* (1937), and Graham Wallas's socialist *The Great Society* (1914), was not aimed at evoking images of material and quantitative prosperity, whereas to lead the citizenry to focus on the qualitative and spiritual aspects of life.

155 Richard Goodwin, *Remembering America: A Voice from the Sixties* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1988), p. 284.

implementation.¹⁵⁶

It was at the time such reforms were implemented that criticisms for the Great Society started to blossom, immediately followed by skeptical views about liberalism. Social scientists had been summoned in the previous years by President Johnson to provide expertise and knowledge for the new coming domestic problems and projects: reliance on university-based research centers, think tanks, and foundations registered an increase in the number of times they were questioned and consulted by policy makers. Nevertheless, President Johnson constantly kept a skeptical eye on them, on the one hand making large use of their work, on the other hand condemning their snobbish manners, especially at the outset of his mandate.¹⁵⁷

Throughout the 1960s and the 1970s, however, the social enterprise as a whole would grow considerably. The funds dispatched for applied social research increased from \$235 million in 1965, to roughly \$1 billion by 1975, to almost \$2 billion by the end of the 1970s, which permitted the funding of new think tanks, as well as the task-upgrade of the already existing ones.¹⁵⁸

Social science research institutes had until then committed themselves to the processing of potential solutions for social ills or to the analysis of social problems. Starting from 1965, when Johnson commanded that all agencies adopt the techniques of the 'planning-programming-budgeting system' as a guarantee of their technical advice, research institutes and think tanks among them grappled with a new assignment: the evaluation of governmental policies. In a speech he delivered at the fiftieth anniversary of the Brookings Institution's foundation in 1966, President Johnson claimed that, beyond “the power to create, to discover and propose new remedies for what ails us; and the power to administer complex programs in a rational way”, the intellectuals were now recognized “the power to evaluate ... to say about public policies and private choices: This works, but this does

156 See Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, pp. 141–142.

157 An illustrative case is the relationship between President Johnson and Eric Goldman, special advisor to Johnson from 1963 to 1966. The President's attitude towards Goldman, who was an historian graduated from John Hopkins University in Maryland and professor of history at Princeton University, was ambivalent. Despite repeatedly relying on his work for the organization of advisory groups, Johnson preferred to keep his work as secret as possible, as well as the work done by other intellectuals working for the White House.

158 Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 149.

not”¹⁵⁹.

The request addressed to intellectuals and policy experts to redirect their attention from the societal phenomena to the more restricted government activities marked the beginning of their greater involvement in the political sphere, beyond the definitive loss of their neutral claims. The research they conducted not only led to a critical evaluation of the government's policies; it also caused an increasing suspicion toward the very basic values underlying the American liberalism, and toward social sciences themselves.¹⁶⁰

1.6.3. The Urban Institute, the Hudson Institute, and the Institute for Policy Studies: Three responses to the disillusionment, three mirrors of the Liberalism crisis

Following the implicit quest for in depth evaluation and criticism of government policies, the intellectual environment, sponsored by various layers of society, reacted establishing new research institutes, in a manner that reflected the skepticism for the whole course of liberal social science, beyond its inner fragmentation.

In 1967, President Johnson felt the “need for independent nonpartisan analysis of the problems facing America's cities and their residents”, and prompted Robert Weaver and Joseph Califano to fancy and realize an Institute of Urban Development, which would take the shape of the 1968-established Urban Institute.¹⁶¹ At its outset, the Urban Institute could count upon an enviable board of accredited scholars and well-known figures within the business field, among them Robert McNamara, at the time head of the World Bank; Arjay Miller, chairman of the Ford Motor

159 Lyndon Johnson, “Government and the Critical Intelligence”, an address by Lyndon B. Johnson, September 29, 1966 (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1966), pp. 13–14, cited in Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 150.

160 Henry Aaron, director of the Economic Studies program from 1990 to 1996 and currently president of the Bruce and Virginia MacLaury Chair and Senior Fellow in the Economic Studies program at the Brookings Institution, asserted that social science research seems necessarily “to corrode any simple faiths around which political coalitions are ordinarily built”. Henry Aaron, *Politics and the Professors: The Great Society in Perspective* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1978), p. 159. Similarly, Clark Abt, engineer, environmentalist, educator, entrepreneur, and social scientist, founder of the socio-economic policy research firm Abt Associates Inc. reported “the widely held opinion that social research is essentially negative, destructive, and not particularly helpful to society”. Clark Abt, *Problems in American Social Policy Research*, ed. Clark Abt (Cambridge, Mass.: Abt Books), p. 4.

161 Retrieved from The Urban Institute official website, <http://www.urban.org/about/>

Company; Irwin Miller, general manager of Cummins Engine Company; and Cyrus Vance, a lawyer and later Secretary of State under Jimmy Carter from 1977 to 1980. The organization of the Institute traced that of the RAND Corporation, a contract research institution that, however, accepted commissioned works from more than one client. The Urban Institute's early research focused on urban governance, welfare system, income redistribution, and on an overall overview of the government capacities, all conducted with the use of cost-benefit analysis systems. The results were not encouraging; on the contrary, they demonstrated that most policies in the 1960s had been conceived and implemented precipitously and hastily; additionally, they had not been administered properly. Nonetheless, such negative recognitions did not lead to complete despair among the Urban Institute's experts, who remarked the improved chances for a more efficient government, when this was guided by knowledge and more in depth experimentation and testing. The Urban Institute was initially headed by the engineer William Gorham, who presided over the institute from its founding in 1968 to his retirement in 2000.

The Hudson Institute was another response provided by researchers to the intellectual bewilderment. The Institute's origins laid back in 1961, when Herman Kahn, in sharp disagreement with the top leadership at RAND, where he had been working as an analyst since the 1950s, recruited his own personal board of experts and founded this innovative centers. Herman Kahn's personal characteristics and prestige contributed in large part to the center's success, which, indeed, diminished after Kahn's death in 1983.¹⁶² Given the propitious time of its establishment (in parallel to Kahn's enormous success after the printing of *On Thermonuclear War* and *Thinking about the Unthinkable*), the Institute was able to collect funds quite easily throughout the 1960s. According to Smith, by 1965, contracts with the Department of Defense accounted for roughly half of the

162 Kahn worked as a military strategist and a systems analyst during his employment at RAND. His most remarkable theories were those developed during the Cold War. Among these, his research on nuclear warfare, which he named "the unthinkable" that, according to him, was not only feasible, given the two superpowers' nuclear capacities, but also winnable and survivable. His major works included *On Thermonuclear War* (1960), *Thinking about the Unthinkable* (1962), *On escalation: metaphors and scenarios* (1965), *Can we win in Viet nam?* (1968). Indeed, Kahn worked as consultant of the Department of Defense during the years of the American increased engagement in Vietnam: he opposed negotiation with North Vietnam, supported the escalation of American troops, and the Vietnamization.

Institute \$1.2 million annual budget, the Office of Civil Defense for one-quarter, and governmental agencies or private contributors for the remnants of it.¹⁶³ Most of its initial research, half of the total work according to Smith, focused on domestic issues, and its motto soon became “the conventional wisdom is always wrong”, with regard to Kahn and his fellows' quest for continued research and evaluation. Toward the end of the 1960s, the Hudson Institute's areas of interest broadened to the international domain; as a result, research projects on civil and missile defense, nuclear strategies, and the Vietnam war multiplied. The easy years for the Hudson Institute were, however, further and further. As the skeptical views towards the Great Society programs increased, the funds available for research shrank, and the competition among research institutions became fiercer. The Institute' budget plummeted to \$3 million in early 1980s, which forced the Institute's change of location from New York to Indianapolis in 1985. In addition, Kahn's inability to assure a financial balance before his death left his successors with great difficulties, which contributed to the Institute's quick demise. A later institute will be briefly analyzed here to the purpose of remarking the intellectual splintering within the liberal wing: the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS). Founded in 1963 by two young action intellectuals, Marcus Raskin and Richard Barnett, the institute was created in hopes of conducting research independent of any governmental agencies. The two founders' desire was to remain autonomous from the official bureaucracies, while, at the same time, developing tight connections with the academic world: the great majority of its experts were scholars and Professors working for high-level universities.¹⁶⁴ The Institute strove to combine intellectual research and activism aiming at social change: its members called themselves 'public scholars' and the Institute has been considered by many as one of the first pioneer institutes of the 'New Left', as opposed to the 'Old Left'. They claimed the necessity of less fragmentary social reforms and of a broader range of reforms on issues that went beyond the labor rights and the struggle class.¹⁶⁵ After the printing of *A*

163 Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 155.

164 The original board of experts included, among others, Hans Morgenthau, political scientist at the University of Chicago; Steven Muller, chairman of Johns Hopkins University; and David Cavers, professor at the Harvard Law School. See Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 161.

165 The term 'New Left' refers to the groups of activists in the United States and the United Kingdom of the 1960s and 1970s who fought for a broad range of issues, including abortion, gender roles, alienation. It differed from the 'Old

Viet–nam Reader, edited by Raskin and Bernard Fall, the IPS became one of the most active centers of criticisms for the escalating war in Vietnam. Because of its clear sympathy for social revolutions, some conservative authors would later try hard to discredit it, adopting, for instance, the term “communophilism” to describe its activities.¹⁶⁶

The emergence and the divergent natures of the Urban Institute, the Hudson Institute, and the Institute for Policy Studies revealed the internal contradictions of liberalism. This ideological trend was condemned, by the most extremists of both the Left and the Right, to have decreased to a political tool deprived of a real direction, in sharp contrast with the new conservative wave.

Left', which had only focused on the Marxist–inspired struggle of class and labor movement.

¹⁶⁶ Other attacks against the IPS functioning came from the Heritage Foundation in May 1977, and from an article in *World Affairs* in Winter 1984 by Joshua Muravchick, who was a member of the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy, before joining the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) of John Hopkins University.

1.7. The conservative revival: construction of an intellectual establishment as the primary mission

The conservative phase that began in 1968 with Richard Nixon's victory at the presidential elections represented the crowning achievement of the conservative struggles started during the 1964 Barry Goldwater's electoral campaign.

During the campaign, Goldwater was the spokesman of many of the ideals that Ronald Reagan embodied during the 1980s. Nevertheless, his defeat also demonstrated that the conservative ideology was not yet ready to hit the big time, primarily because of the movement's still scarce intellectual establishment. When Goldwater ran for the presidency, he invested heavily in his ideological convictions: emphasis on the primary power of states at the federal government's expenses; opposition to labor unions and to most arms-limitations treaties, the 1963 Nuclear Test Ban Treaty included; urgency of an absolute victory over international Communism and the consequent need for the US military superiority over the USSR; skepticism for the United Nations. Goldwater, as the conservatives that would follow and finally succeed, rooted much of his credo on the importance of ideas face to pragmatism and search for concrete experimentation promoted by much liberalism. A “Trotsky of the far right”, as Theodore H. White described him, Goldwater's attacks were directed to the Liberal Establishment, or Eastern Establishment, as a whole.¹⁶⁷ He, as the political expression of the conservative movement in the making at large, opposed the whole set of institutions, universities, newspapers, policy makers, foundations, and political ideas that concretely embodied the Liberal Establishment.¹⁶⁸ Goldwater believed in the concrete power of ideas, which he saw as “real, permanent, and timeless”.¹⁶⁹ His extremist resolution was detrimental

167 Theodore Harold White was an American political journalist and historian who reported on the 1960, 1964, 1968, 1972, and 1980 presidential elections. The quotation in the text comes from *The Making of the President, 1964* (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1965), p. 208.

168 The term Liberal Establishment was first adopted by Richard Rovere in *The American Establishment* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962), p. 3. It refers to a static, fixed group of institutions that has overstepped the nature of a dynamic movement.

169 Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 168.

to his candidacy, but it sparked off the construction of a whole set of intellectual infrastructures that would represent the conservative ideology. This was how the Hoover Institution and the American Enterprise Institute gradually converted into major beneficiaries of governmental agencies funds, and how the The Heritage Foundation and the Cato Institute came to light.

1.7.1. The institutional mission of the American Enterprise Institute: becoming a conservative Brookings

The origins of the American Enterprise Association laid back in 1943, when Lewis H. Brown, chairman of the Johns–Malville Corporation and an esteemed representative of the business community, gathered a board of businessmen to establish an institute able to “educate the public about business and provide Congress and other interested parties with analyses and evaluations of pending legislation”.¹⁷⁰ During the 1940s and the early 1950s, the Association acted as the bad copy of the Committee for Economic Development (CED), the research center set up in 1942 by a set of economists headed by Paul Hoffman to face post war problems and improve Americans' living conditions.

On the verge of shutting down definitively, the American Enterprise Association received a new input a decade later its foundation, when in 1953 the newly elected chairman A. D. Marshall undertook the task of rendering the Association an influential center. The appointment of the two young economists W. Glenn Campbell and William J. Baroody was the redeeming choice. Baroody took his mission extremely seriously, and while working at the Association, he acted as a policy entrepreneur in translating the economic conservatism he supported into the administration of the Association. From the beginning of his role within the Association, Baroody clearly stated that the importance of ideas, one of the cornerstones of the conservative credo, urged appropriate formal institutions. In his view, the final target had to be the Brookings Institution, which he portrayed as a

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 175.

“bastion of liberal thinking”, as a sign of defiance.¹⁷¹ First of all, following his advice, the American Enterprise Association changed its name in American Enterprise Institute (AEI), in order to avoid confusion with other interest groups operative in Washington: lobbies, universities, or federal agencies. Second, AEI, like Brookings, ought to improve its academic credibility and its institutional relationships. Additionally, AEI should carry on a particularly rigorous engagement in the battle conducted within the market of ideas. In Baroody's view, and consequently in the AEI's views, there was not really a debate of ideas, given the monopolizing nature of liberal precepts, which had completely cut off competition.

The ground-breaking activity inaugurated by the AEI was its continued commitment to ideas marketing and public relations care. Indeed, among the first ones to acknowledge the importance of journalism, they struggled to reach journalists, businessmen, and the general public, beyond Washington-based, high-level policy makers. Reaching the broadest public possible was the Institute's way to implement, in the concrete reality, conservative author Robert Weaver's assertion that *Idea Have Consequences*.¹⁷² This was the basic reason that pushed the members of the AEI, and Baroody was the most active to invest so much in organizing conferences, *symposia*, printing journals and periodicals: *Regulation*, *Public Opinion*, *Foreign and Defense Policy Review*, and *The AEI Economists* are just some examples. The Institution's commitment to diffuse its conservative ideas bore its fruits in the fund-raising campaigns. Getting over the memories of initial faltering financial backers, AEI managed to attract easy endowments starting from the mid-1960s. In 1970, their annual budget jumped to more than \$1 million; by 1982-1983, it had risen a peak of \$14 million, before collapsing to less than \$8 million due to financial mismanagement in the late 1980s.¹⁷³

171 Ibid., p. 178.

172 Indeed, Robert Weaver was among the conservative authors whose works and ideas were most exploited by the conservative movements in the 1960s and 1970s. Apart from Weaver, author of *Ideas Have Consequences* (1948), other writers evoked in this period were Russell Kirk, author of *The Conservative Mind* (1953), and Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (1955).

173 Data retrieved from Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 179.

1.7.2. The Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace: a “home and shelter” for conservative academics ¹⁷⁴

The trajectory covered by the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace was a successful line begun in 1919, when it still did not bear this name.

The figure giving the name to the Institution was Herbert Hoover, an historian, collector, and later President of the United States from 1929 to 1933. He volunteered during the First World War and contributed to the creation of a private humanitarian agency to assist Belgian civilians, which would later form the American Relief Administration. In the aftermath of the war he joined the Supreme Economic Council focused on recovery policies, and he realized he had sufficient direct experience to fill out detailed reports on the war. In 1919, he provided the Stanford University, where he had graduated, with a \$50,000 grant to start a project on filing the war reports: this marked the beginning of Hoover's commitment to the extension of Stanford's library, at the time called the Hoover War Library.

During the first forty years more or less, the Hoover War Library carried out its research and reports quite discreetly, though soon obtaining financial support from major foundations, including the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation: reports ranged from postwar reconstruction, to the history and worldwide functioning of the League of Nations, to fascism, to systematic studies on the Soviet Union, when the Cold War entered the international scenario as the dividing line of global coalitions.

Following Herbert Hoover's words in 1960, the Library had begun to approach more actively political affairs; its mission was to “demonstrate the evils of the doctrines of Karl Marx – whether Communism, Socialism, economic materialism or atheism – thus to protect the American way of life from such ideologies, their conspiracies, and to reaffirm the validity of the American system”.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 189.

¹⁷⁵ Hoover quoted in Stanford Daily (March 29, 1960), reported in Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 186.

Stanford University could no longer provide patronage to an institution with such a clear-cut ideological mission. Therefore, the Hoover War Library became the independent Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace in 1959. From that moment on, the Institution's political orientation became more and more conservative in nature, especially after W. Glenn Campbell took responsibility of its presidency.

Even though continuing the Institution's original mission of collecting librarian collections, Campbell gave the center a strong conservative imprinting, first of all in terms of the sponsoring sources, most of them being conservative foundations. The Institution's connection with the conservative sphere was further attested by Ronald Reagan's proximity to the center: he was selected as honorary fellow, and he repeatedly asserted the Institution's influence over his own thinking. Campbell's merit was to assure the financial health of the Institution, whose annual budget had jumped to roughly \$17 million around the end of the 1980s.¹⁷⁶ In other words, the Hoover Institution did not meet the economic asset imbalance that other institutes had experienced, including the aforementioned American Enterprise Institute. On the contrary, it still ranked 16th in the list of the 55 top think tanks in the US, and 2nd in the top 50 best university affiliated think tanks in the US in 2011, in confirmation of the Institution's tight-knit connections with the academic sphere.¹⁷⁷

176 Ibid., p. 187.

177 See McGann, *2011 Global Go To Think Tanks Index Report* and *2012 Global Go To Think Tanks Index Report* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2012).

1.8. Think tanks' entrance in the marketplace of ideas ¹⁷⁸

Think tanks' strive for the broadest diffusion of their own ideas within the generic public at first, and the highest levels of policy makers in the long term has always been their characterizing feature. Nevertheless, the precise manners for doing so have evolved over time. Starting from the mid-1970s, since the first advocacy tanks took shape to be more precise, think tanks have progressively acknowledged the importance of selling their products, namely their ideas, in the shape of written works.

At the time the Russell Sage Foundation was founded in 1907, it was pretty much the only center whose duties included the drafting of pamphlets and books. On the contrary, the intensified competition caused by the growing availability of think tanks let them focus on the manners to enhance their notoriety and academic credibility.

Indeed, marketing and promotion of originally issued ideas and thoughts entered the political agenda of think tanks as one of their main tasks. Both new and old think tanks discovered the benefits of issuing papers, or better books. The first ones realized that it could have been the right investment to do to gain academic credibility on a large scale; the second ones began to calculate it as a fixed expense in the annual budget, ranging from 5 to 10%. Both new and already set think tanks understood that, on the basis of their works' nature, they could address and influence different targets of audiences. More than ever before, books received attention not only for themselves, but because they became a vehicle to convey messages and ideas, and because they came to represent specific symbols. Books embodied the institution that had edited them, and, very often, policy makers made reference to their content without having read them, just because of the metaphors and hidden messages they conveyed.

The marketplace of ideas became a very concrete space: a place where to sell and buy ideas, think

¹⁷⁸ The label 'market of ideas' or 'marketplace of ideas' refer to the think tanks' progressive commitment to the sale of their ideas.

tanks on the one side, greedy policy makers on the other.

1.8.1. A winner in the race for the best seller book: the Heritage Foundation

The Heritage Foundation, among the best endowed think tanks today, owed its notoriety to the extraordinary success of a book. A book that was intended to let the conservative ideology be triumphal over the Liberal Establishment, guiding the American political leaders through their most immediate tasks in the first ninety days of office. *Mandate for Leadership*, this was the book's title, generated a snowball effect amid the conservative political sphere, after short briefings from it had been spread and diffused among influential people some weeks before its official release.¹⁷⁹ The book, a blueprint on the appointment of the personnel and on the immediate tasks, “from taxes and regulation to crime and national defense”, became a sort of manual for the government, beyond a library best seller.¹⁸⁰ The author of the book, Ed Feulner, already chairman of the Heritage Foundation, described his own work as followed,

Mandate for Leadership outlines policies designed to limit government, expand freedom and strengthen America. [...] It provides a brief yet comprehensive road map for everything from reforming the federal budget process and eliminating needless and costly regulations to fixing Medicare, homeland security and the federal courts.¹⁸¹

The The United Press International depicted it as “a blueprint for grabbing the government by its frayed New Deal lapels and shaking out 48 years of liberal policy”.¹⁸² As a matter of fact, the success of the book reflected the political leadership's craving for an intellectual establishment that

¹⁷⁹ The 1.100 pages long *Mandate For Leadership* was issued in 1980 in conjunction with Ronald Reagan's Presidential election. Members of the Heritage Foundation would later remark that “nearly two-thirds of *Mandate's* 2,000 recommendations were adopted or attempted by the Reagan administration”. Retrieved from <http://www.heritage.org/research/commentary/2004/06/reagan-and-heritage-a-unique-partnership>

¹⁸⁰ Retrieved from <http://www.heritage.org/about/our-history/35th-anniversary>

¹⁸¹ Citation by chairman Ed Feulner, available online at <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2005/01/new-mandate-for-leadership-will-help-citizens-keep-politicians-honest>

¹⁸² Retrieved from the Heritage Foundation website, <http://www.heritage.org/research/commentary/2004/06/reagan-and-heritage-a-unique-partnership>

could surround them, as it had been for the liberal leadership up to Johnson.

The set-up of the Foundation dated back to 1973, when President Nixon was lamenting the fact that there was not a conservative counterpart of the liberal establishment, and that he was resolute to let the world know he would not count upon any of those liberal institutes for his counseling.¹⁸³ The original idea for the Foundation emerged from the project of a center that could be, at the same time, a permanent bank from where to recruit conservative staff in office, a haven for them when out of office, and a transmission channel for promoted ideas. No existing institute seemed to prove adequate, not even the American Enterprise Institute, whose work was becoming more and more academic and less political in nature.

The Heritage Foundation would create an original organizational pattern for institutes to come.

First of all, different from any other previous think tanks, the Heritage Foundation was wary about receiving funds from government or parties, accepting only direct donations from private individuals.¹⁸⁴ This principle has remained an underlying feature in the Foundation's statute: on the official website anyone can read that “We are proud of our broad base of support among the American people and we accept no government funds”.¹⁸⁵ As a result, the financial wellness that has characterized the Foundation, which reached the \$18 million annual budget in 1989, was reached mainly through individual, little range, donations.

Secondly, they engaged a considerable amount of the annual budget in promotional activities directed at selling ideas: they started a prolific publishing business, which resulted in concise articles requiring an average of ten minutes to be read. “We specialize in the area of quick-response public policy research and in marketing the academic works for public policy consumption”, Ed

183 President Nixon asked his assistant, H. R. Haldeman, to issue a statement “to all White House staff people (I will have to do this verbally) as well as to Cabinet people (also have to be done verbally) that they are not to use Brookings Institution”. Quoted in Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 196, from Bruce Oudes, ed., *From: The President—Richard Nixon's Secret Files* (New York: Harper & Roe, 1989), p. 29.

184 Among the initial supporters of the Heritage in 1973 were private corporations and wealthy privates, interested in the conservative principles they embodied. Some examples were John Scaife, who contributed with \$900.000; The Noble Foundation of Oklahoma, and John M. Olin Foundation. Information retrieved from Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 200.

185 Heritage Foundation's official website.

Feulner claimed of the Foundation.¹⁸⁶ In this sense, they underlined their difference from the book-length works issued by Brookings.

A third feature was the intensity with which the Foundation engaged in promoting its ideas, thus abandoning any uncertainty about the means to adopt. “We believe that ideas have consequences, but that those ideas must be promoted aggressively”, said Ed Feulner, who continued, “Many other think tanks have been overly cautious in deciding just how far they can opine, and the result is that their impact has not been nearly as effective as it should be. We set out to change this”.¹⁸⁷

The Heritage Foundation's progression benefited from its broad commitment to be a refuge for conservatives of all strains, be they member of the New Right or not; its success paralleled and partially contributed to the gradual decline of AEI, the other conservative rival, which progressively lost ground in the mid-1980s, due to mismanagement and unclear operational programs.¹⁸⁸

More than one factor contributed to the Foundation's advantage in the 1980s. Firstly, it did not, contrarily to AEI, left its program indefinite: its president Ed Feulner and those who succeeded him, elaborated a clear strategic vision, which enabled them to support the conservative administrations' specific actions, but also to be critical of those governmental policies which proved too moderate and dissociated themselves from radical conservatism. Secondly, they overtly embraced the mission to advocate the conservative side, abandoning the pretension of remaining a purely academic or studentless university-style think tank. As one of its members claimed,

We state up front what our beliefs are and admit that we are combatants in the battle of ideas. We are on one side and we make that clear. We are not just for better government and efficiency, we are for particular ideas... The staff uses its expertise to mobilize arguments. They are

186 From an interview between Smith and Ed Feulner, December 17, 1985. Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 201.

187 The two quotations come respectively from <http://www.heritage.org/about/our-history/about-the-heritage-foundation>, and *ibid.* (interview of Ed Feulner by Smith).

188 The 'New Right' refers to a set of political convictions attached to the right-wing side of the government. Scholars normally point out the existence of a first 'New Right', which developed in the years before Barry Goldwater's presidential campaign and melted libertarians, traditionalists, and anti-communists; a second and a third 'New Right', which emerged respectively during Barry Goldwater's campaign in 1964, and in the 1970s and 1980s. They were embodied by scholars working at the Heritage Institution and at the American Enterprise Institution.

By so doing, they could engage totally in their advocacy mission, and on the more direct way to do it, that is the educational training of future political leaders, adherent to the conservative faith. In order to do so, they prepared special 'Conservative Curriculum', in the conviction that 'people are policy'.

The wave of conservative think tanks that experienced a great success in the 1980s would be inextricably bound to the conservative leadership in power: Nixon, but Reagan in particular, are directly linked to the names of institutes like AEI, CATO Institute, and Heritage Foundation. These Institutes contributed to the administration's functioning less for the creation of new ideas issued by their members' minds, than for the conceiving of a whole set of modern tools for their dissemination (including TV programs, radio productions, periodic op-eds), and for the establishment of a totally new professional cadre of experts-advocates, which could finally filled that vacuum lamented at the outset of the conservative movement.

189 From an interview between Smith and Burton Y. Pines, November 4, 1985. Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, pp. 205–206.

2. THINK TANKS IN CHINA

As described above, think tanks originally rose as an American phenomenon, whose origins can be traced back to the early 20th century, if we consider the broad function of experts and their relationship with the policy elite network, or to the mid-20th century, if we narrow the focus to think tanks as they developed during the Second World War.

Considering that the meaning of the term 'think tank' has long been disputed in its home country, the United States, it is not surprising that it has engendered further complications with regard to its use in other countries. Think tanks have appeared in European countries, in Australia, New Zealand, and Asia; as a consequence, the term has been often applied to a varied lot of institutions, centers, foundations, and institutes, sometimes with a very different functioning from their original American connotation.¹⁹⁰ Understandably, given its experimental and leading function, think tanks in the United States have dictated the model for this kind of institutes all over the world.

This chapter is intended to give readers an overview on the development of research centers that have been referred to as think tanks in China, from their first emergence in the 1950s to the end of the 1980s, when the Tiananmen events imposed a rethink of their functions and roles. Remarkably, the year 1989 was a watershed moment for both China and the United States; in fact, it marked the end of a bipolar era and sparked the beginning of a more freely interconnected world, whose consequences spilled out to all countries.

¹⁹⁰ On the organizational peculiarities of think tanks that have developed outside the United States, and on the divergences of such institutes from the American model, see Diane Stone, *Think Tanks across nations: a Comparative approach* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1998).

2.1. Cultural divergences and reflections on the different approaches to think tank studies

When approaching the universe of think tanks in the Chinese world, it is important to be aware of the necessity of taking a particular stance, different from that used in the Western analysis. As exposed above, ideas enter the policy making process in multiple different ways and in various degrees. They take the shape of book-length studies, of hastily prepared pamphlets and articles, of lengthy discourses and conferences, just to cite some examples.

In every culture we look at, ideas are the outcomes of a double set of channels: first of all, they stand as the mouthpiece of policy makers in power at the moment; at the same time, however, they are moulded by the context where they originate and where they propagate. Indeed, calling to mind some very basic precepts of intercultural communication theories, following a holistic style approach, the nature of a specific object cannot be fully understood through the observation of its inner characteristics solely, whereas through an in depth awareness of its surrounding environment.¹⁹¹

In fact, the importance attributed to the contextual elements when looking at China is necessary and appropriate, since it reflects the prominence given by the Chinese people as a whole to the context in every kind of human relations: official and non-official links, formal and informal encounters, business ties, friendships, and family relationships. As a high-context culture, Chinese people recognize the importance of establishing direct personal relationships with the interlocutor, and this is the starting point for sharing ideas.

This cultural characteristic bears considerable consequences with regard to the diverse communicative and interactive patterns, which means that low-context cultures, of which the North

191 Richard Nisbett conducted a research in 2001, distinguishing between the analytical style and the holistic approach. The first one focused on the object only, while ignoring its background. The second one focused both on the object and on the external context. See Yoshihisa, Kashima, "Culture", *Encyclopedia of Identity SAGE Publications*, 2010, http://www.sage-ereference.com/identity/Article_n62.html

American one is considered an example, privilege verbalized codes to convey messages; hence, the greater importance they attach to spoken words, which are acknowledged to be the real channel to transmit and shape personal opinions, thoughts, and ideas. On the contrary, Chinese culture, an example of a high-context environment, takes personal relationships (关系 *guānxi*) in high esteem, and most of the conveyed meanings can be understood from contextual elements, more than from written or spoken words.¹⁹² This point should be taken into account whenever one tries to analyze the divergences in terms of outspokenness of these two cultures' languages and of their translated version into institutional, intellectual, and political frameworks.

Consequently, an equivalent approach must be embraced in order to be successful in gaining knowledge about Chinese equivalents for American think tanks.

In the past, Western scholars specialized in think tank studies paid little attention to the development of such institutes outside Western countries in the strict sense, as a result of historical reasons (the fact that think tanks developed in Western countries first), as well as of geopolitical ones (the ongoing Cold War impeded much of the research on communist countries). Therefore, little research has been conducted on communist societies, China among them.

In addition to the quantitative scarcity, occasional studies in the field have been compromised by a qualitative shortcoming: the application of Western-modeled cultural frameworks to non-Western societies. Therefore, think tanks in China have been interpreted as spokesmen of the development of a civil society, of a growing political pluralization, and of the citizens' freedom to finally express unrestricted personal thoughts.¹⁹³ However, in the Chinese context, they are originally intended to be “organizational means for the party-state either to maintain ideological hegemony or to consolidate the vested interests and strengthen the political positions of political leaders during

192 Throughout the whole thesis, the Chinese original word, both in characters and in *pīnyīn* (the phonetic transcription with Latin letters) will be provided after the English translation of the name of Institutes, think tanks, or other relevant terms.

193 For more research in the field see T. Brook, “Auto-Organization in Chinese Society”, in T. Brook and B. Michael Frolic, eds., *Civil Society in China* (London: M. E. Sharpe, 1997); M. Goldman, “The emergence of Politically Independent Intellectuals”, in M. Goldman and R. MacFarquhar, eds., *The Paradox of China's Post-Mao Reforms* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

internal power struggles”.¹⁹⁴ Despite the establishment of a couple of Western-resembling think tanks since the late XXth century, think tanks in China have emerged mainly as politically dependent institutions, which seek to advise and influence the political leadership, while not undermining its ideological basis as a whole. On the contrary, Ming-Chen Shai and Stone have gone further arguing that in China the “attitudes of think tanks towards the State result in a very strong 'statization of society' which suppresses civil society”.¹⁹⁵ The relatively limited influence exerted by think tanks in China, at least in their first decades of existence, was the result of the two sides' reciprocal needs: the state and the party needed expertise and advisory, while research institutes searched for visibility and academic relevance, which they could only gain with a proper positioning within the official establishment. As a result, think tanks developed as “a product of the state”, and their bonds with the party-state have mainly been characterized as a patron-client relationship.¹⁹⁶

194 Ming-Chen Shai and Diane Stone, “The Chinese tradition of policy research institutes”, in Diane Stone and Andrew Denham, eds., *Think Tank Traditions. Policy research and the politics of ideas* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p.142.

195 Ibid., p. 143.

196 Ibid., p. 145.

2.2 They call them think tanks in the United States. What about China?

Looking more closely at the Chinese case, it is worth observing that this kind of research institute does not represent a new phenomenon in the Chinese environment, since many scholars acknowledge their existence at least since the Mao era. Nevertheless, as it was the case in the North American continent, they went through numerous changes and evolutions which have altered their nature.

A first controversial issue regarding research institutes in China concerns the term to adopt to label them. In the United States, before the term 'think tank' was widely accepted and translated into common use, other linguistic options had been proposed, including 'brain trusts', 'brain boxes', 'idea factories', and 'thinking cells'.

In China the term 'think tank' has two different translations, depending on the context in which it is used.

The first term is *Zhinuang Tuan* and it refers to those individuals who work as part of decision makers' advisory team, mainly as governmental officials. Initially, the term was used interchangeably with another phrase, *mùliáo* (幕僚), which identified the emperor's advisers in ancient times. This term remarks the basic and original role of the experts already discussed above: the emperor or the king's personal advisers, who mainly supply their knowledge and expertise at the service of a better kingdom or empire. The term *Zhinuang Tuan* can sometimes be found as a synonym for 'brain trust': indeed, most times, the term is adopted to translate both American think tanks and Roosevelt's advisory group, the short-lived Brain Trust. An example of this type of institute was the Central Policy Unit (CPU) of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) under Jiang Zemin's guidance.¹⁹⁷

The other term more broadly used to translate think tank is *Sīxiǎng Kù* (思想库), or its Taiwanese

197 See Xuanli Liao, *Chinese Foreign Policy Think Tanks and China's Policy Towards Japan* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2008), p. 54.

version *Zhikù* (智库), which is a direct translation of the anglophone term. The two variations mainly refer to those research institutes aimed at conducting research on policy issues.

Despite the previous existence of such institutes, prior to the late 1990s the term 'think tank' had not been employed for Chinese policy research centers, given their blatant divergences from the well-grounded American model.¹⁹⁸ Later on, the adoption of the already known term 'think tank' has not swept away the uncertainties and interpretative shadows surrounding the term. Indeed, two sets of problems have arisen with regard to the Chinese ground. First of all, due to a lack of a well-defined and clear-cut definition, it is left to discretionary choices to consider one specific research institution as a think tank or not. As a result, the term has often been employed indiscriminately to refer to university-based centers, to government-affiliated institutes, or to the departments under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS, 中国社会科学院 *Zhōngguó Shèhuì Kēxuéyuàn*), when, in fact, they are different one another. Second, distinctions become difficult between the contribution given by think tanks as institutions, and by experts or advisers as individuals. These two sets of problems partially concern the American environment, as well. However, they are much stronger in the Chinese case, since it is rare for a Chinese research center to label itself a think tank, whereas American institutes overtly declare their think tank-nature.

198 The first works where the term 'think tank' was used for research institutes in China were some articles published in the journal *The China Quarterly*, including Murray S. Tanner, "Changing Windows on a Changing China: The Evolving Think Tank System and the Case of the Public Security Sector", *The China Quarterly* 171 (2002), pp. 559–574; David Shambaugh, "China's International Relations Think Tanks: Evolving Structures and Process", *ibid.*, pp. 575–596; Bonnie S. Glaser and Philip C. Saunders, "Chinese Civilian Foreign Policy Research Institutes: Evolving Roles and Increasing Influence", *ibid.*, pp. 597–616; Bates Gill and James Mulvernon, "Chinese Military-related Think Tanks and Research Institutions", *ibid.*, pp. 617–624; Barry Naughton, "China's Economic Think Tanks: Their Changing Role in the 1990s", *ibid.*, pp. 625–635.

2.3. Alternative categorizations of Chinese think tanks

Given the controversial and disputed applicability of the term 'think tank' to the Chinese research institutes, it is problematic to identify some categorizations parallel to those traced in the American case: university without students, contract research organizations, and advocacy tanks.

The main categorizations of Chinese think tanks have been supplied by Chinese authors, who had a sound knowledge of American think tanks and could trace some similar border lines for the Chinese ones. In fact, if academic research with regard to American-grounded think tanks has repeatedly displayed blank spaces, one can imagine how uncertain is the equivalent research about the Chinese world.

Despite the limited research, important discrepancies exist among the Chinese scholars who have dealt with Chinese research institutes.

Above all, there is not an absolute agreement upon the degree of independence required by a think tank to be legitimately labeled this way. In fact, it is dubious whether independence refers to financial autonomy, or to the freedom to choose the research efforts, the issues to deal with, and the tools to adopt. Many Chinese scholars maintain that if one interprets the term independence in the first nuance, then the American categorizations themselves should be reconsidered, since many American think tanks rely economically on government, foundations, or wealthy individuals' endowments and grants.

Therefore, some scholars maintain that independence, considered as the freedom to set one's own research agenda, must be an essential feature for those institutions that claim to be think tanks. On the other hand, other academics claim that independence is not an inalienable characteristic, and they include under the umbrella of this definition also those institutes that are not financially independent. These authors implicitly assert that the concrete organization and management of think tanks may vary across countries, according to the political, cultural, social, and historical

background, and that the following outcomes may not be modeled on the same identical mould.

2.3.1. A first categorization option by Zhu Xufeng: official research institutes, semi-official think tanks, and civilian think tanks

Most of the categorizations proposed by scholars have identified three categories, even though sometimes the names given vary slightly. One possible categorization of Chinese think tanks takes into account think tanks as the expression of Chinese slowly developing civil society. It considers the possibilities that specific interest groups have to express their politically sided standpoints and let non-official standpoints enter the policy arena.

When he exposed his categorization option, the author Zhu Xufeng mentioned three categories, but only for two of them he used, in fact, the term 'think tank'.¹⁹⁹ In the third case, that is when talking about those institutes that are closely connected to the central government, he claimed that the label think tank would be misleading for the different features it implied, and he therefore used the term “official policy research institutes”.²⁰⁰ In Zhu Xufeng's mind, Chinese policy research institutes can be distinguished as follows: official policy research institutes, semi-official think tanks, and civilian think tanks.

Official policy research institutes are the earliest and still most influential research institutes, legally registered in China as 'government agencies'. Indeed, they do not belong to the think tank field, since they work as “immediate actors” of the official government, directly contributing to the drafting of official policy alternatives, and to the organization of policy research.²⁰¹ Some government agencies that belong to this category are the Research Office of the State Council, and

199 Zhu Xufeng is an associate Professor at Zhou Enlai School of Government, Nankai University. He was Visiting Research Fellow at the East Asian Institute at the National University of Singapore, and Visiting Professor at Harvard–Yenching University in 2008-2009. His major works focused on Chinese Policy process, think tanks, and policy analyses.

200 Zhu Xufeng, “China's Think Tanks: Roles and Characteristics”, *East Asian Institute Background Brief*, no. 306 (2006): pp. 1–14.

201 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

the diverse Offices of Policy Studies (OPS) of local governmental entities (local governments, Ministries, and Commissions). Their roles are

to draft documents and reports for the NDRC [the National Development and Reform Commission], [...] to research on important policy issues, [...] to participate in the research and decision making process of some important policies of the State Council, [...] [to take in charge] the release and dissemination of policy information, [...] the press, newspapers and journals, [...] to synthesize and manage economic policy research undertaken by other research institutes.²⁰²

Semi-official think tanks are registered as 'public institutions' in China. They still maintain strong connections with governmental lines, in terms of financial means, research domain, and heading leadership. Indeed, such institutes are normally established with a government start-up endowment; the heading positions are assigned to government-appointed personnel; they are subject to continuous governmental control in the shape of supervisory personnel appointed by the government; part of their research duties are provided by the government. Despite this, there has been an increasing openness in terms of the amount of research studies commissioned by alternative sources, including other governments' departments and international organizations. Moreover, such institutes have displayed a growing tendency of marketing their products and research.²⁰³

The two most relevant semi-official think tanks, according to Zhu Xufeng's categorization, are the Development Research Center (DRC) of the State Council, and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). Semi-official think tanks, while not providing the basis for official policy making, are nevertheless important since they act as "information filters, advisors of policy ideas,

202 Ibid., pp. 3–4. For instance, the Office of Policy Studies under the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) is in charge of the release of the *China Planning Press* (中国计划出版社), the *China Economic Herald* (中国经济导报), and the *Journal of Macro-economic Management* (宏观经济管理). Its website explicitly asserts that the leading objective is to "promote the relevant economic and social lines, principles, policies, and regulations of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council, and the regulations of the National Development and Reform Commission's work plan". Retrieved from the official website of the *Journal of Macro-economic Management*, <http://www.hgjggl.com/>

203 Zhu Xufeng, "The Influence of Think Tanks in the Chinese Policy Process. Different Ways and Mechanisms", *Asian Survey* 49, no. 2 (2009): pp. 333–357.

and policy interpreters”²⁰⁴

Civilian think tanks, on the contrary, can be identified more directly as the expression of civil society, that is of the growing public participation into the policy making process and the political sphere. As the term itself reveals, civilian think tanks in China enjoy greater independence of governmental control, primarily in terms of financial backing. Indeed, they have access to a wide range of potential economic contributors, including entrepreneurs, funds from overseas countries, enterprises, national funds, and private capital.²⁰⁵ Certainly, they are not completely free from governmental supervision, and some of them still maintain direct connections with the government officers that supervise them. Nevertheless, they do enjoy greater autonomy, since they often employ well-known scholars who have long-time established links with other overseas scholars, while being in the position of offering critical opinions about the government's functioning.

As for the two previous types of think tanks, Zhu Xufeng included, among the functions of civilian think tanks, the following ones: they provide ideas, research, and information for the policy elite, in a more informal and unofficial manner than official think tanks; similarly to semi-official think tanks, they conduct academic research, given the broad affiliation of some staff members with university centers; they carry out an educational role, as a direct consequence of their academic preparation; they give voice to the mild criticisms of some official policies, acting as brokers of public discontent; they act as “windows of China”, permitting mutual exchanges between China and the outside world: they allow external policies and structures to permeate the Chinese world, and at the same time they let positive images of a reforming China impress overseas countries.²⁰⁶

204 Zhu Xufeng, “China's Think Tanks: Roles and Characteristics”, p. 6.

205 Ibid.; Zhu Xufeng, “The Influence of Think Tanks in the Chinese Policy Process”.

206 The term 'broker' here is intentional, and it calls back to mind the function of 'idea brokers' exerted by experts and policy advisers in the United States since the beginning of the twentieth century. The label “windows of China” with regard to the role of think tanks in this country has often been employed by researchers in the field, because it provides a good image of their 'filtering role'. See Zhu Xufeng and Murray S. Tanner, among others.

2.3.2. A second categorization option: the model by Xuanli Liao

Another categorization of Chinese think tanks, which has its roots in a comparative transposition of the categorization introduced by Abelson and McGann, is that provided by Xuanli Liao.²⁰⁷ This author, too, identifies three different groups of think tanks, according to their divergent institutional positions. From the category that keeps the closest affiliation with the government, to the one that displays greater freedom, Xuanli Liao has distinguished between government think tanks, academic specialized think tanks, and university-affiliated think tanks. Though maintaining, in any case, a pretty strong relationship with the top power leadership, academic specialized think tanks and university-affiliated think tanks enjoy greater autonomy, as the terms themselves suggest, thanks to their tighter connections with external bodies and outsiders.

Government think tanks in China must not be confounded with administrative government departments: central government is their unique financial sponsor, and all of them are affiliated with government ministries; however, staff members do not respond for government decisions, as government officials do. Given their close bonds with government ministries, their easier access to the government environment, and their halfway position between the Western idea of think tanks as non-governmental institutions, and the Chinese traditional consideration of policy advisers as government officials, this kind of research organization plays the most influential role within Chinese politics. Institutes falling under this category in China include the Centre for International Studies, affiliated with the State Council; the Institute of International Relations, connected to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA); the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), affiliated to the Ministry of State Security; a couple of military institutes, like the China Institute for International Strategic Studies (CISS), the Chinese Academy of Military Sciences

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(CAMS), and the National Defense University (NDU). As noted by Xuanli Liao, think tanks of this type have proven more successful in entering the Chinese policy making process not only because of their privileged access to private and official data and materials from the government and because their viewpoint has been more easily accepted by the central leadership.²⁰⁸ Government think tanks in China have also mattered the most because they have come to represent the official government in 'Track II Diplomacy' encounters more than once.²⁰⁹

The second type of think tank identified by Liao refers to the academic specialized think tanks, which share some similarities with their Western counterparts, though maintaining specifically Chinese features. Academic specialized think tanks are those research institutes coordinated by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), which have kept tight-knit connections with the academic environment.²¹⁰ Indeed, one of the main differentiating points with the government think tanks is that institutes under the CASS commit only a limited amount of their research energy and time to policy research, while consecrating more efforts to specifically academic issues; therefore, their final products tend to be different, too. Being the outcome of scholarly conducted research, their final works tend to be more similar to the book-length studies issued by the US-based 'university without-students' think tanks. In addition, their research, similarly to that of studentless universities think tanks in the US, tend to be more long-term oriented.

This type of think tank in China has both advantages and disadvantages compared with government think tanks. The first advantage is that they enjoy greater freedom in regard to the quality and quantity of issues they can deal with; secondly, despite nominally less influential than government think tanks, they are sometimes granted substantial visibility and credibility, as a result of the

208 Some examples are provided by Xuanli Liao in chapters 4–5–6 of her book, when she deals with the issues of US–Japanese Security Alliance, Chinese dealing with the History Issues, and the Baogang Project. See Xuanli Liao, *Chinese Foreign Policy Think Tanks and China's Policy Towards Japan* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2008).

209 'Track II Diplomacy' refers to the “unofficial overtures by private individuals or groups to try and resolve an ongoing international crisis or civil war”. Karen A. Mingst and Ivan M. Arreguin–Toft, *Essentials of International Relations. 5th edition* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2011), A29.

210 The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) is defined as “the highest academic research organization in the fields of philosophy and social sciences as well as a national center for comprehensive studies in the People's Republic of China”. Retrieved from CASS official website, http://bic.cass.cn/english/infoShow/Arcitle_Show_Cass.asp?BigClassID=1&Title=CASS

positive and numerous links they hold with several institutions from other countries.

When one still tries to compare them with their Western counterparts, the most relevant handicaps of this category are the following: they still cannot work independently of the official government, not least because of the presence of government-appointed chairmen to such institutes; they can only provide a limited amount of research, constrained by their primary academic, and not political, nature.

The CASS itself is a research institute founded in 1977, whose goals are

... to prosper and promote the development of social sciences, and fully pursue the strategy of invigorating the nation through science and education, devote great efforts to construct a number of research institutes with international reputation, foster a number of scientific scholars enjoying great prestige both at home and abroad, put out a batch of scientific research achievements which are valuable towards nation's significant policy decisions and the development of disciplines; build the CASS into the highest academic research organization in the fields of philosophy and social sciences [...].²¹¹

The role of this second type of think tanks, while somehow disregarded up to the 1990s, has considerably grown since then, as it could be ascertained by the increasing number of times experts and specialists working for these institutes have been questioned by Chinese top leaders.

The third and last type of think tank identified by Xuanli Liao is made up of the university-affiliated think tanks, the least influential think tanks in nowadays Chinese policy making arena. They include those research institutes that operate within the institutional and organizational wing of established universities. Their main goal is to produce academically relevant work, just like specialized academic think tanks; their relative distance from the top government leadership constrains their visibility, and thus, their influential capacity. Some examples are the Institute of International Relations of Peking University and the Institute for Japanese Studies of Nankai University.²¹²

211 Ibid., available at http://bic.cass.cn/english/infoShow/Arcitle_Show_Cass.asp?BigClassID=1&Title=CASS

212 Xuanli Liao, *Chinese Foreign Policy Think Tanks and China's Policy Towards Japan*, pp. 58–59.

2.4. The study of Chinese think tanks

2.4.1. The difficulty deriving from the limited availability of research material and official data

Most scholars who have engaged in the study of Chinese think tanks, both Chinese and foreigners, have soon run into the first obstacle: the opacity and lack of transparency of Chinese policy making, which has been one of its peculiar features since ancient times. Given the government and party tight control over official data and media publications, both Chinese and foreign researches encounter hard times when they try to have access to clarifying materials about the policy making process in this country, while they still hold the misleading hope that they can employ the same methodological approach adopted for Western countries.

In fact, if compared to the Mao era, the amount of information and data now available and attainable not only by the elite intellectuals, but also by the wide public, has increased substantially, with the exception of high-level policy decisions, and most top-secret documents issued by most research institutes.²¹³

As a consequence, Chinese and foreign experts have experienced substantial difficulty in policy making process investigation in the Chinese domain because of the limited accessibility to research-relevant materials. Nevertheless, they have also benefited from a progressive evolution in the Chinese leadership, which has simultaneously caused changes in the alternative policy inputs allowed in the policy arena, and therefore in the quality and quantity of policy-relevant materials available.

²¹³ Research institutes, in particular, often allow public circulation of part of their research outputs, but often keep secret the official transcript of high-level meetings and *symposia*.

2.4.2. How did think tanks make their appearance in the one-party dominated China?

Domestic and international factors that have allowed think tanks into the policy making process

The progressive growth of Chinese think tanks is the result of a complex interplay of national and international factors. It would be unfair to give prominence to one or the other element, since they often developed simultaneously, and they were often related in their cause and effects developments.

The most prominent domestic evolution since the mid-twentieth century, with regard to the evolution of think tanks, has been a progressive move from the 'centralized elitism' of the Mao Era to a more 'pluralistic elitism' of his successors.²¹⁴

Needless to say, China today remains a one-party dominated country, where major domestic and foreign policy decisions are made by the top leadership, namely the Chinese Communist Party, the Central Government, and the military arm, the People's Liberation Army (PLA). However, because of China's growing involvement in international affairs, and its efforts to keep a loud voice against its diplomatic competitors, Chinese leaders have progressively felt the need to count upon specialized professionals for the processing of updated policies. This is why, when referring to the Chinese policy making process, experts are not ready to abandon the 'elitism approach', but they have allowed the supplement of an adjective that gives merit to the existence of alternative policy actors. 'Pluralistic elitism' is a research approach that describes the contemporary situation in China: an oxymoron in its meaning, as often is the case in this country, it calls to mind for example the similarly conflicting concept of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' with regard to the economic sphere.²¹⁵

214 The terms 'centralized elitism' and 'pluralistic elitism' are borrowed from Xuanli Liao, *Chinese Foreign Policy Think Tanks and China's Policy Towards Japan*.

215 The 'pluralist elitism' approach is the model adopted by Xuanli Liao to explain and justify the growing presence and influence of think tanks and other research institutes in China since the Mao era. Xuanli Liao defined this approach as a combination of two divergent models in decision making theories: the Ruling Elite Model and the Pluralistic Model. The former is "a paradigm that assumes an undemocratic policy process by making the elite the key policy-

The influence of think tanks in China must not be overestimated, and in many cases they have played a marginal role in supporting their policy proposals upward. Nevertheless, their real existence in a country until recently inscrutable is indicative of the changes that China is undergoing. Think tanks in China nowadays insert in a broader set of changes that have affected the Chinese foreign policy making as a whole. The most relevant evolution among these has been the progressive fragmentation of authority over foreign policy, which can be intended as a confirmation of the aforementioned pluralistic elitism move. The official, ever existing Chinese top leadership has progressively been flanked by new policy actors, some of whom represent additional arms and extensions of official bodies, while others are actors “on the margins” which have gained credibility and accessibility through tougher efforts.²¹⁶ These actors working on the margins of official policy making include economic centers, such as financial institutions and enterprises, as well as local governments, media, 'netizens', and research institutes.²¹⁷

No institution completely independent from the government exists in China, and to assert that the new actors from the margins represent wholly autonomous organizations would be fallacious and incorrect, given the continued pressure they receive from higher-level organs. Nevertheless, research institutes, and think tanks among them, are representative of a specific trend in Chinese foreign policy making, that is the breach of new possibilities for unofficial performers.

Among the international determiners that have contributed to the birth and development of think

makers”, where a policy is made either by conspiracy or by a coincidence of shared interests. According to Xuanli Liao, in the case of China, the meaning of 'power elite' varies greatly from other western countries, where high political positions were mainly the result of favourable economic conditions, or of the access to the upper class. In China, the 'power elite' refers to “a small group of top leaders in China, namely those sitting in the Politburo and the Standing Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)”, who maintain much more power on the overall political system than their counterparts in other democratic countries. On the contrary, the 'pluralist model' argues that “power is dispersed within a society that is comprised of different interest groups, though not equally, and that some groups have greater access to policy-making circles and greater opportunities to affect policy outcomes”. Xuanli Liao, *Chinese Foreign Policy Think Tanks and China's Policy Towards Japan*, pp. 1–14.

216 Linda Jakobson and Dean Knox, “New Foreign Policy Actors in China”, *SIPRI Policy Paper 26* (2010): pp. 1–51. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) is a Sweden-based think tanks, ranked 3rd among the 100 top non-US think tanks worldwide, and 4th in the top 150 think tanks, US-based think tanks included. Information retrieved from 2012 McGann think tanks annual report.

217 Netizens are those citizens that frequently make use of the Internet, and who have started to exploit it as a tool to convey information, data, and even criticisms governmental policies. See Jakobson and Knox, “New Foreign Policy Actors in China”.

tanks in China were the end of the Cold War and Chinese increasingly more decisive participation in international affairs.

The Cold War had, since the late 1940s, impeded the development of completely independent foreign relations for most countries, since all of them, included the furthest Third World countries, fell under the influence sphere of either superpower, the USSR or the United States, though with various degrees of intensity. China was not an exception, and its domestic policies somehow reproduced the changing power relations across the planet. As we will see later in this paper, the organizational lines of think tanks have long reflected Chinese mutating connections with the two superpowers: from the establishment of Soviet-style research institutes in the 1950s, to a more neutral, empirical, and less ideological kind of think tanks throughout the 1980s and the 1990s, along with the slow rapprochement to the American leadership.

Chinese top leaders were in those same years reconsidering their country's positioning within the international arena, as a consequence of the increased economic, diplomatic, and social contacts with foreign countries. The policy making process was not a homogeneous whole anymore, but rather a multifaceted amalgam, thus creating “demand for in depth research and analysis to aid Chinese leaders in making informed foreign policy and national security decisions”.²¹⁸ Top leaders required specialized expertise to respond to the increased international role, and urged high-ranking knowledge about new grave issues, at least for the Chinese leadership, such as “arms control, international trade, climate change, and intellectual property”.²¹⁹

218 Bonnie S. Glaser and Phillip C. Saunders, “Chinese Civilian Foreign Policy Research Institutes: Evolving Roles and Increasing Influence”, *The China Quarterly* 171 (2002): p. 597.

219 Ibid., p. 597.

2.5. The evolution of Chinese think tanks from an historical perspective

I will try to recall here a concise history of think tanks' development in the twentieth century China, starting in particular from the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, even if some scholars have alleged their existence as far as the time of Confucius, or around the late nineteenth century.²²⁰ The path followed by such research institutes in China was fundamentally different from the one followed by American institutions bearing the same name: moreover, the restraints posed by the Central Government and the Chinese Communist Party pressure limited the quantity and quality of think tanks for a long time.

2.5.1. The first generation think tanks: 1949-1977 ²²¹

The early research institutes nominally intended to provide expertise and knowledge to the CCP and the Central Government are reported to have existed in China since the mid-1930s, coinciding more or less with the Yan'an period (1935-1947).²²² Those were the years when Mao Zedong definitely consolidated his power within the party, spread Mao's Thought (毛泽东思想 *Máo Zédōng Sixiǎng*), and Mao's cult, getting the 'centralized elitism' off. The research institutes that appeared in those decades, which made up the first generation of think tanks in China,

220 Indeed, many scholars have asserted that the basic principle of providing expertise to political leaders dated back to the Confucius time, when groups of experts and advisers called themselves “counselors of the prince”. See Michal Meidan, “Les think tanks chinois, conseillers du roi”, *China Analysis/Les Nouvelles de Chine* 16 (2007): pp. 10–11. Moreover, some academics have considered as early examples of think tanks the “study societies” (学会 *xuehui*) that bloomed under the sponsorship of high-ranking civil servants at the turn of the nineteenth century, contributing to the rise of the “modernist school of thought” and leading to the founding of the first Chinese Institute of International Studies (1897). See Amaury Bessard, “La production collective de la connaissance en Chine: Des Xuehui traditionnels aux think tanks modernes,” *OFTT* (2009), see: <http://www.oftt.eu/thematiques/asia/article/la-production-collective-de-la-connaissance-en-chine-des-xuehui-traditionnels-aux-think-tanks-modernes?lang=en>

221 The term 'first generation' was adopted by Murray Scot Tanner to indicate the research institutes which developed since the mid-1930s in China, in the article “Changing Windows on a Changing China: The Evolving 'Think Tank' System and the Case of the Public Security Sector”, *The China Quarterly* 171 (2002): pp. 559–574.

222 Yan'an, in the Shaanxi province, functioned as a war base for the leaders of Chinese Communist Party between 1936 and 1947. The role played by experts during the late 1940s/early 1950s has been referred to as 'Yan'an Predicament' by M. Bonnin and Y. Chevrier, “The Intellectual and the State: Social Dynamics of Intellectual Autonomy during the Post-Mao Era”, *The China Quarterly* 127 (1991): pp. 569–593.

conveyed China's tight relationship with the USSR.²²³ They were moulded along the Soviet models, both in organizational and analytical terms. The theory of Marxism-Leninism permeated the research system, and this was reflected into its organization style: strict centralized planning, vertical hierarchies, control over research outputs to guarantee their conformity with political precepts, and the omnipresence of party officials.

The function of such think tanks, if it is allowed to call them this way, was mainly that of promoting the Party's ideology; therefore, the research scope was tightly controlled, no dissenting views were allowed, and each institute conducted independent research with no connection with similar institutes. The steady party control was warranted by the fact that all of them could only benefit from the sponsor of a government unit (mainly ministries); in addition, they were strictly classified within a formal bureaucratic system (系统 *xìtǒng*). Their main function being that of supporting the “CCP and the government's policy process through propaganda and providing theoretical interpretation of legitimacy”, this kind of institutes did exert a predominant function similar to that normally attributed to think tanks, but the number of cases was extremely limited.²²⁴ Indeed, Chinese policy research institutes of the time could not be called think tanks, as they “only served as an analytical body within a governmental agency”.²²⁵

The distinguishing feature of research institutes set up since the founding of the PRC was then their affiliation to relevant ministries, which also supervised their overall conduct. At the same time, civilian and independent think tanks did not exist, as a result of the suspicious approach of top leaders toward intellectuals, most of whom had been preferably moved to the lowest positions after the unfolding of the Two Hundred Policy (百花运动 *Bǎihuā yùndòng*, 1956), and the Struggle Against Right Deviations (反右派运动 *Fǎnyòupài yùndòng*, 1957), which would anticipate the

223 Tight relations between the newly established PRC and the USSR were at their peak, as demonstrated by Mao's first ever visit abroad to Moscow, in 1949.

224 For example, experts were consulted about the decision of aligning with the United States against the Soviet Union, in the 1960s. Zhu Xufeng and Lan Xue, “Think Tanks in Transitional China”, *Public Administration and Development* 27 (2007): p. 452–464.

225 According to Zhu Xufeng, this early type of research institution in China is known by Western scholars as “establishment intellectuals”. *Ibid.*, p. 454.

subsequent Cultural Revolution in 1966.²²⁶

One of the earliest research institutes established in obedience to the Party's precepts, and under the directives of later Prime Minister Zhou Enlai was the Chinese Peoples' Institute of Foreign Affairs (CPIFA, 中国人民外交学会), set up as a separate branch of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1949. The institute's self-acclaimed novelty was to be “the first of its kind devoted to people-to-people diplomacy after the founding of the New China”;²²⁷ its mission to

... engage in studies on the world situation, international issues and foreign policies, and to carry out exchanges with statesmen, scholars, noted personages, relevant research institutions and social organizations of various countries, with a view to enhancing mutual understanding and friendship between the Chinese people and the people of all other countries, promoting the establishment and development of friendly relations and cooperation between China and other countries and making contributions to peace and development of the world.²²⁸

Interestingly, most of the Advisory board of the Institute had tight connections with top level leaders, and had previously or later occupied high-ranking positions within the National People's Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC, 全国人民代表大会常务委员会), or within the highest ministries.²²⁹

Since the founding of the PRC, the power had been centered around a few actors, and major resolutions were ultimately made by the “top power elite”, described by Lieberthal and Oksenberg as follows,

226 The Hundred Flower Campaign, or Hundred Flowers Movement, was encouraged in 1956 by the Chinese Communist Party as an occasion for citizens to express their opinions about the regime and foster an outlook of pluralism of expression. Nevertheless, having completed his objective of having “enticed the snakes out of their caves”, Mao ordered a tough crackdown on those expressing dissenting views. The following Anti-Rightist Campaign was the harsh response to the criticisms moved toward the government by the supposed rightist wing of the Party. In fact, the campaign allowed Mao to remove an estimated total of 550,000 of intellectuals, who were dismissed to labor camps or imprisoned. See Philip Short, *Mao: A Life* (Macmillan, 2001), p. 470.

227 Retrieved from the official website of the still operating CPIFA, <http://www.cpifa.org/en/s/toCpifaSurveyIntroduction.do?channelId=2>

228 Ibid.

229 For instance, the current Senior Advisors' team includes Qian Qichen, former Vice Prime Minister, Lu Yongxiang, Vice-Chairman of NPC Standing Committee.

... approximately 25 to 35 people [...] partly defined by the positions its members hold: most of the Politburo and Secretariat of the Chinese Communist Party and of the Standing Committee of the State Council, the top commanders of the military, and the leaders of the wealthiest and largest cities and provinces.²³⁰

Within the top elite, the actual power resided in the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC, 中国共产党中央政治局常务委员会), a much smaller commission that, normally made up of “five to seven members [...] and composed of the most influential leaders in the party, the state and the military, [...] has been the most important decision making institution in China's foreign policy, except during the period of the Cultural Revolution”.²³¹

Among this restricted group were, in 1956, Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De, Chen Yun, Deng Xiaoping, and Zhou Enlai, who were collectively responsible for major decision making until the enormous failure of the Great Leap Forward towards the end of the 1950s. The economic and social breakdown that followed the two–years program marked and inaugurated Mao's almost uncontested unilateral power.

Consequently, it was under Mao's initiative that a couple of research institutes were founded between 1956 and the end of that decade, which pushed for a deeper knowledge of current international affairs. Most of such institutes had an affiliation with a government agency in charge of foreign affairs, and they were affected by their supervisors' lack of substantial influence under Mao.²³²

230 Kenneth G. Lieberthal and M. Oksenberg, *Policy Making in China: Leaders, Structures, and Processes* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 35.

231 Xuanli Liao, *Chinese Foreign Policy Think Tanks and China's Policy Towards Japan*, p. 18.

232 The major government agencies in charge of foreign affairs were the State Council, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the ministry of Foreign Trade, which are described as insignificant in the policy-making process, at least until the establishment of the five leading small groups (LSGs, 领导小组 *lǐngdǎo xiǎozǔ*). These small groups were “granted significant power in their respective fields to realize the overall control of the CCP, [...] and made the government essentially the executive organ of the party”. The Foreign Affairs LSG (中央外事工作领导小组

The first comprehensive Chinese research institute of foreign affairs, similar to a modern think tank, was the Institute of International Relations, founded in 1956. The Institute was established as a consequence of the events unfolding in Eastern Europe, and reflected Mao's fear of the potential fallout in China. Therefore, he commissioned Zhou Enlai with the planning of an institute under the Ministry of Affairs. Some scholars, Shambaugh among them, maintained that it was not an influential center in its first years; however, they recognized the influence it exerted on the draft of the Nine Letters²³³, a series of exchange letters between the Chinese Communist Party and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union which ushered in a period of PRC-USSR worsening mutual relations.²³³

The Institute was dismissed during the Cultural Revolution, when all research institutes were closed, with the only exception of the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR, 中国现代国际关系研究院 *Zhōngguó Xiàndài Guójì Guānxi Yánjiūyuàn*). After the Revolution was over, the Institute of International Relations was organized again, and it gained more influence and credibility than ever, under the new denomination of China Institute of International Studies (CIIS, 中国国际问题研究所 *Zhōngguó Guójì Wèntí Yánjiūsuǒ*). The increased power it enjoyed ever after was partially the consequence of its absorption of the China Center for International Studies (CCIS) in 1988, beyond the altered political circumstances, which had seen a less authoritarian, but also less authoritative leadership make the scene after Mao's death. The China Center for International Studies ranked 36th in the list of the 100 Top think tank outside the United States; the 8th major think tank among those in China, Japan, and South Korea; 7th Best Government Affiliated think tank worldwide. Shambaugh has gone even further considering it as the deserving Chinese counterpart of the British Royal Institute for International Affairs (Chatham

Zhōngyāng Wàishì Gōngzuò Lǐngdǎo Xiǎozǔ) chaired by the then Foreign Minister Chen Yi was particularly relevant in shaping most of the foreign affairs. Xuanli Liao, *Chinese Foreign Policy Think Tanks and China's Policy Towards Japan*, p. 22.

233 The progressive worsening of the relationships between the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union, often referred to as 'Sino-Soviet Split', was determined by increasingly divergent viewpoints from the two sides with regard to the development of Communism. The Soviet Union accused the Chinese to have become 'splittists, left-wing adventurists, anti-Marxists', whereas the Chinese blamed the Soviet for their revisionist' behavior.

House) or the Japan Institute for International Affairs (JIJA), the biggest think tank in Asia, mainly because of its privileged function of Track II diplomatic actor in carrying out unofficially official tasks of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.²³⁴

In fact, the increase in power and influence of this long-term focused institute has been connected to the progressive decrease of another institute, whose organizational patterns had further roots than the CIIS, but a later formal establishment. The China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), took the first steps as a research and intelligence center back in the Sino-Japanese War and in the advisers and political leaders' coordinated efforts to oppose the Comintern interference in Yan'an.²³⁵ It was formally established in 1965, as an evolution of the research division of the International Liaison Department (ILD) of the CCP. Since its inception, the Institute has been inextricably bound to the State high-level political power, though undergoing a set of changes in its immediate supervisors: it was first subordinate to the Central Committee up to 1982, when its supervision was transferred to the Ministry of the State Security, before returning, by the turn of the twentieth century, to the State Committee again. The Institute's loosened influence over the decades has been attributed to the dismissal, for natural or retirement reasons, of its original authoritative chairmen, who did not find appropriate successors. In fact, the Institute was the only one whose functioning was allowed during the Cultural Revolution, thus revealing how much its focus on immediate, urgent, and short-term issues was appreciated and needed by policy makers. Moreover, the Institute still ranked very high in the annual report issued by McGann from the University of Pennsylvania. The CICIR ranked 14th among the top 70 Security and International Affairs think tanks, the first of Chinese think tanks; 10th best government affiliated think tank (in this case second to the CASS and the CIIS); 25th among the 100 top worldwide, non US think tanks; 4th among the 45 top think tanks in China, Japan, and South Korea (in these two latter cases second only to CASS in China).²³⁶

234 Shambaugh, "China's International Relations Think Tanks: Evolving Structure and Process", p. 585.

235 Ibid., p. 581.

236 James G. McGann is the Director of the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program University of Pennsylvania

Both the CICIR and the CIIS, despite their fluctuating and opposite evolution, fall under the category of governmental think tanks, according to the definition by Xuanli Liao, or alternatively under that of semi-official think tanks, according to that provided by Zhu Xufeng. A substantial difference among the two has been the range of their research: CIIS has traditionally been focused on “mid-term and long-term issues of strategic importance”, and it has revealed a strong academic imprinting, as demonstrated by the high number of PhD holders among its staff; on the other hand, CICIR has historically made its fortune upon the processing of instant proposals and analysis on short-term or urgent issues, and has invested much on the establishment and nourishment of academic and professional relationships with overseas partners.²³⁷

In those same years, some other research institutes focused on foreign affairs were established, all of them implicitly marking the mounting of Sino-Soviet conflict, and their growing competition in the developing world.

An Africa-Asia Research Institute was founded in 1961, connected to the International Liaison Department of the Chinese Communist Party (ILD), and further divided into a research institute on West Asia and Africa, and one centered on Southeast Asia; following soon after was the establishment of a Soviet-East Europe Institute in 1963, of a research institute on India in 1963, as a consequence of the Sino-Indian border war the year before, and of a Latin America Institute the same year. In addition, a set of colleges and university departments completely devoted to academic research in International Relations were set up to provide high-level training on foreign languages and international politics, and despite their original academic function, some of them are now

Philadelphia, which edits an annual report that offers statistics and data on the development on thinks tanks worldwide in the previous year. It is normally issued the first months of the new year, and it usually includes rankings of top think tanks in the world, by region, by area of research, and by special achievements.

237 A substantial part of their research was aimed at the production of reports to be used during Chinese contacts with other foreign experts or high-level political meetings: according to Shambaugh, most of them are “biographies of interlocutors, the current internal political situation of the interlocutor's nation, recent foreign policy interactions of interlocutors, and compilations of pronouncements concerning China/Taiwan by interlocutors”. Shambaugh, “China's International Relations Think Tanks: Evolving Structure and Process”, p. 583. The effort at entering a broader circle of expertise and relationship may be deductible from the Institute's publication of an English language journal, the *Contemporary International Relations* (现代国际关系 *Xiàndài Guójì Guānxi*).

considered think tanks, too.²³⁸

2.5.2. The broker function of the intellectuals' salons

The life of intellectuals in China has been perpetually marked by cycles of alternated moments of repression (收 *shōu*) and relaxation (放 *jàng*). Such alternating moments have been referred to by Ming-Chen Shai and Stone as cycles of 'loosening' and 'tightening', which have often taken place simultaneously with, or as a consequence of, moments of acute political struggle or lack of ability.²³⁹ Such a coordination may be intended as a further confirmation that the role of intellectuals in China, as well as elsewhere, truly skyrockets at times of crisis; in China, in addition, their functions have changed again and again from that of servants to that of critics of the leadership in power. Inner conflicts amid the Party structures have over time been reflected in the varying attention turned to the expression of civilian needs, and this has been the case not only in China, but, under other circumstances, elsewhere, too. The unfolding of the Cultural Revolution was a negative moment for Chinese intellectuals, who were impeded to express their political standpoint overtly. However, it was during those years that intellectuals incremented the frameworks around which to organize their own thinking.

On the basis of personal linkages developed in the previous years and in the wake of the Cultural Revolution, intellectuals embraced a new kind of organizational structure, that of private networks and private salons (民主沙龙 *minzhǔ shālóng*).²⁴⁰ Given the strengthened Party and State control

238 For instance, Departments of International Politics were set up in Peking University, Fudan University, and People's University. In order to train the staff of the Foreign Ministry and Xinhua News Agency, the College of Foreign Affairs and First Foreign Languages Institute were established, beyond the College of International Affairs (国际关系学院 *Guójì Guānxi Xuéyuàn*) to prepare intelligence personnel for the Investigation Department. See Shambaugh, "China's International Relations Think Tanks: Evolving Structure and Process", p. 577. Some of them can rely on a rich board of accredited scholars, among others Wang Jisi, Director of the School of International Studies and Beijing University, or Shen Dingli at the Centre of American Studies at the Fudan University. Bondiguel and Kellner, "The impact of China's foreign policy think tanks", *BICCS Asia Paper* 5, no.5 (2009): p.8.

239 Ming-Chen Shai and Diane Stone, "The Chinese tradition of policy research institutes", in Diane Stone and Andrew Denham, eds., *Think Tank Traditions. Policy research and the politics of ideas* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p.141.

240 The term was not used at the time as the official definition for this kind of networks, but it began to be adopted

over potentially dissident activities, experts and intellectuals emulated the Parisians and intellectuals encounters that supported revolutionary ideas, and they proved to be safer from most official inference. These networks of intellectuals were the outcomes of intellectuals' self-initiatives, and were ground-breaking initiatives in their primary focus on foreign affairs.

Salons developed just before the outburst of the Cultural Revolution and displayed their power just in its aftermath, during the social protests in 1978-1979. The first recognized example of a salon overtly political in nature, and not hidden behind different definitions, was the salon that gathered around Fang Lizhi, his wife and some other students who would later lead the Tiananmen protests. By organizing this network, they expressed their skepticism toward the real possibilities for intellectuals to influence the policy making process remaining within the political framework itself. Intellectuals gathering around the *minzhǔ shālóng* were among the first to fully acknowledge and exploit the chances of publications: from the cooperation among young writers purged from the capital and other intellectuals still in Beijing, resulted the editing of *Jintian*, the first non-official literary journal.²⁴¹

Intellectual salons can, therefore, be considered as initiators of the second wave of think tanks, in the progressive *crescendo* of autonomy enjoyed by intellectuals, who had, nevertheless, to wait the next political leadership shift to reveal a deeper influence.

2.5.3. The second generation think tanks: 1978-late 1980s

In the North American case, a fundamental turning point in the development of think tanks were the 1960s-1970s. That revolutionary moment was marked by the growth in the number of think tanks that had well-identifiable and explicitly advocated political positions. It was the time when advocacy tanks first appeared, along with the conservative, republican revolution initiated by

later. See Bonnin and Chevrier, "The Intellectual and the State".

²⁴¹ Ibid.

President Reagan.

In China, a similar turning point was reached in the late 1970s-early 1980s, with the end of the Cultural Revolution, and the rehabilitation of the role of experts and advisers.

The emergence of the second generation of Chinese think tanks marked a series of advancements in the developmental process of such institutes, which, in many aspects, were pointing to opposite directions compared to their American colleagues. While American think tanks were progressively losing their long time-pursued objectivity and neutrality, and were becoming direct supporters of specific political beliefs, their Chinese counterparts were being asked to try and gain more credibility through the provision of “more empirically-based, less ideologically and bureaucratically hidebound, and more innovative and cosmopolitan” expertise.²⁴²

A similar request was met by different responses over the 1980s. In some, yet limited cases, intellectuals followed an indirect path, and under the guise of editorial committees (编辑委员会 *biānjí wěiyuánhui*), they coalesced with local publishing houses to transmit knowledge and expertise by the translation of foreign books; a successful example was the *Heishanhu* board of intellectuals, who took charge of the publishing of 470 foreign books, among them Lacan, Foucault, Sartre, and Camus.²⁴³ Some intellectuals began to gather around the editing of book series and journals, including *Toward the Future* book series and *Culture: China and the World* book series, and epitomized their positions in the film *The River Elegy*.²⁴⁴ The great majority of intellectuals, however, followed more ordinary procedures and were organized in think tanks and research institutes within the administrative system. In both cases, the intellectuals' aim was to create a “‘public space’ that was independent of the state; it was a mission that assumed a common discourse based on Enlightenment ideals”.²⁴⁵

242 Tanner, “Changing Windows on a Changing China: The Evolving ‘Think Tank’ System and the Case of the Public Security Sector”, p. 560.

243 Bonnin and Chevrier, “The Intellectual and the State”, p. 584.

244 Fewsmith, *China since Tiananmen*, p. 8. The two book series were respectively started by Jin Guantao and Bao Zunxin, and Gan Yang and Liu Xiaofeng.

245 Ibid.

The new leadership that succeeded Mao, including Deng Xiaoping, Hu Yaobang, Hu Qiaomu, Zhao Ziyang, and Deng Liqun, made the impression of being more aware and enthusiastic of a solid, autonomous policy research, in order to be efficient in the implementing of economic reforms, and competitive in the world economy, where China was willing to enter.

2.5.4. New opportunities for think tanks as a result of a more open political leadership

The beginning of the second generation of think tanks coincided with the advent to power of Deng Xiaoping in 1978, who launched a period of opening-up and reforms. Think tanks enjoyed increasing relaxation and loosened political control, even though conditions were still far from those experienced by contemporary American think tanks. Already established think tanks took advantage of the ameliorated environment to further develop and extend their range of research; moreover, new think tanks were established, especially in the economic field, where the Soviet-style centralized economy had previously impeded the emergence of such institutes. Along with the launch of the economic reforms in 1978, experts and intellectuals' participation in policy decision making increased, and their counseling became more urgent and felt as necessary in the race to the achievement of the 'four modernizations' inaugurated by Deng.²⁴⁶ As underlined by a Chinese scholar, there were more than one concurrent factors to the increased role of think tanks and free thinkers since Deng's appointment,

First, to meet the needs of the reform and open door policy, and the increasing demands of information, China must both understand the external world and strengthen the study of its domestic situation ... Second, the proposition advanced by Deng Xiaoping that 'intellectuals are one part of the working class', has won nation wide support, ... third, 'democratization and scientification of decision-making' has been advocated by the central government and has

246 Bonnin and Chevrier, "The Intellectual and the State", p. 577. The 'Four Modernizations' refer to the political objectives launched by Deng in 1978, on the basis of proposals by Zhou Enlai (1963). They included advancements in the fields of agriculture, industry, national defense, science and technology.

further pushed forward the development of academic research work.²⁴⁷

The new opportunities available for intellectuals and experts were not embodied by Deng Xiaoping's greater openness solely; his close political partners would be promoters of a diverse approach toward the intellectual elite, too. CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang, for instance, rehabilitated, with Deng's permission, several intellectuals who had been purged and sent to labor camps during the anti-rightist campaign and the Cultural Revolution.²⁴⁸ In so doing, he helped the rehabilitation of virtually all the intellectuals purged from the 1950s up to the Cultural Revolution.²⁴⁹ Despite not having received higher education, he strongly supported the role of intellectuals in the accomplishment of the four modernizations: industry, agriculture, national defense, and science and technology.²⁵⁰

Zhao Ziyang succeeded Hu Yaobang as Secretary General of the CCP and he was in office from 1987 to 1989. During his mandate, he contributed with a series of reforms that helped realize the market economy in China. During the Thirteenth Party Congress in 1987, he advanced the proposal of separating the party from the government, which he conceived as a tactical move to reduce the emphasis on ideology and strengthen professionalism within the government. His proposal was rejected by the conservative wings of the party, who justified the refusal insisting on keeping party control over the government.²⁵¹ Moreover, he received international visibility because he was one of the few political leaders who opposed the severe repression of the civilian protesting in Tiananmen square decided by the top leaders.

247 Z. Luo, "The Globalization Challenge and the Role of Think Tanks in China", in J. W. Langford and K. L. Brownsey, eds., *Think Tanks and Governance in the Asia-Pacific Region*, (Halifax, Nuova Scotia: Institute for Research on Public Policy).

248 Hu Yaobang (1915–1989) was one of the Chinese political leaders who succeeded Mao. Appointed chairman of the CCP from 1981 to 1982 by Deng Xiaoping, Hu later substituted this office with that of General Secretary of the CCP, of which he was the first in charge. In 2005, 90th commemoration of Hu's birth, Vice-President Zeng Qinghong described him as "a long-tested and staunch communist warrior, a great proletarian revolutionist and statesman, an outstanding political leader for the Chinese army"; he was also revolutionary in his attempt to guarantee greater autonomy in Tibet.

249 See Merle Goldman, "Politically-Engaged Intellectuals in the Deng-Jiang Era: A Changing Relationship with the Party-State", *The China Quarterly* 145 (1996): pp. 35–52.

250 Retrieved from *China Daily*, http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200511/19/eng20051119_222524.html

251 Ming-Chen Shai and Stone, "The Chinese tradition of policy research institutes", p. 149.

The new wave of think tanks initiated one year before the beginning of Deng Xiaoping's tenure, when the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) was established in 1977, and it went on till the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989.

The augmentation of think tanks in China was an outgrowth of the progressive transformation from the Maoist 'centralized elitism' to what would become Deng's 'pluralist elitism'. After the purged intellectuals were allowed back in the country, they acted as mouthpiece of those intellectual principles that had animated the May Fourth Movement in 1919, of which they mainly recovered the ideas of freedom from intellectual and political doctrines, and the emphasis to be put on “science, democracy, cosmopolitanism, and the leading role for intellectuals as societal conscience”.²⁵² Intellectuals of this period were skeptical of the mainstream Marxist-Leninist theories, and of their most immediate representation in the Chinese context, Maoism. They acknowledge the flaws of such beliefs, which had not contributed to the advancement of society, and fought for the opposite of it, that is for the acquisition of more intellectual and personal liberty.²⁵³ As intellectuals during the Culture Movement stretching roughly from 1915 to 1920 were known as the 'Chinese Enlightenment', given their reference to the European Enlightenment, intellectuals in 1980s China were referred to as 'New Enlightenment'.²⁵⁴

Intellectuals found expanded interstices where to let their voices resound. These were not limited to the traditional formal bonds with top policy leaders, but now encompassed also the new, revolutionary channels offered by informal public spaces: official and non-official journals, informal intellectual meetings and conferences, sporadic appearances on television.²⁵⁵

The expanded spaces where freed intellectuals and think tanks could now operate did not mean that think tanks became uncontested providers of advisory expertise for political leaders upon all issues.

252 Fewsmith, *China since Tiananmen*, p. 8.

253 Goldman, “Politically-Engaged Intellectuals in the Deng–Jiang Era”, p. 36.

254 Fewsmith, *China since Tiananmen*, p. 8.

255 Ibid.

Indeed, the ambivalent attitude that political leaders had deserved toward intellectuals throughout the great part of Chinese history, which was similar to that experienced in Western countries, did not disappear completely, even after Mao's passing.

Deng himself was revolutionary as he permitted the emergence of semi-independent think tanks patronized by individual leaders, he established formal liaisons with some think tanks, and he occasionally relying upon their counseling. However, he did not distinguish himself so much from his predecessors in terms of his still limited reliance on such institutes for advisory, to such an extent that some authors have argued that some major decisions he made were more the result of his own “visionary thinking and political courage”, rather than the outcome of meetings and agreement with think tanks.²⁵⁶ Among the reported origins of such ambivalence toward intellectuals were the very recent settlement of the university system after the disruptive wave of the Cultural Revolution, the still recent change of political leadership, and Deng Xiaoping's personal features, only partially counterbalanced by the greater enterprising spirit of some other political leaders. Among these, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang accounted for sound promoters of think tanks' expertise. They had connections with several intellectuals with liberal ideas who later became activists during the Tiananmen movements in 1989, and who were, therefore, negatively affected by Hu and Zhao's fall after these events.²⁵⁷ As a matter of fact, Deng belonged after all to the same political generation of Mao, and the indoctrinated education he had received was not easy to be totally canceled. Surely, he relieved the tight political control exerted by his predecessor, but prosecutions against intellectual activists were not absent, even after Deng. They were different, however, from the large-scale nature of Mao's repressions: they were limited in their life span and in their target, since they did not aim at beating the intellectual environment as a whole, but specific authors or works.²⁵⁸

256 Cheng Li, for instance, reports that Deng preferred to listen to her daughter's gossips for the drafting of official documents, rather than getting informed through the experts' reports. Cheng Li, “China's New Think Tanks: Where Officials, Entrepreneurs, and Scholars Interact,” *China Leadership Monitor* 29 (2009): pp. 1–21.

257 Ibid. p. 3.

258 Goldman, “Politically-Engaged Intellectuals in the Deng–Jiang Era”, p. 37.

2.5.5. The remaining seeds of an authoritarian leadership

Throughout the whole Deng's mandate, the coalition he established with the community of intellectuals and developing think tanks was ambivalent. He intended to rely upon their updated studies, while trying to confine their operational framework within well-defined boundaries, preferably not entering the political sphere.

A permanent controversial point between Deng and intellectuals was, indeed, the extent of the reforms. Deng, together with the community of intellectuals connected to him and to the Party elders, agreed upon the urgency of reforms in the economic sphere solely. On the contrary, younger intellectuals, who revolved around Hu Yaobang, claimed the necessity of undertaking political reforms, as well, in particular with regard to the introduction of more democratic principles. Such clashes of interests and positions were reflected in the different degree of autonomy that was expected to be granted to research institutions, in the viewpoint of research institutions members' themselves on one hand, and of political leadership, on the other hand. The former fought for a comprehensive autonomy, which included the economic and social sphere, as well as the political field; policy leaders were on the other hand resolute not to recognize them political independence. Clashes of ideas between these two standpoints not always solved peacefully: as aforementioned, Deng occasionally used more forceful methods to let his ideology prevail, as it happened in September 1979, when he condemned Wei Jingsheng to 15 years of solitary confinement, as a punishment for having openly criticized Deng's policies.²⁵⁹ During the Conference held between January and April 1979, such clashes were brought to the front: Deng's rigorousness to defend the Party's authority and its ideological foundations contrasted the younger intellectuals' quest for ideological revision and tolerance.

259 Wei Jingsheng is a Chinese human rights activist, militant of the Chinese democracy movement. Wei was arrested and condemned to prison in 1978 for his 'counterrevolutionary activities', embodied by his essay titled *Fifth Modernization*, which was posted on the Beijing 'Democracy Wall' in September 1978. His imprisonment lasted up to 1993, when he was released shortly in view of the potential appointment of China as the next Olympic Games location. He was imprisoned again under false pretense and he was definitely released in 1997, when he was received by the United States.

Other moments of frictions between the traditionalist Party members and the younger, forward-looking intellectuals existed throughout the 1980s. In 1981 the intellectual and political communities centered around Deng strengthened their intransigent positions. They perceived the increasing accusations against Mao's totalitarianism as an accusation against themselves, who had carried out those policies while Mao had been alive; moreover, they were alarmed by the social movements unfolding in Eastern Europe, fearing that those democratization voices could spark similar activism in China, as well.²⁶⁰ On the basis of such fears, Deng launched, that same year, a repressive campaign against Bai Hua, producer of the movie *Unrequited Love*, followed by a broader campaign against the Western principles, which were perceived as polluting the traditional Chinese morale. On that occasion, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang demonstrated their revolutionary tendency, in that they advised Deng about the negative consequences that such a brutal repression could have on China's relations with Western countries.²⁶¹ Following that event, Hu and Zhao further convinced Deng to introduce political reforms toward a more democratic country. More far-sighted intellectuals proposed multi-party elections and the recognition of universal human rights: nonetheless, the firstly adopted changes were only administrative ones, including, for instance, the division of Party and central government.

Again, frictions surfaced between 1986 and 1987, in a different environment. With the implicit support of Hu Yaobang, who had not impeded his work up to that moment, Fang Lizhi sparked the first student movements in favor of a democratic establishment.²⁶² They were the first signs of the student protests that would shake China and the World a few years later, and like the later ones, they were also repressed as soon as they came to represent a challenge to the established power. The

260 In particular, Deng and the Party elder policy makers feared the establishment of the Solidarity Movement (*Solidarność* in Polish), a Polish social movement that started in August 1980, the first trade union not under the communist party control. It gained extensive popular adhesion since its outset, and received support from the United States in its first years. The Chinese political leaders were frightened by the possibilities of a similar movement to spread over China and overthrow the Party.

261 Goldman, "Politically-Engaged Intellectuals in the Deng–Jiang Era", p. 40.

262 Fang Lizhi was a Chinese astrophysicist, who worked as vice-chairman of the University of Science and Technology of China. He is considered to be one of the inspiring voices of the student protests since 1986 up to the Tiananmen major protests in 1989. He was purged from the Chinese Communist Party in 1987.

local protests that Fang Lizhi had contributed to fuel inspired another campaign against the 'bourgeois liberalization', which, once again, referred to Western values and their supposedly disrupting effects.²⁶³ Nevertheless, as a result of considerations regarding the negative effects that any destructive breakdown of protests could shed a negative light on China from the outside world, in consequence of the increased bonds with foreign intellectuals, even this campaign was short-term and interrupted on Deng's orders. Similarly to the Mao's Era, under Deng, too, "critical or unorthodox ideas could be voiced publicly when, and only when, the Party gave the signal".²⁶⁴ Even so, the coalition between Deng and the intellectual lines that represented the first line revisionists was feeble, not so much stronger than that existing under Mao, and it was destined to become even more loose, with the progressive establishment of relatively autonomous think tanks.

2.5.6. A bivalent attitude of intellectuals toward the power elite

Having experienced, for the most part of history, a political environment that constrained and dismantled their activities, intellectuals in China have developed a cautious attitude toward the top power elite. Indeed, their ideological perspectives have remained the same, but the instruments used to obtain them have been, at least, dual.

Intellectuals in China have generally been distinguished by their position relative to the official political leadership. Peter Moody has proposed the categorization of establishment intellectuals and non-establishment intellectuals, depending on their belonging or not to the government bureaucracy.²⁶⁵

Establishment intellectuals have represented the majority of intellectuals over the Chinese

263 Goldman, "Politically-Engaged Intellectuals in the Deng–Jiang Era", p. 41. It was after some protests that unfolded in Hefei universities and during the local elections, which further extended to other urban areas, that Hu Yaobang was purged from his position within the Communist Party. Indeed, he refused to carry out Deng's order to suppress the protests.

264 Bonnin and Chevrier, "The Intellectual and the State", p. 577.

265 Peter Moody, *Opposition and Dissent in Contemporary China* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institute, 1977), as cited in Ming-Chen Shai and Stone, "The Chinese tradition of policy research institutes", p. 145.

history. They are experts who are part of official or semi-official think tanks; they feel a “sense of responsibility” toward the political authority; they have exploited informal channels to advise policy leaders; and have played the bivalent function of serving the leadership and criticizing the whole society at times.²⁶⁶ Several members of the establishment intellectuals community enjoy formal and informal channels to communicate with the political leadership, and they are often appointed to fill high-level political positions.²⁶⁷ Establishment intellectuals could be described as having pursued a sort of 'Trojan horse' strategy, meaning that they have acknowledged the limited spaces in which they are allowed to operate, and they have tried to bypass such constraints by accepting them and exploiting them at their advantage. In other words, they are part of the official government framework, in the belief that it is easier this way to influence policy choices from within, given the autonomy margin granted them from their position. However, they do this not only consciously, but also willingly, since a radical power subversion is rarely fixed on their agenda.

A smaller percentage of intellectuals has operated as non-establishment intellectuals. This limited component of the intellectual community has refused to compromise with the Party, and has supported dissenting views fearlessly and overtly. There have been examples of this latter group of people, but they have been few and soon repressed. Sticking to the period considered in this chapter, beyond the examples provided elsewhere in the chapter, we could call to mind Bao Zunxin, academic at the History Institute of the Chinese Academic of Social Sciences (CASS), and a fervent supporter of the urgency for China to adopt a more democratic system. As a political activist, he played a great role during the Tiananmen protests, after which he was sentenced to 5 years of prison in the charge of “counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement”.²⁶⁸

266 The expression “sense of responsibility” comes from Merle Goldman, *China's Intellectuals: Advice and Dissent* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), as cited in Ming-Chen Shai and Stone, “The Chinese tradition of policy research institutes”, p. 145.

267 Ming-Chen Shai and Stone, “The Chinese tradition of policy research institutes”, p. 148.

268 Article by Nicholas D. Kristof, “China Charges 8 Dissidents in 1989 Tiananmen Protests”, *The New York Times*, January 27, 1991, <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/01/27/world/china-sentences-8-leading-dissidents.html?src=pm>

2.6. An overview of the think tanks environment

2.6.1. The origins of specialized academies think tanks: the CASS

The second wave of Chinese think tanks began in the late 1970s, inaugurated by the emergence of the CASS Institute. Starting from that year, Western analysts began to show interest in Chinese think tanks, whereas this had been previously limited because of the ideologically and politically strong content of such institutes in China.

The CASS emerged as the extension of the Department of Philosophy and Social Sciences of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, founded back in 1949, and would soon become a sort of a reference center for those think tanks that would later be called semi-official think tanks or specialized academies: a kind of central wheel in a hub and spokes system.

The CASS flourished as a research center devoted to

fully pursue the strategy of invigorating the nation through science and education, devote great efforts to construct a number of research institutes with international reputation, [and] build the CASS into the highest academic research organization in the fields of philosophy and social sciences, which will rely on basic theoretical research and will be characteristic of multi-disciplinary and comprehensive studies with emphasis on a macroscopic, strategic and foresighted nature.²⁶⁹

This latter objective has been accomplished, as revealed by the many statistics that rank the CASS in the highest positions of Chinese most influential think tanks. According to McGann's 2012 think tanks index report, the CASS is the 5th top 100 non-US think tank worldwide, and the 17th if both US and non-US think tanks are considered; number one among top 45 think tanks in China, Japan, and South Korea; moreover, it stands out for its leading position among Chinese think tanks in

²⁶⁹ Retrieved from the CASS official website, http://bic.cass.cn/english/infoShow/Arcitle_Show_Cass.asp?BigClassID=1&Title=CASS

terms of top International Development think tanks, Domestic and International Economic Policy think tanks, and for its Outstanding Policy-Oriented Research Programs.²⁷⁰

The CASS soon developed as one of the major Chinese think tanks to specialize on international affairs, since the new domestic and international circumstances seemed to present experts with new policy needs and a quest for improved roles. The Academy's specialization in international affairs has remained over the years, and it can be noted from the current existence of eight departments completely devoted to this subject. The CASS has been referred to as a sort of “administrative equivalent of a Ministry”, and it has constantly remained subordinated to the State Council. It is now composed of 31 institutes and 51 research centers, most of them established between 1978 and 1980. It covers 261 sub-disciplines, and it can count upon 3,767 on-the-job staff members, of which 2,975 are professional workers.²⁷¹

The specialization in a specific research area of which the CASS was a sort of forerunner, has given rise to the specialized academy-like think tank, that is research centers with a main issue range.

A set of institutes rotate around the CASS, in a sort of father-son affiliation relationship. Among these, the Institute of Japanese Studies (IJS, 日本研究所 *Ribēn Yánjiūsuǒ*), established in 1981, exerted particular influence upon the Sino–Japanese disputes over the US–Japanese Security Alliance, on the History Issue, and on the Baogang Project issue.²⁷² The Institute of World Politics and Economics (IWPE) resulted from the combination in 1980 of the Institute of World Economy and the Institute of World Politics, the former being established in 1964 under Mao's instructions.

The two institutes had been part of the Chinese Academy of Science, and they had provided each

270 McGann, *2012 Global Go To Think Tanks Index Report and Policy Advice* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2013).

271 Retrieved from the CASS official website.

272 Xuanli Liao maintained that the role exerted by Chinese think tanks should not be overestimated, but it should not even be dismissed. In particular, she claimed that some particular, specialized think tanks managed to make their advice be listened by political leader, even in politically sensitive issues, as in the three case studies she reported: the US–Japanese Security Alliance, the History Issue, and the Baogang Project. The History Issue refers to the diverse approach to take with regard to the Japanese responsibilities during the Sino–Japanese War in the 1930s–1940s. According to the Chinese, the Japanese should have openly admitted their guilt, and they ought have expressed their apologies for the past events. On the contrary, the Japanese maintained divergent opinions upon the course of history, but the official position changed along with the changes of political leadership.

department of the central government with relevant data about world economy, shooting for the provision of “important reference for economic reform, opening up to the outside world the economic development paths in China through the review and introduction of foreign economic systems, economic reforms, economic policies, development strategies and economic practices”.²⁷³

2.6.2. The Development Research Center (DRC)

It was in 1981 that the currently second major think tank in China appeared. The Development Research Center (DRC, 国务院发展研究中心 *Guówùyuàn Fāzhǎn Yánjiū Zhōngxīn*) emerged from integration of the Economic Research Center (ERC), the Technical Economic Research Center (TERC), and the Price Research Center (PRC), a set of economically focused research centers under the State Council's supervision.²⁷⁴ The Center would be further expanded after the Tiananmen crackdown with the merger of the Rural Development Research Center (RDRC).²⁷⁵ The DRC originated from the desire to set up an *ad hoc* institute that could fit those economists who did not belong to the CASS 'membership', mainly because of ideological conflicts sparked during the Cultural Revolution or earlier.²⁷⁶ The DRC has constantly aimed at reforming and opening-up China, developing over the years a great amount of foreign exchanges, accomplishing a set of internationally sponsored projects, and organizing high-level conferences.²⁷⁷ Its primary goals were, and still are, to conduct advanced study on the overall national economic and social development, and to provide the State Council and the Central Committee with policy “proposals on mid- and long-term development plans and regional development policies”, to “conduct international collaborative research and exchanges with relevant international organizations and research institutions”, to advance the research on rational utilization of human

273 Retrieved from the official website, <http://en.iwep.org.cn/cate/1000.html>

274 Bondiguel and Kellner, “The impact of China's foreign policy think tanks”, p. 11.

275 Naughton., “China's Economic Think Tanks: Their Changing Role in the 1990s”.

276 Ibid., pp. 627–628.

277 Some examples were “China and the world in the Nineties” and “China Development Forum”. See the official website, <http://www.drc.gov.cn/>, or the English version, <http://www.drc.gov.cn/english/>

and national resources, on the development of income distribution and social security.²⁷⁸

Some of the Departments of the DRC include the Department of Macroeconomic Research, the Department of Development Strategy and Regional Economy, the Research Department of Rural Economy, of Industrial Economy, of Techno-Economic Research, of Foreign Economic Relations, of Social Development, and the Institute of Market Economy.

The DRC is placed directly under the State Council, and its research efforts are deeply connected to it and to other major political organs. The tight-knit relationship between the DRC and the most relevant official economic organs can be retrieved reading the mission statement of one of the DRC Departments, the Department of Macroeconomic Research. As one can read in the official website,

The Department of Macroeconomic Research undertakes in-depth research on major economic issues of significant concern to the State Council, and is directly involved in the research and decision-making process in a number of key economic reforms in China. It participates in the investigation, discussion and drafting of relevant government documents, and undertakes major research projects designated by the State Council. The Department conducts research on major issues entrusted by the government ministries and commissions. The Department has undertaken research projects for the Ministry of Commerce, the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Science and Technology, and China Insurance Regulatory Commission on various major subjects. Many of its policy recommendations have been adopted by the government decision makers.²⁷⁹

As a result, DRC can be considered an influential policy provider for its 'bosses' demands, and some of its Departments have proven particularly important at specific times in the past: the Department of Development Strategy and Regional Economic, for instance, has adopted computable general equilibrium models as its characterizing tool and has applied it to forecast the implications and impacts of China's entrance in the World Trade Organization. As a rather dependent body, the DRC has not historically stood out for particularly innovative or groundbreaking proposals, nor with

278 Ibid., DRC official website.

279 Available at http://www.drc.gov.cn/english/aboutdrc/Table%20of%20DRC%20Organizations_d.asp?departid=6 , accessed September, 9th 2013.

unpopular ideas.²⁸⁰

Today, while still entering the 2012 top think tanks list, in particular when compared to other Asian think tanks, it ranks in middle-low positions among the top think tanks worldwide.²⁸¹

2.6.3. Other think tanks in a more diversified intellectual environment

Along the specialization wave initiated by the CASS, other institutes specialized by region emerged since the early 1980s. Among them, the Institute of Taiwan Studies, born in 1984 under the State Council and the Central Committee's equivalent Bureaus. It was not an insignificant center, since it presumably played a role in the drafting of the White Book on Taiwan in 2000.²⁸² The only governmental institute to focus solely on Taiwan issues, the Institute of Taiwan Studies used to be a separate arm of the CICIR in its yearly years; it then became an independent institution, and it now responds directly to the State Council's Taiwan Affairs Office.²⁸³

Between the mid-1980s and the end of the decade two more research institutes specialized in the Pacific area were set up. The China National Committee for Pacific Economic Cooperation (CNCPEC) was arranged in 1986, in accordance with the charter of the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), a sort of institute of reference for most centers on Pacific economic studies. The CNPEC is allowed to arrange autonomously its board of members. These do not belong exclusively to the Chinese government; on the contrary, they must simultaneously be appointed among business industries, academic entities, and other intellectual circles, according to their private capacities and personal skills. It aims at seeking and promoting economic prosperity and

280 Naughton, "China's Economic Think Tanks: Their Changing Role in the 1990s", p. 628.

281 See McGann, *2012 Global Go To Think Tanks Index Report and Policy Advice*.

282 The White Paper (officially the One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue) is a document issued in February 2000 by the Chinese Central Government, exposing and supporting the One-China Principle. In it, the Chinese government maintained that Taiwan was, and had always been, an integral part of China; that Taiwan's secessionists only made up a scarce percentage of the total population, and that consequently, their attempt to prove Taiwan's Independence by a referendum under the pretext of the "sovereignty belongs to people" principle was a futile one, since Taiwan's status as part of China was unequivocally stated in every official document.

283 As reported by Glaser and Saunders, "Chinese Civilian Foreign Policy Research Institutes: Evolving Roles and Increasing Influence", p. 599.

cooperation within the Pacific region.²⁸⁴ The Committee did not appear on McGann *2012 Global Go To Think Tanks Report*, but *Global Times* ranked it 7th among the top think tanks in China, behind the CIIS and CICIR, but ahead of CISS and SIIS (上海国际问题研究院 *Shànghǎi Guójìwèntí Yánjiūyuàn*).²⁸⁵ In addition, the Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies was founded in 1988, on the eve of the Tiananmen events, itself centered on South Asia, East Asia, and South Pacific regions.²⁸⁶

In 1979, a semi-private think tank was established in Beijing, with the original name Beijing Institute of International Strategic Studies (BISS), later renamed China Institute for International Strategic Studies (CISS) in 1992. The Institute contributed to the national security and the economic construction of China, and at the 30th commemoration of its foundation in 2009 it received and was praise for its high-level contribution in these two fields by Chen Bingde, member of the Central Military Commission and chief of general staff of the PLA.

284 Retrieved from <http://www.chinavista.com/products/pecc/pecc.html>

285 CISS and SIIS stand respectively for the China Institute for International Strategic Studies and the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies.

286 Retrieved from <http://yataisuo.cass.cn/english/about/intro.asp>

3. THINK TANKS IN THE UNITED STATES AND IN CHINA FROM 1989 TO THE TURN OF THE 20th CENTURY

3.1. United States. Introduction

The 1980s covered a span of time full of changes for the United States, and think tanks that developed in those years reflected such evolutions in the way they undertook and altered their research style. The kind of research they conducted was revised, as well as the sort of experts that constituted their board of trustees. As seen in the first chapter, focused on the historical establishment of think tanks in the United States, starting from the appointment of President Nixon, and with Reagan more overtly, several conservative-minded think tanks sided with conservative parties, and they became a resource bank for conservative ideas and conservative fellows. Experts working for such centers were required to be more and more specialized in the subjects that represented the hot issues of the moment, since more often than ever the political leadership demanded quick proposals and solutions. Increasingly, experts were drawn from the foreign policy domain, which became an area more think tanks started to focus on. At the same time, political decisions made in Washington were increasingly centers of interest for the business community, who participated not only as audience, but also as financial backers. Consequently, and this would become another characterizing feature of think tanks from the 1980 onwards, specialized intellectuals within foreign policy-centered think tanks began to conceive their originally academic role as one alternative way to reach influential positions in Washington. Being a member of a Washington-based think tank became synonym for a chance to advance one's own career. Being a member of a Washington-based think tank developed into one of “the means for many of these policy types to make their way, retaining a base in Washington, where the issues are debated and discussed, where opportunities for governmental and private consulting exist, and where political

journalism is centered”²⁸⁷.

In fact, the selection of experts working at the direct or indirect service of power in the United States at the end of the 1980s-early 1990s was a wide one. Experts had grown over the decades before not only in number, but also in the knowledge and expertise they could offer, and the charges they were able to hold. Government, as their primary user, could now rely on 'scholar-statesmen', former public officers who fulfilled high-level positions, such as former National Security Advisors Zbigniew Brzezinski or Henry A. Kissinger; as an alternative, they could appoint 'policy specialists', who, even though perhaps not guarantor of the same authority, could provide policy makers with academic teaching based on full-time research; alternatively, policy makers could have exploited the expertise of 'policy consultants', members of contract research organizations-like think tanks, inaugurated by the RAND Corporation and the Urban Institute, which operated on the basis of a client-supplier relationship. 'Government experts' could similarly be exploited by government officials, given the good conjunction of knowledge and privileged position within the bureaucracy. Two new categories seemed to proliferate starting from the late 1970s in particular: 'policy interpreters', who took advantage of the original opportunities created by journalism and the media diffusion; and 'policy entrepreneurs', who, undertaking the task of moving economic resources toward specific research institutes, embodied the growing participation of businessmen within the ideological environment.

²⁸⁷ Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 211.

3.2. An exemplary model of the tendencies in Washington: CSIS and its move toward the center

The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) represented both changes aforementioned. The Center opened its doors in 1962, during a period of high escalation in the Soviet-American confrontation in the Cold War perspective.²⁸⁸ Members of the Center would later recall that the Center had been founded in a moment when it was necessary “to find a way to survive as a nation and prosper as a people”.²⁸⁹ Among the board of founders were David Abshire and Admiral Arleigh Burke, respectively an historian who had worked for the Army, and a former naval chief. The social and working origins of these two 'idea brokers' were indicative of the change underway: economists and engineers were not the only intellectuals who could bring about social and political changes; other specialists, including historians, businessmen, and union officials were asked to gather and funnel their scattered and disparate knowledge to face national security problems. The Center opened its doors as an affiliated branch of Georgetown University, until the two entities parted in 1986 because of the divergent viewpoints about how to manage the Center. The Center embraced a different standpoint from the other bipartisan think tanks burgeoned in the years just before. Unlike conservative think tanks, such as the Heritage Foundation or the American Enterprise Institute, which were explicitly vowed to be the advocates and partisans of conservative precepts more than to conduct academic research, the Center for Strategic and International Studies dropped the narrow target of influencing political leaders through the marketing of ideas, while beginning to expand its aim to the acquisition of a broader policy consensus. Indeed, the approach of the center was that policies emerge from consensus and discussion, rather than from hard political struggle. As a result, they supported an 'ethos process', a *modus operandi* that allowed them

288 In October, 1962 the US aviation denounced the existence of a Soviet missile base in Cuba. The crisis lasted a couple of days, before finding a solution through some letters exchanged between President Kennedy and Soviet leader Khrushchev. This moment was considered one of the most critical ones during the Cold War period, mainly because of the real threat of an imminent and destructive use of nuclear weapons.

289 Quotation retrieved from CSIS official website, <http://csis.org/about-us/-brief-history>

to bring together people with different political standpoints to cover a given issue.²⁹⁰

The Center has pooled intellectuals and members of the business community with the intent that it could facilitate the “union of intellectuals and opportunity”.²⁹¹ Thus, in today's list of the Center's board of trustees one can read names of bankers such as Othman Benjelloun from the BCME Bank, Linda W. Hart, Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Hart Group, and Kenneth Gerald Langone, Chairman and founder of the Invemed Associates.²⁹² Simultaneously, it can also count upon a number of counselors appointed among former senators, including John Warner and Sam Nunn, the current CSIS President, and National Security Advisors, among them Zbigniew Brzezinski, Henry A. Kissinger, and Brent Scowcroft.

Nevertheless, the Center's operational structure has drawn sharp criticisms, especially from the academic world to which the center originally belonged. Full-time professors at Georgetown University, for instance, looked askance at their colleagues of the Center, blaming them for the exaggerate attention they directed to television appearances or the exaggerated number of contracts with media.

So much attention turned by the Center's trustees to the direct visibility of the Center itself and of its proposals has been driven by the commitment to influence and serve the decision making process in more immediate ways. The Center invests its members, named 'scholar-statesmen', with the task of building consensus around a given issue, with the use of the most instant tools they have, including public talks and informal debates. Thus, as one can read in the official website, in 1978 CSIS helped change the Congress perceptions of the Cambodian genocide; in 1985, it inspired a reform of the Defense Department and Joint Chief of Staffs; moreover, in 1998 it contributed the Social Security reform debate; in 2007, it took part in the discussions on American declining hegemony and offered

290 The term 'ethos process' is attributed by Smith to several researchers at CSIS describing their own work. Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, pp. 207–213.

291 Retrieved from CSIS official website, <http://csis.org/newbuilding>

292 BCME (Banque Marocaine du Commerce Extérieur) is a big Moroccan bank, with branches in Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, England, Germany, and China. The Hart Group, Inc. is a group of companies specialized in building materials for residential and commercial structures. Invemed Associates is a merchant banking and investment banking firm.

some proposals about an American “smart power approach” to its global engagement.²⁹³

293 From the official website, available at <http://csis.org/about-us/-brief-history>

3.3. Reactions from the margins of the ideas industry: traditionalists and libertarians' alternatives

Starting from the mid-1970s, new research centers sparked intellectual and political discourses that differed from the strictly conservative or liberal standpoints. The emerging research institutions expressed a growing dissatisfaction with the tools and the accomplishments gained by the government in its attempt to rule. These alternative voices maintained that all the idioms used by policy experts so far had been fallacious and lacking, since they had lost sight of true values. Traditionalist intellectuals claimed for a return to traditional religious precepts, whereas libertarians struggled for a reduction of governmental intrusion, in all its shapes.

3.3.1. The quest for moral rigor prompted by traditionalists

With the scientific progress displaying its huge potentialities and dangers along the course of the Cold War, a number of new research institutes in the United States organized their activities around the opposition to such evolutions. A couple of research institutes were set up since the mid-1970s aiming at a higher moral discourse, and a return to original values. Among these were the Ethics and Public Policy Center and the Rockford Institute.

The Ethics and Public Policy Center was established in 1976 by Ernest Lefever, a political theorist, foreign affairs expert, and church minister, who founded the Center on the ground of his credo: a well-established skepticism for progress and rationalism. Lefever maintained the necessity of reestablishing great “ethical imperatives”, among these respect for individual dignity and freedom, justice, and limited government, which had been swept away by the scientific progress.²⁹⁴ In his view, the neoconservative combatants had proven to be the best actors to embody such values;

294 Retrieved from the official website, <http://www.eppc.org/about/>

therefore, the Center he supported was vowed to serve the political leadership in its critical issues in full compliance with the precepts he identified with the 'Judeo-Christian moral tradition'. Lefever represented the conservative and hard line side of the religious and political sphere of the moment: by consequence, his nomination as Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs in the Department of State in 1981 by President Ronald Reagan was rejected, because of his extremist background (even though he had previously served as senior researcher at Brookings Institution). The Center has been operating so far within the claim of letting the religious precepts of the alleged Judeo-Christian tradition permeate the political discourse.

The Rockford Institute in Illinois is a second example of political activism arisen from the religious side, founded the same year as the Ethics and Public Policy Center, in 1976, which, interestingly, also coincided with the nation's bicentennial foundation. The Institute was established by Rockford College President John Howard, and it is often described as a representative of 'paleoconservatism'. Since its outset, the Institute has worked to "preserve the institutions of the Christian West: the family, the Church, and the rule of law; private property, free enterprise, and moral discipline; high standards of learning, art, and literature".²⁹⁵ The Institute has committed itself to recover morality within the society, and to cure the 'moral rot' denounced by its then chairman Allan Carlson. Contrary to other contemporary think tanks, like the Heritage Foundation and the AEI, which avoided discourses on issues that had to do with morality, the Rockford Institute made of family, religion, and church its major focus of interest, given its sincere faith that politics is modeled mainly after cultural values. The Institute has been promoting the restoration of a preindustrial community, since it rejects the idea of a positive and innate *homo economicus*.

Both the Ethics and Public Policy Center and the Rockford Institute emerged as think tanks that protested against the loss of traditional moral values, and they tried to fight this by promoting the

295 Retrieved from <http://www.chroniclesmagazine.org/rockford-institute/about-the-rockford-institute/>. *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture* is the monthly magazine published by the Rockford Institute and edited by Thomas Fleming, current president of the Rockford Institute. *Chronicles* is depicted as a stronghold of anti-globalist, anti-interventionist stances.

most radical expressions of such principles. They did gain some visibility within the Reagan Administration, but being radical institutes they did not manage to enjoy broad public participation. Their role at the margins is a further proof that think tanks' success is dictated by their power to embody median positions, and to display the mildness and moderation which allow them to efficiently compete in the battle of ideas.

3.3.2. Libertarianism and the Cato Institute: another, more successful response to the discontent

Libertarianism was another school of thought which gained increased visibility starting from the early and mid-1980s, mainly because it represented the ideology embraced by some later influential think tanks, the Cato Institute among them.

Libertarianism developed in the early 1970s as a branch of liberalism, soon radicalizing most of its assumptions and radically challenging the way the policy structure had evolved over the previous century. The fundamental axioms of this ideology are a total rejection of government, both in its federal and local forms, and a complete adhesion to capitalism in its most radical representations. Government is rejected because it deprives the human being of his freedom and of his private property, and because it embodies the human incapacity of gaining any real knowledge. The human knowledge is necessarily uncertain, and government officials, pretending to organize rationally people's living, act as channels and personifications of such incompetence. Libertarians reject social sciences for the same reason, thus asserting that the only way to organize and transfer knowledge is through the market and its free mechanisms, in other words, through the “free market environmentalism”.²⁹⁶ Libertarians' rejection of the state differs, in fact, between the anarchists, who totally reject the government looking forward to stateless societies, and the miniarchists, who, on the contrary, are disposed to accept minimal state intervention in such sensitive fields like state

296 Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 220.

defense and public order.

The most successful think tank that embraced the libertarian credo was the Cato Institute, set up in San Francisco in 1977.²⁹⁷ The Institute owes its name to the *Cato's Letters*, a series of pamphlets issued in the 18th century by John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, in which the two English writers denounced colonialism and an excessive governmental power.²⁹⁸

The Cato Institute's avowed mission is to “originate, disseminate, and increase understanding of public policies based on the principles of individual liberty, limited government, free markets, and peace”.²⁹⁹ The Institute's work and aim are probably best described by using its own words: “It combines an appreciation for entrepreneurship, the market process, and lower taxes with strict respect for civil liberties and skepticism about the benefits of both the welfare state and foreign military adventurism”.³⁰⁰

Therefore, translating minimal state intervention into the foreign policy domain, experts working at the Cato Institute have sided for a gradual withdrawal of the United States from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and a similar decrease in American military backing of European countries, Korea, and Japan, which should have become more independent in their self-support.³⁰¹ In the domestic, as well as in the foreign policy domains, the Cato Institute aims at disseminating its quest for individual liberty in as many issue areas as possible, since the threats of an excessive government intervention lay everywhere. In particular, Cato works to extend the 'civil society', where people decide independently with regard to their own lives, as opposed to the 'political society', where someone else makes such choices.³⁰²

Since its onset, the Cato Institute has bravely supported its credo, and it has refused any label that

297 Cato maintained tight bonds to the Libertarian Party in California until 1981, when it autonomously moved to Washington. This change permitted the Institute to enjoy the necessary degree of independence to exert considerable influence in the policy making process. *Ibid.*, p. 220.

298 Smith is careful to remark that the name of the Institute has nothing to do with the Roman censor, who was one of the spokesmen of the struggle against corruption, luxury, and extravagances of his time.

299 Retrieved from Cato's official website, <http://www.cato.org/mission>

300 *Ibid.*

301 Smith, *The Idea Brokers*, p. 221.

302 Cato's official website, <http://www.cato.org/mission>

did not perfectly match its beliefs. It denied it was a conservative, liberal, or classical liberal institute, since all these labels missed its real mission, that is to “applaud the progressive extension of the promises of the Declaration of Independence to more people, especially to women, African-Americans, religious minorities, and gay and lesbian people” and to “continue to extend the promise of political freedom and economic opportunity to those who are still denied it, in our own country and around the world”.³⁰³

303 Ibid.

3.3.3. American think tanks' development of specific centers focused on China

Along with the impressive economic growth experienced by China starting from 1978, several American think tanks have progressively devoted part of their research efforts to China, its impressive and astonishing growth, and its relations with Asian neighbors and with the United States. As stated by Brookings in 2001, during the 1980s and 1990s China emerged as a major actor of the world economy. By then, it had increased its “foreign trade [...] from about \$20 billion in the late 1970s to \$475 billion in 2000”, and it had become by 1995 “one of the top ten trading countries in the world”, attracting foreign investments from all over the world.³⁰⁴

The recent path followed by China in its rush for development has been deeply analyzed by American research centers, in the awareness that no sufficient knowledge has been produced so far around China. As a result, a dense network of centers and departments focused on China have emerged. In particular, in 2006 the John L. Thornton Center has been established as an affiliated center of the Brookings Institution, which later that year opened another office at Beijing Tsinghua University.³⁰⁵ The purpose of the Center is to conduct in depth research on China's changing role in Asia and in the entire world; to understand the growing challenges that China is facing, including growing social inequalities, energy security challenges, and sustainable growth, in hopes of cooperating with Chinese partners to examine the consequences they might have on the entire planet. In particular, the Center's main areas of interest include Economics and Trade, China's Domestic Challenges, Energy Policy, and Foreign Policy; the research outcomes are conveyed and diffused through op-eds, newspapers, the organization of public programs, roundtables, seminars,

304 Retrieved from the Brookings Institution website. Article by Nicholas R. Lardy, “Issues in China's WTO Accession”, *Brookings Institution*, May 9, 2001, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/testimony/2001/05/09foreignpolicy-lardy>

305 The John Thornton's office that opened in October 2012 in Beijing is known as the Brookings-Tsinghua Center. Its goal is to facilitate “joint and individual research projects by Chinese and American scholars focusing on economic and social issues in China's development”. The Center “serves as a liaison to think–tanks, academic institutions, government officials, corporations and individual scholars in China”. Retrieved from the John L. Thornton official website, available at <http://www.brookings.edu/about/centers/china/about>

and conferences.³⁰⁶

Similarly, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has set up an affiliated center specifically focused on China, namely the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy. This one is located at Tsinghua University in Beijing, and it cooperates both with other Carnegie-affiliated centers scattered globally, and within the 'Asia Program'.³⁰⁷ The Carnegie-Tsinghua Center gathers experts and academics from China, the United States, and elsewhere, in order to examine and address major issues “on the economic, security, and political developments in the Asia-Pacific region”, in order to “publish timely and incisive analysis on the most pressing global issues, including international economics and trade; energy and climate change; nonproliferation and arms control; and security threats in North Korea, Iran, South Asia, and the Middle East”.³⁰⁸

The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) set up Asian Program, called CSIS Freeman Chair in China Studies, in order to “advance the study of China and to promote understanding between the United States and the countries of the Asia-Pacific region”.³⁰⁹ This Center, too, has strove to promote a reciprocal engagement for bilateral cooperation, in hopes that “mutual appreciation and understanding through broad based international exchange” would be beneficial for both.³¹⁰

On the republican side, it is worth mentioning the Asian Studies Center of the Heritage Foundation, which stands as the Foundation's oldest research center. Founded in 1983, the Asian Studies Center

306 Ibid.

307 The Carnegie Asia Program has been set up by Carnegie with the intent to provide “clear and precise analysis to policy makers on the complex economic, security, and political developments in the Asia-Pacific region”. Retrieved from <http://carnegieendowment.org/programs/asia/>

308 Retrieved from the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center website, available at <http://carnegietsinghua.org/about/?lang=en#advisoryCouncil>. Experts on China working for the Carnegie Endowment and Carnegie-Tsinghua include Chen Qi, expert on US-China relations; Matt Ferchen, specialist on China's relations with developing countries; Paul Haenle, former director of the China, Taiwan, and Mongolian Affairs on the National Security Council staffs of President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama; Yukon Huang, expert on China's economic development and its impact on the world economy; Michael Swaine, one of the most accredited American experts on China's security studies; Yan Xuetong, one of Chinese leading experts on China's foreign policy, national security, and US-China relations.

309 From the official CSIS website <http://csis.org/program/freeman-chair-china-studies>. The CSIS Freeman Chair was founded, as the name itself suggested, by the Freeman Family, including clergyman Luther Freeman, Mansfield Freeman, a scholar business leader, and Houghton Freeman, an international businessman.

310 Ibid.

ranks today as one of the most accredited policy think tanks focused on Asian issues.

3.4. Think tanks in China after 1989. Introduction

In the aftermath of China's opening up and reforms started in 1978 by Deng Xiaoping, China experienced accelerated developments in all fields, including the ideological sphere. The Tiananmen protests and their brutal repression induced tough sanctions from foreign observers, who almost uniformly condemned the wrongness of the decision. Indeed, among the consequences of the 1989 facts was the shutting down of almost all the existing government, semi-official, and civilian think tanks, which were indifferently perceived as sources of dissenting views, and the getaway of several think tanks' members throughout the duration of the crackdown and its immediate aftermath.

The intellectual impasse caused by the Tiananmen events went on until 1992, when Deng Xiaoping undertook his decisive tour to the southern provinces and launched a new prolific era of reforms sparked by his South China Tour Speeches (南巡讲话, *Nánxún jiǎnghuà*).

Think tanks mushroomed, including private, civilian, and university-based think tanks. They were telltale signs of the second, deeper wave of reform launched by the political leadership. Most of them were set up by returning scholars coming back after the hasty escape and capable of returning home when circumstances turned favorable to the intellectual environment; therefore, they displayed somehow loosened government and party control. However, the responses provided by intellectuals in the aftermath of the Tiananmen protests were a varied lot, and the alternatives they proposed in hopes of letting China gain its national sovereignty while entering the globalization process ranged from neoconservative approaches, to neoliberal or neo leftist ones.

It took time for American observers of China to understand that the student protests of 1989 would not automatically transform China into a democratic country, but were only one spark that could eventually lead China to take up the long road toward democratization. Chinese intellectuals in the aftermath of Tiananmen, or better after the two-years silence following 1989, started to overtly express their interest in their own country's future development. Despite the emergence of various

theories about the best way to proceed, some scholars have underscored a sort of renewed supportive attitude from the intellectuals' side toward the official government, together with the most critical approach to the West ever displayed since the May 4 Movement.³¹¹ Think tanks emerged or reorganized after Tiananmen displayed such evolutions, and received increasing interest from Western observers.

311 Fewsmith, *China Since Tiananmen*, p. 9.

3.5. Spring 1989: The Tiananmen events and their consequences

3.5.1. The path to the Tiananmen crackdown

The Tiananmen protests represented the arrival point of at least two decades of discussions and reflections within the intellectual community. Since the opening-up inaugurated by Deng in 1978, intellectuals had been granted a certain, yet still limited, degree of autonomy, mainly in the social and economic fields, which allowed them to reinforce their role and to establish connections with fellow intellectuals and think tanks, even abroad.

Intellectuals had worked both as individual thinkers, and as members of research institutions, in the former case coming to the front more easily in times of occasional repression. In both cases, they progressively tried to broaden the range of freedom they could enjoy, and sought to extend it from the social and economic sphere, to the political one. In both cases, they met the Party and State officials' immediate opposition.

Intellectuals, who increasingly demanded political reforms along with the economic development, argued that these were necessary to “alleviate the social tensions caused by the economic reforms and avoid a socially explosive situation”, and that “changes in the economic substructure must be accompanied by changes in the political superstructure”.³¹²

Along with the intellectuals' rise of awareness, Deng and the leadership responded accordingly. Any form of repression conducted within bureaucratic research institutes is more difficult to be retraced; on the contrary, it is easier to identify several examples of individual thinkers who were prosecuted for their claims of freedom, and many of them were actually part of some think tanks.

Hu Jiwei, for example, took advantage of his position as *People's Daily* editor to spread his criticisms against the flaws of the Party and his faith in democratic principles. He maintained that

312 Goldman, “Politically-Engaged Intellectuals in the Deng–Jiang Era”, p. 42. The second assertion comes from a Marxist precept.

only rejecting obedience to the Party leadership, could one avoid to commit several mistakes against himself and his fellows. While leading the *People's Daily*, he fomented an escalating skepticism toward the Party leaders, from the ideas and policies promoted by Mao, up to the contemporary lack of democratic principles in his country. In his view, only democracy could be the secure guarantee of stability, and he was consequently criticized by many conservative Party leaders for his liberal positions. His work was actually another confirmation of Chinese intellectuals' operational pattern: Hu Jiwei sought to implement several 'quasi-democratic' practices, including an attempt to protect the press and the journalists' freedom, operating from within the top-level political positions (he was nominated member of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress in 1983).³¹³

A further example of intellectuals increasingly becoming conscious of the right to be recognized real freedoms and authority was represented by the film series *River Elegy*, a former Red Guards' group production. The film series was intended to be a condemnation of both Chinese traditions, and of the intellectuals' often opportunist attitude of serving and withstanding the orders of the top leadership.³¹⁴

Either as members of think tanks or as free thinkers, Chinese intellectuals, in their quest for political along with economic freedom, progressively upgraded and deepened the focus of reforms. They acknowledged that changes in the intellectual climate on a purely moral or ideological level were not sufficient anymore; in order to definitively contain intrusions from the Party and the State, they fought for more institutional and political shifts toward a real democratic system.³¹⁵

313 Article by Verna Yu, "Former People's Daily chief editor Hu Jiwei sought Tiananmen vindication", *South China Morning Post*, September 11, 2013, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1039377/former-peoples-daily-chief-editor-hu-jiwei-sought-tiananmen-vindication>

314 See Goldman, "Politically-Engaged Intellectuals in the Deng–Jiang Era", p. 43.

315 Ibid., pp. 43–44.

3.5.2. The mounting student protests and the ultimate military repression

Reform efforts promoted in previous years by single thinkers or think tanks were linked up during the couple of months and weeks before the Tiananmen crackdown, and they formed well-connected networks. Several protesters were former representatives of the Red Guard, and despite their disparate social background, free thinkers, semi-official and government think tanks, and independent artists among others coalesced to ask for democratic reforms and for the pardon of Wei Jingsheng and other imprisoned political dissidents. The intellectual coalition formed in the wake of the protests in spring 1989 were indicative of the greater maturity of the Chinese intellectual community, which was not restricted to the high-level intellectual elite as it may have been before, but it combined the interests of various social layers, from professional workers, to independent artists and writers, to former Red Guard activists, to think tanks' members.

The military repression begun between June 3rd and 4th 1989 was intended to swipe away any remaining seeds of the counterrevolutionary instances within the citizenry. The crackdown had a severe impact on the intellectual community as a whole, since the great majority of its liberal representatives were forced to flee China, or were imprisoned or exiled. Think tanks were shut down, their activity interrupted, and the intellectual establishment as a whole was “silenced by politics or exile”.³¹⁶

Even though informal and moderate intellectual discourses began in the immediate aftermath of the Tiananmen crackdown, at least two years were necessary for the more or less free intellectual establishment to get reorganized. Precisely, the intellectual community experienced new life since Deng Xiaoping's tour to the South, in April 1992.³¹⁷ Until that moment, “intellectuals were largely shocked into silence by the enormity of what had happened; alienated from the political leadership,

316 Fewsmith, *China Since Tiananmen*, p. 9.

317 In April 1992 Deng Xiaoping, who had already retired from the official political life and whose authority had been substantially weakened following the Tiananmen events, engaged in a tour to the Southern provinces, hoping that his figure could be redeemed following his political speeches. He visited Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, and Shanghai, stressing the urgency of continued economic reforms for China, blaming on those who contrasted their implementation.

they had little desire to participate in discussions – and the political leadership, caught up in its own conflicts, had little patience with intellectual expression”.³¹⁸ The impact of the repression varied along with the nature of the research institutes themselves, the most heavily hit being the political and economic think tanks, in particular those “closely tied to Zhao Ziyang”, which were expression of the most liberal wings.³¹⁹ Indeed, as it had been more than one decade before in the United States with the 'conservative revolution' of Reagan, the immediate aftermath of the Tiananmen events was marked by a sort of conservative repercussion, which repressed and looked down upon excessively liberal attitudes.³²⁰

The events of spring 1989 caused a rethink of the agenda setting of many think tanks, especially with regard to the public security think tanks, which refined their whole research agenda in order to explore deeply the social, economic, and political reasons of the social upheaval.³²¹

Nonetheless, a third generation of think tanks is recorded to have developed since the recover from the Tiananmen turmoil.

318 Fewsmith, *China Since Tiananmen*, p. 14.

319 Tanner, “Changing Windows on a Changing China: The Evolving 'Think Tank System and the case of the Public Security Sector”, p. 562.

320 Pascal Abb, “China's Foreign Policy Think Tanks: Changing Roles and Structural Conditions”, *German Institute of Global and Area Study (GIGA)*, no. 213 (2013): pp. 1–35.

321 Ibid.

3.6. Reflections of the Cold War termination on China

The end of the Cold War ushered in an era of increased globalization and of increased faith in the success of capitalism. With the collapse of the USSR and its satellite countries, the socialist structure as a whole was deeply questioned, and a number of changes in China were accelerated by these changed circumstances.

First of all, the collapse of the Soviet Union and its inability to maintain control over Eastern Europe countries awakened in depth research on the basic precepts of socialism itself, not so much to improve it or to skim off the wrong aspects of the doctrine, whereas to prevent China from fulfilling the same destiny.

Secondly, the fall of the Berlin Wall simultaneously marked the ideal demolition of the divisive line between the East and the West, the First and Second World, the capitalist and socialist countries. Contacts among countries would have started to develop much easier, and China entered more vigorously the globalized world, too. This circumstance bore lots of consequences, since intellectuals proved to develop divergent viewpoints with regard to China's globalization, which would bolster until China's admission into the WTO in 2001 and would continue even after that date.

The more intense contacts with the outside world also altered Chinese intellectual community and its educational background. Chinese intellectuals could make more direct experience of the educational, cultural, political, and economical systems of the foreign countries they visited. Many Chinese intellectuals gained degrees from American universities, accomplished internships abroad, attended conferences and seminars held abroad by foreign specialists. All this contributed to the increasing professionalization of Chinese intellectuals, who became more and more identifiable with a class of specialized 'technocrats', more than the 'generalists' of before.³²² The function

³²² Fewsmith, *China since Tiananmen*, pp. 11–13. Interestingly, Fewsmith adopted several labels, including 'technocrats', 'increasing specialization' of the government leadership and of their advisory experts, which recall the American tradition of think tanks.

attributed to intellectuals since the 1990s became more clearly identifiable with that of technocrats blending expertise with policy advise, and not only as the “conscience of society”.³²³ At the same time, the Chinese top leadership, too, enjoyed greater opportunities to train or study in vanguard universities, both in China and abroad. Secretary Jiang Zemin graduated from Jiatong University, a well-known technical institute in Shanghai, while Premier Zhu Rongji graduated at Tsinghua University.³²⁴ As a result, both the intellectual community and the top leadership were, by the mid-1990s much better educated and specialized, resulting in an even more complex relationship between the two spheres. As underlined by Fewsmith, the distance between the better educated government leaders and the establishment intellectuals had “both narrowed *and* broadened”.³²⁵ It has narrowed since government leaders are often themselves part of the intellectual community; on the other hand, it has broadened because the real needs faced by government leaders today no longer concern the urgency or not of future reforms, whereas the manners how to implement them.

The globalization process that has interested China since the early 1990s induced, beyond a professionalization process, a commercialization of the Chinese culture, meaning the astonishing increase of published volumes, which has produced “a trend that has forced intellectuals to compete in or against a real marketplace”.³²⁶ According to Fewsmith, the double set of changes, increasing professionalization on the one hand, and commercialization of the Chinese culture on the other, have pushed intellectuals into the 'ivory tower' of the top political power. The meaning of this assumption is that, throughout the 1990s, intellectuals have progressively displayed more supportive attitudes toward the government, sometimes as a result of shared interests about the dilemmas to solve (for instance, the ambiguous attitude toward globalization, or the relationship with the United States). Things were to change once again by the end of the decade, but at least

323 Ibid., p. 13.

324 Ibid.

325 Ibid. The italics layout is original from the author.

326 Ibid., p. 13.

over the 1990s there was a renewed cooperative relationship between intellectuals and policy makers, as demonstrated, for instance, by the assiduous cooperation between Jiang Zemin and Wang Huning, an accredited political scientist at Fudan University in Shanghai. Fewsmith used the following words to explain the implicit or explicit cooperation between intellectuals and the policy leaders,

Unlike the discourse that grew up in the late 1980s whose participants came to confront the government, many intellectuals in the 1990s found themselves implicitly or explicitly more supportive of the government than they or their counterparts had been only a few years before. The prospect of governmental collapse and social chaos, the object lesson provided by the economic decline in Eastern Europe and the subsequent disintegration of the Soviet Union, a newfound respect for the complexity of reform and state building, and (especially after 1993) a new sense of nationalism – as well as the costs of continuing opposition – inclined many intellectuals to be more tolerant and even supportive of government efforts.³²⁷

The new course of reforms in which intellectuals inserted themselves was one in which the most radical expressions, even of democratic stances, were temporarily shelved, and more conservative stances seemed to be justified by economic reforms and the relative social stability. Intellectuals and government officials shared the same viewpoints with regard to many instances, even though the government maintained more rigid positions toward nationalism and the rigorousness of the economic reforms.³²⁸

An additional trend inaugurated by the end of the Cold War and the collapse of socialist regimes was a broad challenge to the liberal establishment and the emergence of a varied set of responses from the intellectual community. Starting from 1993 more or less, in China began to emerge the

327 Ibid., p. 165.

328 Government officials, for example, shared the nationalism that had been developing since the early 1990s, but they did not support populism, which had risen along with nationalism in response to the globalization worries starting from the 1990s. On the other hand, several intellectuals were beginning to realize the social polarization and unequal repercussions of economic reforms on the society, and they advanced the implementation of more cautious reforms, whereas political leaders pushed for “marketizing reforms, a growing role for the private sector, and increasing integration into the global economic order”. Ibid., pp. 165–167.

idea of a 'third way' specific for China, which diverged from both Marxism-Leninism and Western capitalism. This was the result of the historical evidence, as well as the outcome of the globalizing world. Intellectuals found themselves somehow deprived of the authority and respect they had enjoyed in the 1980s, and were stimulated to find alternative manners to make their way through. Indeed, as reported by critic Xu Jilin, intellectuals in the 1980s were “intellectual heroes”, and they were treated with respect.³²⁹ Fewsmith reported that, on the contrary, “by the 1990s this was no longer the case, as intellectuals became marginalized by the changes in social values that accompanied the growth of the economy”.³³⁰ Another relevant figure, Wang Hui, claimed that intellectuals “in the 1980s thought of themselves as cultural heroes and persons of foresight (*xianzhi*), but intellectuals in the 1990s are struggling to find a new way of adapting”.³³¹ Given the plurality of ideas they embodied, the lack of a uniform intellectual background, contrary to the 1980s, and searching for new channels through which to exert influence and funnel their voices, some of them began to serve the government purpose as members of think tanks.

Wang Hui, mentioned earlier with regard to his editing job with the journal *Dushu*, is a good example of the comprehensive trends affecting the Chinese intellectual community. Wang Hui worked as editor of *Dushu* from 1996 to 2007, and he was listed among the top 100 most influential public intellectuals on Earth by the US magazine *Foreign Policy*. He is currently professor at Tsinghua University in Beijing. He is often referred to as the leader of the 'New Left' movement, label that he has nevertheless rejected because of the inappropriateness of the term in the Chinese environment. The 'New Left' refers in China to that group of intellectuals, mainly trained and educated in the United States, who became critical of China's path toward modernism and globalization, and gave rise to some postmodernist and deconstructionist practices toward the Western frameworks. The 'New Left' derives its name from the need to distinguish it from the 'Old

329 Xu Jilin, *Ling yizhong qimeng* [Another type of enlightenment]. (Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 1999). p. 10.

330 Ibid., p. 116.

331 Wang Hui, “Dangdai Zhongguo de sixiang zhuangkuang yu xiandaixing wenti”, p. 134, translated as “Contemporary Chinese Thought and the Question of the Modern”. Wang Hui was editor of the influential intellectual journal *Dushu* (*Reading*) from 1996 to 2007.

Left', that is the former Marxist-Leninist ideologues like Hu Qiaomu, and which was at odds with the 'right' side of the government, supportive of liberalism. In fact, Wang Hui rejected the definition 'New Left', as well as to be considered its pioneer, since he considered it inappropriate and discreditable in the Chinese context, and he preferred the definition of 'critical intellectuals'.³³² Indeed, the defining role of such intellectuals was that of deconstructing the long-accepted faith in the values underlying the May Four Movement and the recent introduction in China of capitalism and market economy, yet adapted to the Chinese context. According to such academics, these changes had only brought about “polarization, corruption, and a mutual penetration between political and economic power”.³³³

The end of the Cold War meant, along with a rethink of Chinese relations with former Soviet Union, also the reorganization of US-China linkages. In the wake of Kissinger and later Nixon's visits to China in 1971 and 1972, US-China relations experienced a decisive improvement, which remained throughout the whole 1980s. However, starting from the late 1980s-early 1990s bilateral relations began to worsen, and Chinese mild distrust and moderate hostility arose toward the United States. The origins of such mistrust among the intellectuals and the public as a whole, are reported to have been linked to the conception that the US was doing nothing to help improve social conditions in Eastern Europe and Russia, and that it was trying to prevent China from developing, as well. The most blatant demonstration of such American attitude toward China was its decision to oppose China's bid to host the 2000 Olympic Games.

332 Ibid., pp. 124–126.

333 Ibid., p. 124.

3.7. Main features of the third generation think tanks: 1989/1992-onward

Compared to the research institutes of the previous decades, think tanks operative since the 1990s formed a more varied community: they displayed, at least in some research fields, a less dependent position relative to their political patrons, they began to exploit some of the Western-initiated patterns of ideas-marketing, managing to form better connected networks of expertise.

Some of the main characteristics of the third generation think tanks in China regarded their position within the administrative bureaucracy and their influence capacity.

A first new trend, which had been very limited in the years preceding Tiananmen, was the progressive increase in the number of civilian think tanks, most of which were established by returned scholars who had left China in 1989.³³⁴ Civilian think tanks were the expression of a more generic tendency toward the decreasing importance of military think tanks, face to the importance of civilian ones, as proven in many foreign policy cases.³³⁵

Second, think tanks of the third generation were decisively more independent of the government agencies that backed them. Third generation think tanks, which Tanner described as “less dependent upon ministries or leadership 'patrons' than their 1980s predecessors”, were not actually free to express whatever position they supported, but they surely broadened their research efforts.³³⁶

Among the reasons for this dual trend, the increasing autonomy of think tanks and their inference in a growing number of research issues, were China's greater participation in the global economy, along with the increasing commercialization of Chinese cultural and political products. Chinese intellectuals have discovered the potentialities incidental to the 'marketization' of their research outputs, and they sought to take advantage from them. Along with the liberalization of the press and

334 See Zhu Xufeng, “Think tanks in transitional China”, p. 455.

335 See, for instance, Xuanli Liao, who retraces the declining position of military think tanks relative to civilian think tanks, in particular to the institutes affiliated to the CASS. Xuanli Liao provides an example of this reverse gear in the case of Sino-Japanese relations with regard to the history issue. Military think tanks were supportive of tougher and more decisive positions, whereas the CASS-affiliated and other civilian think tanks supported a more moderate approach. The author maintains that military think tanks were no longer enjoying a privileged position. Xuanli Liao, *Chinese Foreign Policy Think Tanks and China's Policy Towards Japan*.

336 Tanner, “Think Tanks and the Public Security Sector”, p. 562.

publishing activities, which have, nevertheless, proceeded quite slowly, Chinese intellectuals and analysts have realized that it has become possible and easier for them “to get published, or even build entirely autonomous scholarly lives outside their government think tanks”.³³⁷

The international arena has played a role in Chinese think tanks' evolution, as well. The end of the Cold War scenario in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall, or in 1991, with the collapse of the Soviet Union as a unitary entity, opened a whole set of chances for China to enter the international arena, and dialogue more openly with a broader range of international actors.

A third development of the third generation think tanks was their growing participation within the governmental lines, meaning that a growing number of politically relevant figures relied heavily on expertise provided by think tanks members, or they were themselves think tanks' members. Zhu Rongji exemplified such tendency: he was mayor of Shanghai from 1989 to 1991, vice-premier of the State Council from 1991, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee between 1993 and 1995, Governor of the People's Bank of China from 1993 to 1995, and vice-premier of the People's Republic of China from 1993 to 1998. Zhu Rongji worked at the Industrial Economy Research of the CASS in the first years of the reform, and he maintained tight connections with the academic environment for the whole course of his office, even though sometimes displaying controversial attitudes toward them.

This trend would continue later on, as exemplified by Su Ge, who was appointed Minister Counselor in the Chinese Embassy in the US, Chinese Ambassador to the Republic of Suriname and to the Republic of Iceland in 2003, after joining in 2000 the China Institute of International Studies as senior research fellow and Vice President.³³⁸

337 Ibid., p. 562.

338 Retrieved from CIIS official website, http://www.ciis.org.cn/english/2011-08/08/content_4389661.htm

3.7.1. New functions prospected for think tanks in post-Tiananmen China

The unfolding of the economic reforms in China were paralleled by an increase in Chinese contacts with the outside world. Formal and informal channels were set up to assure a steady flow of information between the domestic and the international spheres, including conferences, seminars, informal encounters, and so on. Such links were not totally truncated in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square disaster, even if the Chinese military repression of students and demonstrators met substantial and durable harsh criticisms from most of the Western countries, Australia, and the Asian countries, too. Other socialist countries, including Cuba, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany, were supportive of the Chinese government in its condemnation of protestors. In other Western countries students sparked similar protests in solidarity with the Chinese events. The economic disadvantages were the most negative consequences, since the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and numerous countries suspended their financial loans and their direct investments to China. In response, China rose the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) percentage of military spending, and the overall influx of foreigners in the country recorded a decrease.³³⁹

Cultural connections had been established, before the Tiananmen events, mostly through informal channels, and had been maintained by intellectuals working both within the intellectual establishment and outside. Consequently, after Tiananmen, intellectuals linked to Western academics or scholars were not speaking for the People's Liberation Army or for the most conservative wings of the Party or the government: they were the expression of the most liberal positions and nurtured the pro-internationalization process.

As a result of the continuous relations with foreign intellectuals, Chinese academics working within think tanks embraced some of the roles that they had not, or only partially had, enjoyed before.

The new tasks they performed can be outlined as follows: information filters, policy defenders,

339 Available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiananmen_Square_protests_of_1989#International_reaction

introducers of new ideas, and interlocutors with foreign interests.³⁴⁰

As information filters, think tanks select data to pass to policy leaders, as the ground for their policy making process. By conveying only those elements that they consider relevant for some reasons, both from the domestic news and worldwide, they cut out of the competitive rush those ones which are not worth entering the policy agenda. Consequently, in so doing, Chinese think tanks enjoy some implicit control on policy agenda setting, which is nevertheless limited to the aftermath of policy decisions.

As policy defenders, Chinese think tanks become the mouthpiece of political leaders, working to promote their patrons' position, to legitimate their ideas, and possibly to fight their political rivals. In so doing, Chinese think tanks differ greatly from their Western counterparts, whose legal nature as non-profit and independent organizations prevent them from overtly supporting any party, or any political candidate. While in Western countries, in the United States in particular, think tanks are jealous of their autonomy, with the exception of the economic sphere, in China political defense and overt support of policy makers is a recognized and accepted function. Think tanks' members acknowledge that, acting as policy defenders, they place themselves in a subordinate position to political needs, but they also argue that, in so doing, they can be sure of their academic position.

Think tanks also enjoy a third function, that is that of introducers of new ideas, mostly from the Western world. Relying on their scholar preparation, think tanks can therefore pass to the top leadership new concepts, which may also “deviate slightly from the official line and alter the policy agenda because they have close links with specific political leaders”.³⁴¹ For instance, it was from some think tanks' conference that the concept of 'peaceful rise' was introduced to describe Chinese attitude toward the world in the early 20th century; similarly, Zhao Ziyang introduced the idea of 'confederalism' as a potential solution to regulate Sino-Taiwan relations, in substitution of the 'one

340 The categorization used here is taken from Ming-Chen Shai and Diane Stone, “The Chinese tradition of policy research institutes”, pp. 148–152.

341 Ibid., p. 151.

country, two systems' principle.³⁴²

Lastly, Chinese think tanks have exerted the fundamental function of fostering relations between China and the rest of the world, through formal and informal channels.

342 The idea of a 'confederation of Great China', or 'confederalism' was introduced unofficially by some Chinese scholars. The concept, which was intended to be an alternative solution to the dilemma of Cross-Strait relations, in substitution of the 'one country, two systems' principle. The principle was not proposed officially by Chinese intellectuals, but became known by policy makers through informal conferences and discussions. Scholar Jing Li went further to expose the differences between the concepts of 'federation, confederation, federalism, and confederalism', and applied them to the Cross-Strait relationship. Arguing that the concept of confederation "refers to the form of a concrete state ... [and it is] usually regarded as an outmoded structure for a state", Jing Li maintains that this is not a "mutually acceptable model for China's ultimate reunification". On the other hand, confederalism "refers to confederal principles and practice, or to the theories on confederations". Jing Li argues that some confederal principles could be employed in Cross-Strait integration and China's reunification. Jing Li, "Assessing the Relevance of Confederalism to the Cross-Strait Integration and China's Reunification", *East Asia: An International Quarterly* 22, no. 3 (2005): pp. 63–80.

3.8. Economic think tanks: an exemplary research field in the 1990s

Economic think tanks were among the research institutes most profoundly impacted by the Tiananmen crackdown, as well as the ones that experienced the greatest evolutions in the aftermath of those events.

Economic think tanks that developed since the early 1980s were characterized by strict connections to the top leadership, as a result of the primary importance of their research following the 1978 launch of opening-up and reforms. Chinese economists active in the 1980s fell mainly under two categories: senior academics with an accredited expertise on socialist economy, and younger intellectuals who promoted the implementation of a free market society, and of other Western-inspired reforms.³⁴³ The research institutes they rely on for the realization of their research projects reflected those divergent attitudes. Senior economists could work at ease within the CASS-affiliated institutes, whereas younger, more revolutionary economists were better represented in the Rural Development Research Centre (RDRC), in the Economic Reform Institute, and in the CASS Institute of Economics (IOE). Economists who did not fit into these think tanks joined the System Reform Commission (SRC) and the Development Research Centre (DRC), which were identifiable as 'establishment think tanks' and were not particularly hit by the Tiananmen crackdown.³⁴⁴

After think tanks emerged again following Deng Xiaoping's tour to the southern provinces, several changes affected the world of economic think tanks.

First of all, following the broader tendency involving the intellectual community as a whole, economists were more and more often employed to work within the government apparatus. The government itself, feeling the urgency of confronting the renovated reform efforts with the adequate means, sought to decrease the “inside/outside differential between government economists and

343 Naughton., “China's Economic Think Tanks: Their Changing Role in the 1990s”, p. 626.

344 Both the System Reform Commission (SRC) and the Development Research Centre (DRC) were “composite organizations, designed to accommodate individuals and groups that, for one reason or another, didn't fit neatly into other slots. These organizations accommodated a wider range of views”. Naughton, “China's Economic Think Tanks: Their Changing Role in the 1990s”, p. 627.

individuals in independent think tanks”, making large use of independent think tanks' expertise.

Second, the number of economic think tanks increased considerably, exacerbating competition among the various actors. Economic think tanks diversified their research efforts, as well as the political targets to influence. Think tanks turned their attention from their relatively narrow functions at the service of top political leaders, to other kinds of recipient actors, including private commissioners. Exploiting the new chances offered by media and individual engagement, some Chinese intellectuals reproduced the 'policy entrepreneurs' role of several Western scholars, and managed to “make careers as public intellectuals, giving talks and writing books and articles”.³⁴⁵

Third, economic think tanks throughout the 1990s managed to reach consensus on several issues on which they had maintained diverging positions since the 1980s. It was the urgency of the economic reforms that pushed them into this direction, and most economic think tank members began to share the same worldview. At the same time, they began to strive for the same goals, that is finding ways to realize successful economic reforms and to open the Chinese market to the outside world.

Lastly, despite the growing number of economic think tanks, along with their increasing specialization on given issues, the 1990s were still marked by the continuous supremacy of top political actors, as far as the final resolutions were concerned. In the economic field, for instance, Zhu Rongji stood out as an exemplary model for the new trends unfolding in the economic field, which took the shape of a sort of 'personalization of the decision process'.³⁴⁶ Zhu Rongji often summoned economists and experts on various topics to supply him with data and information on compelling issues. He solicited the simultaneous research efforts from different research institutes, but he finally maintained final resolutions at his complete discretion. Zhu Rongji, a highly praised economist, whose pragmatism and strong work ethic have received broad appraisal but also sporadic criticism, was a seasoned economist with a long-time work experience within the economic community, dating back to his mandate at the Institute of Industrial Economics at the

345 Naughton, “China's Economic Think Tanks: Their Changing Role in the 1990s”, p. 626.

346 Ibid., p. 630–632.

CASS, and to his contacts with CASS-affiliated economists in the 1970s.³⁴⁷ Naughton provided several examples of the many times Zhu Rongji relied on think tanks' expertise during the pre-decision policy making process and for gathering data on the issue at hand: in 2001, the vice-premier asked for counseling upon the issue of pension funding, thinking about “selling off some of the state-owned shares of corporations listed on the stock market”; however, even on that occasion, he deserved the right to make the final, valid resolution.³⁴⁸

Economic think tanks were representative of the close relationship between the official political world and that of research centers. At the same time, they were indicative of the still pressing difficulty connected to think tanks' capacity of raising funds. As a matter of fact, despite the ongoing opening-up reforms, which were allowing several Western theories and principles to enter China, life for think tanks was still much easier if managed through official or semi-official channels, primarily for the greater facility to get operational funds. This was the reason why a couple of initially civilian think tanks turned their legal status into semi-official research institutes. China Development Institute (CDI) was set up in 1989 by Ma Hong, former Director of the State Commission for Restructuring the Economic Systems (SCRES) and Li Hao, former Secretary to Municipal Party Committee and Mayor of Shenzhen. Facing scarcity of financial support, in 1992 the two General Directors made the decision to transform the Institute into a semi-official organization, approved by Prime Minister Li Peng; China Development Institute turned into a “public institution of semi-official background with civilian operation and local government management”.³⁴⁹

347 Ibid. Zhu Rongji is kept in high-esteem by political figures of many different sides. For instance, he recently received eulogy from some staff members of the Brookings Institution, which also published a whole record on him, titled *Zhu Rongji on the Record. The Road to Reform: 1991-1997* (Brookings Institution, 2013). In addition, Kenneth G. Lieberthal, senior fellow at John L. Thornton China Center, has further underscored Zhu Rongji's main features: a tough man, who not only had clear in mind the goals and terms to achieve, but also fiercely struggled to search for and find the best channels to achieve them. Interview of September 8, 2013 at Brookings by Kenneth G. Lieberthal, available at <http://www.brookings.edu/research/books/2013/zhu-rongji-on-the-record>

348 Naughton, “China's Economic Think Tanks: Their Changing Role in the 1990s”, p. 631.

349 Zhu Xufeng and Lan Xue, “Think Tanks in Transitional China”, p. 458.

The liberalization wave sparked in 1992 was exploited by some economists and entrepreneurs, who set up their own independently managed think tanks. These emerged as wholly private think tanks, in terms both of research scope, which was increasingly more specifically issue-focused, and of financial support.

A first example was the private, non-profit research organization Unirule Institute of Economics, established in July 1993.³⁵⁰ The Institute embodied a double set of novelties of Chinese private think tanks: first of all, it displayed a markedly specialization nature, with its research efforts centered on economics and economic reforms; second, it has claimed its right to be totally independent of governmental funds for its existence, while searching for other supporters. Indeed, Unirule Institute “does not receive financial assistance from any government entities, and instead, is dependent upon social donations and provisional grants for projects from institutions in China and abroad”.³⁵¹ Unirule pays particular attention to “transparency and sound accounting practices” and it is ready to provide “financial information regarding all of the organization's activities open to public scrutiny”.³⁵²

Unirule is one example of the 'one leadership but two identities' structure, adopted by several think tanks in China. Because of the complex *iter* required to gain the status of a Civilian Public Institution in this country, the Unirule Institute was originally registered only as a business enterprise; only in a second moment, it managed to find a governmental agency's support that allowed its legal registration as a Civilian Public Institution.³⁵³ From that moment on, until 1999 reorganization, it maintained the double status of business enterprise and public institution. In 1999

Unirule was divided in two sections, the Unirule Consulting Firm (UCF) with purely consulting

350 The Institute was set up by five economists, namely Dr. Hong Sheng, Professor Yushi Mao, Professor Shuguang Zhang, Dr. Gang Fan and Dr. Shouning Tang, together with Beijing Universal Culture Co, Ltd. The name Unirule refers to the Institute's belief that there must be universal rules governing all fields, including the economic, political, social, and cultural spheres. Unirule has derived such a credo from the Chinese classical work *Shi Jing*, which says: “As the universe is created by the God, there have to be rules for it”. Information available on the official website, at <http://english.unirule.org.cn/Html/About/index.html>

351 For more detailed information, see the official website, <http://english.unirule.org.cn/Html/About/index.html>

352 Ibid.

353 The government agency that provided supervisory role to Unirule Institute starting from 1995 was Beijing Fengtai District Science and Technology Office agency (BFDSTO). See Zhu Xufeng and Lan Xue, “Think Tanks in Transitional China”, p. 459.

function, and the Unirule Institute of Economics (Unirule), which embodies the concrete think tank function, with mainly an academic focus.

A second example was the environment-focused think tank Friends of the Nature, which is actually the first legal NGO in China and the oldest environmental NGO in the country. It was founded in 1994, striving to “promote environmental awareness about China's most pressing environmental problems”.³⁵⁴

Both Unirule and Friends of Nature were representative of the new trend in China since the mid-1990s: think tanks with a clear-cut and narrow research scope, enjoying increased autonomy. In fact, such independence of government or party structures was only permitted by the nature of their research: neither of them dealt with political, or national security issues, which were the most sensitive issues according to the political leadership, in an inverse relationship that saw think tanks' operational freedom increasing along with the decrease of the political sensitivity of the issue.³⁵⁵

354 Retrieved from the official website of Friends of Nature, <http://old.fon.org.cn/channal.php?cid=774&>

355 See Xuanli Liao, *Chinese Foreign Policy Think Tanks and China's Policy Towards Japan*.

4. DEVELOPMENTS OF CHINESE AND AMERICAN THINK TANKS FROM 2001

4.1. China

Think tanks in China have undergone several winds of change, which have often paralleled major changes both internal to China and international. As seen in the previous chapters, some turning points were Deng Xiaoping's entrance in the political arena in 1978, the student protests in Tiananmen Square in 1989, the end of the Cold War, and Deng Xiaoping's tour to southern China. A further historical moment that shook China at all levels, and that bore its consequences on the intellectual sphere, as well, was China's admission in the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. That moment would become unforgettable within the records of China's history because it fulfilled almost fifteen years of negotiations with other member countries and marked an important leap forward in China's integration with the rest of the world.

China officially became a member of the World Trade Organization on December 11, 2001, after negotiations had been successfully concluded on September 17 that same year.³⁵⁶ This fact impelled several changes on the Chinese side, not least “to open and liberalize its regime in order to better integrate in the world economy and offer a more predictable environment for trade and foreign investment in accordance with WTO rules”.³⁵⁷ Despite the evolutions in terms of openness and reform experienced by the country since the Deng era, the steps to take before the accomplishment of an open, liberalized market economy were still copious. Moreover, the economic and market conditions demanded for the admission represented a brand new condition for China, and the political leadership acknowledged the compelling demand for concrete expertise. As a result,

356 For further details on the historical background of negotiation upon China's entrance into the WTO and its final admission, see http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/pres01_e/pr243_e.htm

357 Ibid.

economic and foreign policy think tanks revealed their importance in this transitional phase, and they presented experts with new opportunities.

In fact, the growing influence and upgrade of think tanks' role in Chinese policy arena has rarely been interpreted as evidence of China's growing pluralism, or as the demonstration of the increased access of a growing number of actors into the policy decision process, that is, as the proof of a developing Chinese civil society. On the contrary, it can be better understood as a progressive evolution that has proceeded parallel to the succession of political leaders in power.

According to Xuanli Liao, there have been greater chances for the development of think tanks from Deng Xiaoping onward, as a result of a progressively lessening political authority displayed by political leaders, who still maintained the ultimate power and primacy in the policy making process, but a waning character prominence, which has proven positive for the simultaneous development of think tanks. According to Xuanli Liao, starting from Deng Xiaoping the top political leadership has displayed a decreasing capacity of dominating the political sphere, and even though her analysis only covered the period up to Jiang Zemin, we could argue that a similar trend has kept on going along with Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping in more recent times.³⁵⁸

This last chapter will therefore cover the span of time ranging from 2001, when think tanks and the intellectual community as a whole deepened research on the consequences of China's entry into the WTO under the lead of Jiang Zemin, to the last political succession and Xi Jinping's rise to power in 2012.

358 Xuanli Liao, *Chinese Foreign Policy Think Tanks and China's Policy Towards Japan*.

4.1.1. The debate over China's entry into the WTO

Starting from the beginning of economic reforms in 1978, China has undergone enormous development, and the three-decades long double digit growth that has raised almost 600 million people out of poverty has earned it the entrance among the 'great powers' records. Indeed, the peculiar status of China's development has attracted on itself the definition of “abnormal great power”, since China is not emerging today from a perpetually miserable past, but it is, in fact, a “returning great power – one that accounted for 30 percent of global production two centuries ago but saw its share fall to less than 5 percent by 1950”.³⁵⁹

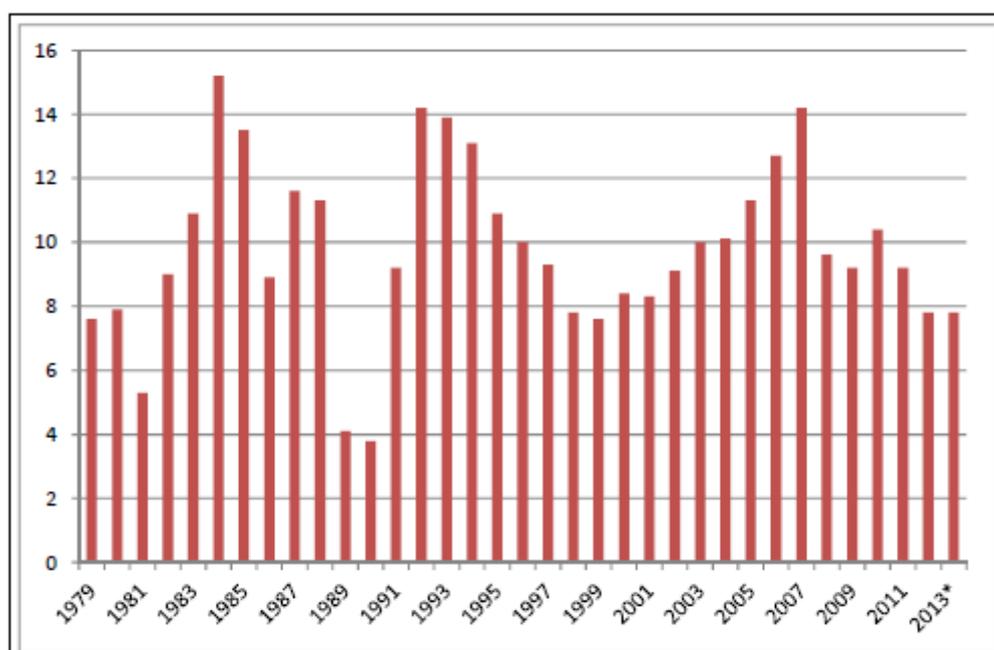
China's incredible growth, which permitted the country to survive and have a pivotal role in solving the 1997 Asian crisis, was further implemented by the country's admission to the WTO. The important announcement of China's admission into the World Trade Organization came after years of discussions, both within China and amid the international community.

Reasons for the long-time hesitation on WTO members' side were rooted in the widespread suspicion about Chinese adoption of the necessary economic and industrial reforms: tariff reductions, open market, and industrial liberalization, among others.³⁶⁰ Such changes represented important revolutions from the Chinese perspective, at odds with the seasoned planned economy system. The admission of China received substantial impulse from the United States, interested in developing fruitful trade relationships with China. Ten years after the admission, China has celebrated its enormous successes, in particular that of having grown into the top goods exporter and importer.

359 Ibid..

360 By 2011, ten years after the official admission, China had relaxed “over 7,000 tariffs, quotas and other trade barriers. [...] But China, overall, has enjoyed one of the best decades in global economic history. Its dollar GDP has quadrupled, its exports almost quintupled”. Retrieved from the article “Shades of grey. It was right to let China in. Now the world's biggest trader needs to grow up”, *The Economist*, December 10, 2011, <http://www.economist.com/node/21541448>

Figure 1. Chinese Real GDP Growth 1979–2013



Source: IMF³⁶¹

Other WTO members have, on the contrary, assisted to China's rise with “furrowed brows”, complaining about some Chinese economic practices, classified as unfair, including the fact that China swamps its “markets with cheap manufactured goods, subsidised by an undervalued currency; [...] it hoards essential inputs, such as rare earths, for its own firms; and [...] it still skews its own market against foreign companies”.³⁶²

The internal debate preceding the formal admission in 2001 was harsh, too. Policy leaders, as well as government and civilian advisors, knew that the consequences for Chinese social, economic, and political spheres would be enormous, since they related to China's overall relations with foreign countries, and China's international relations as a whole. Particularly grounded hesitance was displayed by some groups of intellectuals, including those belonging to the 'New Left' and civilian supporters of populist nationalism, fearful that “such integration might prove socially disruptive”.³⁶³

361 Figure retrieved from the article by Wayne M. Morrison, “China’s Economic Rise: History, Trends, Challenges, and Implications for the U.S.”, *Congressional Research Service*, September 5, 2013, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33534.pdf>

362 See <http://www.economist.com/node/21541408>

363 Fewsmith, *China since Tiananmen*, p. 213.

On the other hand, political leaders were eager to promote China as a 'great power' on the international arena and acknowledged the benefits that could be engendered by them.³⁶⁴

After the Tiananmen protests, China had found itself in a seclusion bubble, excluded and sanctioned with severe penalties. Entering a global organization of that reach would have led to an improvement of the country overall image and to the reestablishment of bilateral and multilateral contacts with foreign countries.³⁶⁵ The debated matters were how far should have China engaged in world economy, coming to terms with capitalist countries, in particular with the United States, and what tools should have been adopted to achieve this long-term goal.³⁶⁶

Contrarily to the uncertainty and mistrust displayed by Premier Li Peng in the mid-1990s, Jiang Zemin disrupted any further hesitation about the importance of nurturing good relations with the 'world's policeman'.³⁶⁷ In 1998, as Li Peng was ending his mandate and relations with the United States were getting better, Jiang Zemin argued that was the right moment to step decisively into the world economy; therefore, he stated: "We have to gain a complete and correct understanding of the issue of economic 'globalization' and properly deal with it. Economic globalization is an objective trend of world economic development, from which none can escape and in which everyone has to participate".³⁶⁸ Throughout the 1998, private negotiations between American President Bill Clinton and Premier Jiang Zemin continued, showing increasing mutual willingness to accept conditions from the other side: President Clinton sent Premier Jiang Zemin several letters claiming his hope to

364 Ibid.

365 Japan was the first country to lift the economic penalties imposed on China after Tiananmen. China struggled then to improve its relationships with countries in Asia, including Singapore and Indonesia, while still prudent about improving relations with the United States.

366 China had applied to become member of the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) in 1986, but the outburst of the Tiananmen protests blocked the ongoing negotiations. One year before the establishment of the WTO in 1995, China expressed its wish to join the Organization again, but suspicion by Li Peng, along with the increased clauses required for the admission represented another obstacle.

367 Li Peng served as Premier of the People's Republic of China from 1988 to 1998, and as Chairman of the NPC Standing Committee from 1998 to 2003. He was second in the CPC hierarchy, only after Jiang Zemin. He was one of the staunchest leaders to support the use of military force to repress the Tiananmen protests, and authorized the martial law during the course of the protests in 1989. Li Peng also embodied conservative positions with regard to the economic reforms, and he tried to foster the decentralization and reduction of the Chinese bureaucracy, at odds with those positions backed by Zhao Ziyang.

368 Words pronounced by Jiang Zemin on March 1998, as reported in the Chinese journal *Renmin ribao*, March 9, 1998.

conclude negotiations upon China's admission into the WTO while Zhu Rongji was visiting the United States that same year; Premier Zhu Rongji communicated the Chairman of the US Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan, that "China was prepared to offer substantial concessions".³⁶⁹ Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji's firm resolve to enter the WTO was constrained by the criticism for American operations in Serbia, where Chinese leaders had the impression that the United States could commit whatever operation they decided without any previous consultation with other NATO members. The great expectations around Chinese Premier's visit to Washington in spring 1998 failed, and "Zhu was sent back to China almost empty-handed".³⁷⁰ Hopes did not revive in the aftermath of those events; on the contrary, they were further disappointed by the United States' bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.³⁷¹

4.1.2 Think tanks' approach to the media and other preferred channels to enter the policy arena

Think tanks in China maintain a different relationship to the media, when compared to their Western counterparts. Like North American think tanks, those in China also aim at increasing their visibility amid the top policy leaders. Contrary to them, however, they still cling to traditional channels for policy influencing, whose roots lay deep in the Chinese culture.

With the beginning of the new millennium, Chinese think tanks have displayed a growing awareness of the propagating role of social media, including television appearances, radio interviews, participation in international conferences and seminars. Several, if not all of them, publish annual reports, reviews, articles, and issue periodic journals or magazines. Notwithstanding,

369 Fewsmith, *China since Tiananmen*, p. 215.

370 *Ibid.*, p. 218.

371 The US bombing on the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade was defined a 'barbarian act' by Chinese leaders. President Clinton apologized to Jiang Zemin for the event, claiming that he had consented the attack thinking it was directed to a Serbian base, accused of arms proliferation. Apparently, the incident was the result of a mistaken calculus. The event sparked intense protests throughout China, where it was condemned as a violation of the international law and of the Geneva Convention.

their approach to the media strategy is still uncertain and not fully developed. Some think tanks' members perceive the media as a good chance to compensate for the limited attention they receive from political leaders, whereas several others are still extremely “shy about talking to foreign journalists or even domestic journalists from liberal Hong-Kong based media”.³⁷² As outlined by Bondiguel and Kellner, the relationship between policy experts or intellectuals on one hand, and journalists on the other, is still “to some extent of a teacher-pupil nature, with the former accepting to share some bits of their expertise to allow the latter to do their work”.³⁷³

Chinese policy makers, on their side, have progressively come to understand and accept the increasingly influential role of social media, as it can be gathered from the fact that “analyses published in the media are now more nuanced than they have ever been in the history of the People's Republic”.³⁷⁴ As a consequence of the increasing reliance on media for the diffusion of their policy outcomes, some authors have even argued that foreign policy commentators working for the media represent today the “third power in Chinese foreign policy after government think tanks and universities”.³⁷⁵ In fact, intellectuals and think tanks are still not allowed to give open comments on particularly sensitive issues concerning China's domestic or international affairs. Namely, issues on the Xinjiang province and the Uyghur ethnic group, border quarrels with India, or the South China Sea issues remain for the most part still off-limits. Moreover, many observers of Chinese think tanks landscape argue that it is unlikely for think tanks' members in China to sew up the same close relationship with media as in Western countries, for the existence of other channels that normally receive greater attention in China.³⁷⁶

As a matter of fact, Chinese intellectuals and think tanks' staff members are more inclined to adopt traditional channels to influence the policy making process. A double set of tools has served this purpose: the formal, official submission of reports or policy briefs on given issues, periodically

372 Bondiguel and Kellner, “The impact of China's foreign policy think tanks”, pp. 23–24.

373 Ibid., p. 23.

374 Ibid., p. 22.

375 Ibid., p. 22.

376 Ibid.

submitted to policy makers, and the informal channel of personal relationships. The first channel resembles the methodological approach adopted by Western counterparts. Policy experts strive to let their voices echo both at the level of the State Council policy making process, and at the provincial and prefectural governments level, through the drafting of policy briefs in the ultimate purpose to reach the State Council's ears. Policy briefs call to mind, in their shape, the one-to-two pages reports submitted by the Heritage Foundation to policy makers; indeed, they are normally not longer than four pages, and they follow a standard template, “what is the policy today; what progress has been made; what is the policy issue of concern; what did the researchers do to study this issue; what are the policy recommendations. Submitting a policy brief to the State Council is the most prestigious and influential way for researchers to communicate findings and recommendations to top policy makers”.³⁷⁷ Certainly, policy briefs are not immediately converted into policy change; once submitted to the State Council or to other relevant competent ministries (in case the submitter is not in a sufficiently accredited position), it needs to be adopted first (采用 *cǎiyòng*) and then signed by the policy maker (批示 *pīshi*).³⁷⁸ After this step has been reached, the actions proposed in the policy briefs may be more likely to be implemented, at least partially; they might be implemented only in some local areas, or after several changes. In any case, they will have the merit to have arisen awareness among leaders about a specific issue of concern, and they may eventually lead to policy change.³⁷⁹

Another privileged channel exploited by think tanks to influence the high level politics is through

377 Information retrieved from the official website of the Rural Education Action Program (REAP). REAP is an evaluation organization made up of experts from the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies at Stanford University, the Center for Chinese Agricultural Policy at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and the Northwest Socioeconomic Development Research Center. The Center's aim is to “inform sound education, health and nutrition policy in China”, and to “help students from vulnerable communities in China enhance their human capital and overcome obstacles to education”. Indeed, REAP's research fields encompass Health, Nutrition and Education, Technology and Human Capital, Keeping Kinds in School. Available at <http://reap.stanford.edu/>

378 A *pishi* is similar to a 'postil' made by a policy maker on a document, which marks it as important and worth of being implemented. Counting the number of *pishi* contained in a think tank's document has been exploited as a method to evaluate its relevance in the policy making process.

379 Ibid., see in particular the short article titled “Frequently Asked Questions about REAP Policy Briefs”, where the whole procedure of policy briefs entrance into the policy making process is reviewed. As the article outlines, as far as the Chinese Academic Sciences concerns, the percentage of policy briefs that are adopted and signed is pretty low, roaming around an average 6 or 7 per year, of which fewer than 5% are adopted and signed.

the key figures among their board of members. Every think tank can rely on at least one or two well-accredited scholars, who maintain tight personal connections with policy makers.³⁸⁰ The influence derived from the personal relationship can be fully understood in terms of the *guānxi* (关系) concept entrenched in Chinese culture.

The categorization of think tanks proposed by Zhu Xufeng and exposed before in this thesis dissertation can be used here once again to trace some linkages between the think tanks' organizational structure and their diverse access to the policy arena. Official and semi-official think tanks get both advantages and disadvantages from their tight connection to the government and the party organs: they are more likely to exert more direct influence on the policy making process, as a result of the shorter distance that separates them from the top power elite; on the other hand, however, they are limited in the domain of their research efforts, for the same reason. Consequently, they are reported to make larger use of personal relationships and administrative linkages to influence policy. On the contrary, civilian think tanks, which evidently can not count upon personal linkages with influential policy makers, have been forced to develop other strategies to make their way into the political sphere. Namely, their efforts have centered on indirect influence of the public and social elite. Arguably, their reliance upon media and individual researchers' efforts have proven more influential than official linkages or supporting services to the government, which stand out as very frequently used channels by semi-official think tanks. On the basis of direct interviews conducted by Zhu and Xue with leaders and researchers of two civilian think tanks and two semi-official think tanks between 2002 and 2004, the authors have discovered that, generally speaking, civilian think tanks primarily ground their strategy on individual efforts, forums and conferences, academic journals, books, lectures and training, and media coverage. On the contrary, semi-official think tanks can enjoy more easily the assistance to government research projects, provision of supporting services to the government, official linkages, and business consulting services.³⁸¹

380 It was the case of Ma Zhengang from CIIS, Zhou Hong from CASS, or Yang Jiemian from the SIIS. Bondiguel and Kellner, "The impact of China's foreign policy think tanks", pp. 19–20.

381 The two semi-official think tanks and the two civilian think tanks analyzed by Zhu and Xue in their research were

4.2. Chinese think tanks' relevant contributions to the political debate

Chinese scholars have often claimed that the development of Chinese think tanks has been misinterpreted by most Western observers, who have tried to apply the same definitions used in the West to those in China and in other developing countries. Chinese scholars in official positions have underscored the “huge potential for development” of think tanks in their own country, arguing that they are increasingly coming to represent the “pulse of international thought, the reserve of national strategy, as well as the leader of policy and social ideological trend, [...] the important intellectual support of judgment on situation and decision-making”.³⁸² Scholars striving to recognize the undeniable prominence of cultural differences have underlined how think tanks have indeed helped not only to “provide ideas and suggestions for decision-making but also [to] lead social thinking”.³⁸³ Differences in think tanks' structure and work are a reflection of the cultural landscape where they exist. As highlighted by Fu Ying, member of the Standing Committee and Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the 12th National People's Congress, this is reflected in the terms adopted and publicized by think tanks themselves. Several times in recent history doctrines, precepts, or ideas adopted by politicians and then become of common use have been originally introduced by the board of trustees working for think tanks, both in China and in the United States, thus revealing the importance attached to linguistic choices.

For instance, the notion of 'great powers' used by American think tanks to refer to the competitive bilateral and multilateral relations on the international stage has been rejected by Chinese scholars, who, on the contrary, have preferred the term 'major powers'.³⁸⁴ By so doing, they aimed at

respectively, the China Centre for Information Industry Development (CCID), the China Development Institute (CDI), Unirule, and the Dajun Centre. The two authors excluded on purpose the CASS or the DRC, among the most influential Chinese think tanks, since they do not embody the main characteristics of Chinese think tanks. See Zhu and Xue, “Think Tanks in Transitional China”, pp. 456–458.

382 Article by Fu Ying, “Think tanks has huge potential for development”, *People's Daily*, June 24, 2013, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90883/8296472.html>

383 Ibid.

384 The difference was discernible both in English and in Chinese. In English, the two opposing terms were the long-adopted 'great powers' and the Chinese proposed 'major countries'; in Chinese, 'great powers' corresponded to 强国 *qiángguó*, and 主要国家 *zhǔyào guójiā*, the former stressing pure physical power and faculty of dominance, the latter

underlying that “the Chinese people advocate harmony without uniformity, and [that, for them] the notion of mutual respect is rooted in the cultural traditions”. In Chinese viewpoint, “all countries, small and big, are equal, [and] China proposed to establish the 'new type of major power relations', which means China and the United States don't go against each other”.³⁸⁵

A second example of the influence exerted by the Chinese intellectual community as a whole in determining the official political path was the 'Theory of the Three Represents'. The theory was initially proposed in 2000 by the then CPC General Secretary Jiang Zemin, but it was exposed more neatly in 2001, on occasion of the 80th commemoration for the CPC foundation.³⁸⁶ The theory acts as an illustrative theory for what the CPC stands for in contemporary China, and it has been formally enshrined in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) constitution at the 16th Party Congress in Fall 2002.³⁸⁷ According to the theory, the CPC should represent the “development trends of advanced productive forces, [...] the orientation of an advanced culture, [...] the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people of China”.³⁸⁸ The theory, though attributed to Jiang Zemin, is reported to have been the brainchild of Wang Huning, former dean of the Law Faculty of Fudan University and personal advisor to Jiang Zemin, who later presented the theory as his own.³⁸⁹ A brief biography of Wang Huning may be useful to understand the intensity of academics' participation in the policy making process. Wang Huning, born 1955, graduated in International Politics at Fudan University in Shanghai, where he later completed a Master's degree in law. He began to work at Fudan University in 1981, first as professor, and then as director of the Department of International Politics and dean of the law school. Resident in Beijing from 1995, he headed the Political Affairs Division of the Central Policy Research Center (CPRC) of the CCP Central Committee from 1995 to 1998, and he was deputy director of the CPRC until 2002.³⁹⁰

referring to a broader relevance and prominence of a country.

385 Ibid.

386 Retrieved from <http://www.cctv.com/lm/124/31/86438.html>

387 Joseph Fewsmith, “Studying the Three Represents”, *China Leadership Monitor* 8 (2003): pp. 1–11. Available at <http://www.hoover.org/publications/china-leadership-monitor/article/7961>

388 Retrieved from <http://www.china.org.cn/english/zhuanti/3represents/68735.htm>

389 Bondiguel, T., Kellner, T., “The impact of China's foreign policy think tanks”, p. 11.

390 Biography retrieved from the Brookings Institution records, <http://www.brookings.edu/about/centers/china/top->

Starting from 2002, he has worked as the director of the Central Policy Research Center of the CCP Central Committee, member of the Central Committee of the CCP, and member of the Secretariat from 2007. During the 1980s, he set up a “patron-mentor relationship with Jiang Zemin and Zeng Qinghong who were then top leaders in Shanghai”, and after Hu Jintao succeeded Jiang Zemin as general secretary of the CCP and president of the PRC in 2002-2003, he became a close advisor to him, contributing to the formulation of the 'scientific development' concept.³⁹¹ According to the Chinese journal *South China Morning Post*, “some analysts say Wang has been playing multiple roles, equivalent to a combination of national security adviser, White House chief speech writer and other key advisory roles in the United States”.³⁹² Indeed, due also to his academic background, Wang has been able to hold his high-ranking position along political succession, and he is reported to be playing a similar role with new President Xi Jinping, for whom he will “craft major policies and write his speeches”.³⁹³

Other examples of terms introduced by think tanks include China's 'peaceful rise' and 'peaceful development', whose origins demonstrate once again the importance attached by Chinese people to names and their meaning. The notion of 'peaceful rise' was the brainchild of Chinese think tanks during the 1990s, and it came to characterize China's position in the world and its attitudes toward neighboring countries. The coinage is attributed to the Communist Party's theorist Zheng Bijian, who first used it during the Boao Forum Asia in 2003.³⁹⁴ Later that same year, the term was used

[future-leaders/wang_huning](#)

391 Ibid., http://www.brookings.edu/about/centers/china/top-future-leaders/wang_huning

392 Article by Cary Huang, “Think-tank veteran Wang Huning to retain influence despite lack of portfolio”, *South China Morning Post*, March 17, 2013, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1192583/think-tank-veteran-wang-huning-retain-influence-despite-lack-portfolio>

393 Ibid.

394 Zheng Bijian began working as deputy chief of the Mao Zedong Works editing committee at the CPC Central Committee in late 1970s; he then served as the deputy director general of the international affairs research center at the State Council, and vice-president of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Beyond this, he also chaired the research institute for Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought of CASS. From 1992 to 1997, he worked as deputy head of the publicity department of the CPC Central Committee, and then became member of the Standing Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. In 2010, he was listed 96 of 100 on the 2005 Global Intellectuals Poll. Available at http://www.chinavitae.org/biography/Zheng_Bijian%7C647.

The Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) is a non-profit and non-government organization that aims to provide leaders in the government, business, and academic environment with a prestigious forum for discussion on relevant issues concerning Asian countries and their relations with the rest of the world. The Forum emerged formally in 2001 out of the proposals of Fidel V. Ramos, former President of the Philippines, Bob Hawke and Morihiro Hosowaka, respectively former Prime Minister of Australia and Japan, who stressed the dearth of a forum that is directed “by Asians and guided from

again by President Hu Jintao during a commemorative speech on occasion of Mao Zedong's 110th anniversary of birth, when he maintained that China should adhere to the “developmental road of peaceful rise”. The term was used again by Premier Wen Jiabao during a meeting with all ASEAN countries, when he explained China's growing economy with the following terms, “The developmental road China has taken is different from that taken by some major powers, and China’s developmental road is the road of peaceful rise”.³⁹⁵

The term has been analyzed by Western and Chinese authors, interested in understanding the implications of its meaning for the rest of the world. Duan Binren has defined it as follows,

The developmental road of peaceful rise, seeks harmony with others, partnership with China’s neighbors, and friendly coexistence with other countries on the basis of Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. Economically, it seeks integration with the globalization, and naturally seeks China’s new role in global development equations, thus becoming a constructive and responsible player in the international economic activities. Politically, the notion would enable China to actively and constructively participate in the international affairs, be a challenger rather than a moot spectator to the events and aspire for a democratic, peaceful and multi-polar world.³⁹⁶

Peaceful rise of China would, therefore, express China's promise to rise peacefully relative to other countries, avoiding any kind of war-like attitude or competition. The basic concept that has sustained the term has long been rooted in the Chinese culture, and was explained by Deng Xiaoping to the UN General Assembly in 1974 as follows,

China is not a superpower, nor will she ever seek to be one. If one day China should change her color and turn into a superpower, if she too should play the tyrant in the world, and everywhere subject others to her bullying, aggression and exploitation, the people of the world should

perspectives of Asian interests and views, provides opportunity to exclusively discuss the Asia issues and aims at enhancing cooperation and exchanges among Asian countries, and between Asian countries and other parts of the world”. Retrieved from the official Boao Forum for Asia website, available at <http://english.boaoforum.org/gyltbjjsen.jhtml>.

395 Retrieved from <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/node/1102>

396 Duan Binren, as cited in <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/node/1102>

identify her as social-imperialism, expose it, oppose it and work together with the Chinese people to overthrow it.³⁹⁷

The term 'rise' has started to be questioned by both government officials and academic circles, because it was perceived as an aggressive choice, potentially scary for neighboring countries, and not reflecting the real situation of Chinese advancement, which still belonged the category of 'developing countries'. As a consequence, academic and official circles in China began to adopt, more preferably, the term 'development' instead of 'rise' starting from 2006, with the publishing of the White Paper *China's peaceful development*, even though not totally abandoning the other one. Spokesmen of the Chinese intellectual community have proven conscious of the worries foreign countries have been feeling toward China's rise, and on different occasions they have been trying to reassure them emphasizing China's commitment to its peaceful development. For instance, during the forum on "China's Peaceful Rise" sponsored by the John L. Thornton China Center of the Brookings Institution, Zheng Bijian, Chairman of the China Reform Forum, voiced the United States' fear of the potential Chinese threat. To reassure American think tanks, media, and the political circle doubtful about "whether or not China's peaceful rise will threaten the American global interests", he stated that "China's peaceful rise is not a threat but an opportunity for the US" and that China will "take an active part in economic globalization and will not change international order and configuration through violence".³⁹⁸ Zheng Bijian was eager to demonstrate that the American leadership should exult for the opportunities of an increased US-China cooperation, "from the political field to all dimensions including political, economic, cultural, military and security fields"; that the Chinese leadership had been aware of the difficulty China would necessarily encounter in its attempt to guide 1.3-1.5 billion people toward development. Zheng Bijian underscored, however, that Chinese leaders had nevertheless elaborated proper manners to

397 Retrieved from the article by Yukon Huang, "China, the Abnormal Great Power", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, May 5, 2013. Available at <http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/03/05/china-abnormal-great-power/fo53>

398 Retrieved from a luncheon speech held by Zheng Bijian during the Forum on "China's Peaceful Rise" at Brookings Institution on June 16, 2005. Available at <http://www.brookings.edu/events/2005/06/16china>

face such challenges, including the abandonment of old-style industrialization and development approaches, while opting for new ones that could guarantee “external peace and internal harmony” in the construction of a “socialist society with Chinese characteristics”.³⁹⁹ Zheng Bijian's speeches aimed at stressing China's eagerness to enter the globalization process, but holding Chinese characteristics in all fields, from economic issues such as energy consumption, to social matters, like management of the urbanization process. Zheng Bijian summarized China's development and integration in the globalizing world as follows,

... by unswervingly adhere to a development path of peaceful rise, we seek to become a modern socialist country that is prosperous, democratic and culturally advanced, and a responsible big country playing a constructive role in international affairs which doesn't seek hegemony or leadership of the world nor becomes a vassal state.⁴⁰⁰

Linked to the notion of China's peaceful rise is that of 'Chinese dream', a core political term introduced by Xi Jinping, but in which think tanks and the intellectual community as a whole have had and still have a great stake. 'Chinese dream' is what China is striving for: it embodies, at the same time, China's aspirations and its development constraints. It represents the path to become “a big market, a major civilization, and a responsible big power playing a constructive role in the international community”, but which takes into account the real needs, and the concrete resources available to the country”.⁴⁰¹ Zheng Bijian, considered to be the major drafter behind the 'Chinese dream' concept, has stressed the peculiarity of the objective, which differs from the “American dream”, the “European dream”, and the “Soviet dream”, respectively for differences in resources availability, population, and long-term goals.⁴⁰²

399 Ibid.

400 Zheng Bijian, Ibid.

401 Ibid.

402 Ibid. Zheng Bijian stressed that China's ultimate goal should be that of integrating in the world development relying mainly on resources available on the domestic territory; above all, China's dream is not aimed at transforming the country in a big military power, striving to become the new hegemonic country and trying to export the Chinese revolution abroad.

The 'Chinese dream' is a political aim that concerns both the domestic and the international fields. With regard to the national domain, the 'Chinese dream' aims to achieve “national rejuvenation, improvement of people’s livelihoods, prosperity, construction of a better society and military strengthening as the common dream of the Chinese people that can be best achieved under one party, Socialist rule”.⁴⁰³ In the international sphere, economic growth and improvement of US-China relations are among the most important goals. China's commitment to realize such dream in a peaceful manner, despite provoking already wary reactions from worldwide companies, among others,⁴⁰⁴ has been reiterated by President Xi Jinping, who stated,

... the Chinese dream, [...] will benefit not only the Chinese people, but also people of all countries. The Chinese dream is not a call for revanchism and Chinese nationalism at the expense of its neighbors. It is the dream of China, which once suffered invasions and turmoil, to maintain lasting peace. A peaceful and stable China is a blessing to the Asia-Pacific region and the whole world. The world's second-largest economy and the most populous country is too important to fail.⁴⁰⁵

The term had been used by several Chinese activists and academics, before its formal attribution to Xi Jinping's speech on occasion of his formal appointment as President of the People's Republic of China in March 2013; however, some China's observers have sometimes connected the term 'Chinese dream' (or 'China dream', as it is often referred to in most recent articles) to a *New York Times* article written by Thomas Friedman, in which he raised the question “Does the next generation of Chinese leaders have a ‘Chinese Dream’ that is different from the 'American Dream'?”⁴⁰⁶ Chinese leaders have been resolute in reiterating the specifically Chinese nature of such dream, asserting on the contrary that the 'China dream' means to “push forward the great cause

403 Retrieved from the article by Bill Bishop, “A Highly Public Trip for China’s President, and Its First Lady”, *The New York Times*, March 25, 2013, http://dealbook.nytimes.com/2013/03/25/china-dream-apple-nightmare/?_r=0

404 Article by Tom Mitchell, “China dream sours for foreign companies”, *Financial Times*, August 9, 2013, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/4c9d9f06-00bd-11e3-8918-00144feab7de.html#axzz2fjGEeZIM>

405 Retrieved from an article by Gui Tao, “China Voice: Peace, opportunities: global implications of 'Chinese dream'”, *Xinhuanet*, March 25, 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/indepth/2013-03/25/c_132260959.htm

406 Article by Thomas Friedman, “China Needs Its Own Dream”, *The New York Times*, October 2, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/03/opinion/friedman-china-needs-its-own-dream.html?_r=0

of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and strive to achieve the 'Chinese Dream' of great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”.⁴⁰⁷

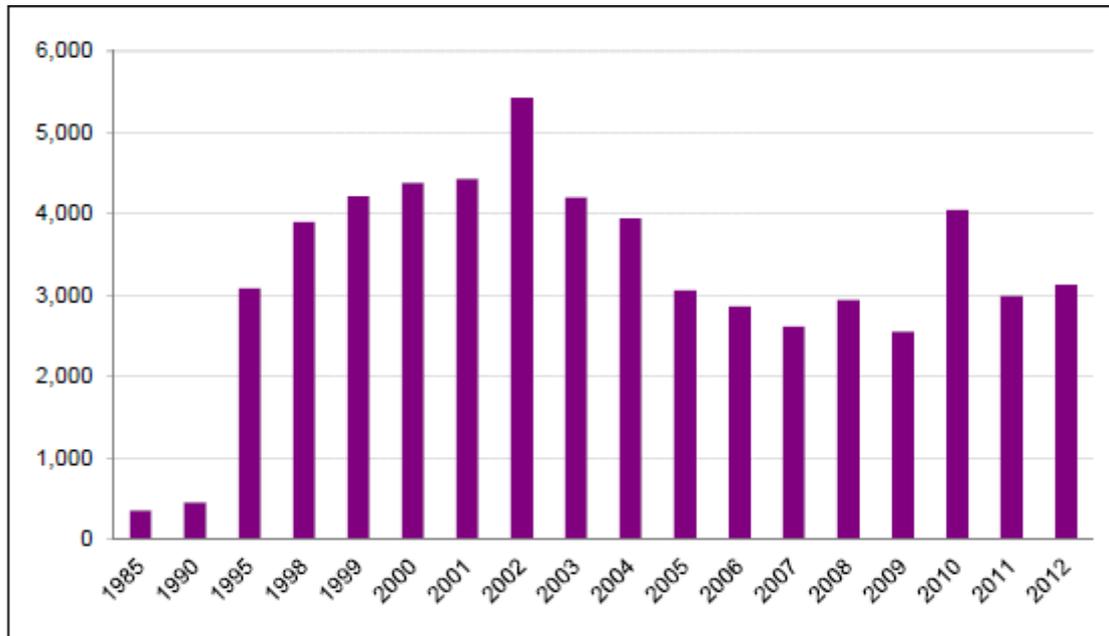
407 The first time Xi Jinping mentioned the term 'China Dream' was during a visit of the National Museum 'Road to Rejuvenation' exhibition', in late November 2012, during which, recalling Chinese people's past humiliations, he also referred to the rejuvenation of China as a major dream of the Chinese people. On March 17, 2013, during the first discourse he held to the nation as newly elected head of state, he repeated the term once again, and expressed his hope that by 2021, on occasion of the Party's 100th anniversary, the society would have developed into a moderately prosperous one; by 2049, 100 years after the establishment of the PRC, China would have fulfilled the dream of becoming a prosperous, civilized, rejuvenated modern socialist country. Starting from that moment, the concept has been used several times, and it has become a popular slogan associated to Xi Jinping, as that of 'scientific development' to Hu Jintao and 'Three Represents Theory' to Jiang Zemin, before him. For further information on the 'China dream', see Brendan Forde, “Xi’s Chinese Dream: collective strength for national rejuvenation”, *East Asia Forum*, July 5, 2013, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/07/05/xis-chinese-dream-collective-strength-for-national-rejuvenation/>); Kristie Lu Stout, “Is Xi Jinping's 'Chinese dream' a fantasy?”, *CNN*, July 17, 2013, <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/05/26/world/asia/chinese-dream-xi-jinping/index.html>); Suthichai Yoon, “The China Dream: What does it really mean?”, *The Nation*, August 1, 2013, <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/opinion/The-China-Dream-What-does-it-really-mean-30211609.html>), among others.

4.3. The United States and the year 2001: remarks about the consequences of this watershed moment on domestic think tanks

China's growing participation on the international stage has not only meant that Chinese economy has progressively represented a growing share of the world's total GDP. It has also meant that Chinese domestic and foreign affairs decisions have had growing pressure on policies all over the world, primarily on the country that is still depicted as the hegemonic power, the United States. The year 2001 has been here taken as a watershed moment in the description and analysis of think tanks' environment both in the United States and in China, since that year two major events altered the global balance of power. These were China's admission into the WTO, following almost 15 years of fluctuating negotiations, on the one hand, and the terrorist attacks in New York, on the other. The two circumstances destabilized the already uncertain balance of power, since they pinpointed China's growing weight on the international stage, and the United States' parallel more and more shaky position.

The issue of China's admission into the WTO was a highly debated one among American think tanks, given the relevance that the event had on the American economy, as well as on following American political resolutions. As it can be observed from the Figure below, the United States' Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to China recorded a huge hike in the immediate aftermath of China's admission into the WTO, and several American think tanks, especially liberal and libertarian inclined ones, pointed out the advantages, rather than the drawbacks, of the altered international balance.

Figure 2. Annual U.S. FDI Flows to China: 1985-2012 (\$ millions)



Source: Chinese Ministry of Commerce and Chinese Yearbook, various years.⁴⁰⁸

Some American think tanks focused on trying to explain the Chinese reasons underlying their desire to make their entry into the WTO; moreover, think tanks from disparate sides displayed diverse reactions to the event. The Brookings Institution, for instance, strove to enlighten the reasons for China's lust for such admission. Indeed, according to researchers of the Institution, Chinese top leaders were evidently aware of both gains and costs that this change would have brought; moreover, they were conscious of the increased and constantly increasing adjustments necessary for the admission. At the same time, observers from the Brookings Institution underscored the positive effects outlined by Chinese political leaders of an increased international competition on domestic enterprises, which would have sensed the need for urgent reforms long set aside. Lardy exposed Chinese leaders' position on the issue as follows,

408 Morrison outlines that Chinese and U.S. data on bilateral FDI flows differ greatly because of the different methodologies used. Table retrieved from Morrison, "China's Economic Rise: History, Trends, Challenges, and Implications for the U.S.," p. 17.

... it appears that China's top leadership in the wake of the Asian crisis came to believe that there was no viable alternative to the globalization of production and that, indeed, China would benefit from greater participation in the trend. They recognize that globalization means that production of an increasing range of goods is global rather than national. While complex products such as automobiles, aircraft, computers, and telecommunications equipment are assembled in only a few locations, the parts and components for these goods are made in many locations throughout the world, based on comparative advantage. The Chinese have come to realize that their liberal foreign investment regime and low-cost labor markets give them a wonderful opportunity to participate in these cross-border production networks, and that deeper participation in these global networks could provide a new and sustainable base for the continued growth and development of their domestic economy.⁴⁰⁹

The Cato Institute focused its research efforts on the favorable economic benefits available for the United States resulting from China's admission; indeed, trustees of the Institute remarked that, by 2001, China had become “the United States’ fourth-largest trading partner, trading goods worth some US\$100 billion”.⁴¹⁰ Consequently, it was believed that such trade and economic relations would be further developed following China's integration within the biggest trade organization. Such a moderate and not pessimistic standpoint revealed by the Cato Institute can be understood as the direct reflection of the Institute's faith in free market, minimal government intervention, and individual liberty, which may result in the major relevance attributed to the economic aspects.⁴¹¹ Before the successful completion of negotiations, more conservative-minded think tanks, including the Heritage Foundation among them, discussed the two sides of the coin. Discussions prior to China's admission expressed domestic doubts whether China' integration would be beneficial or harmful for the economy of the United States, in fear that “American jobs will be sacrificed to Dickensian Chinese factories and a modernizing, hostile military”.⁴¹² Experts working for the

409 Article by Nicholas R. Lardy, “Issue in China's WTO accession”, *Brookings Institution*, May 9, 2001, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/testimony/2001/05/09foreignpolicy-lardy>

410 Article by Mark A. Groombridge, “China’s Accession to the WTO: A Winning Outcome for both China and the United States”, *Cato Institute*, July 24, 2001, <http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/chinas-accession-wto-winning-outcome-both-china-united-states>

411 See the article by James A. Dorne, “China’s Dilemma”, *Cato Institute*, appeared in the *Baltimore Examiner* on April 19, 2006, <http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/chinas-dilemma-0>

412 Article by Stephen Yates, “U.S. to China: Join the WTO, But Real Work Lies Ahead”, *The Heritage Foundation*, December 9, 1999, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/1999/12/us-to-china-join-the-wto-but-real-work-lies->

Heritage, indeed, claimed that no astonishing “increase [in] U.S. investment and participation in China's market in the near future” should be expected, and that the US should prove capable of keeping its national security under control. The other side of the coin concerned the doubtful perspective on the decisive China's step into the democratization process. Indeed, according to Heritage scholars, “China's membership in the WTO is not likely to [...] ignite a passion for liberal democracy within China's borders”, and “it will take several years before China's market-opening pledges are realized”. Academics serving at the Heritage Foundation did not deny chances for beneficial consequences on the American life (which was the main center of interest among the Foundation's scholars), but these were subjected to some intransigent demands from the American side: primarily, pushing for Taiwan simultaneous access, establishing a new forum and non-sanction manners to regulate human rights and national security concerns, and forcing China to abide by the WTO discipline.⁴¹³

The terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers marked a further development in US-China relationship, changing what the Bush administration had dictated up to that moment. US-China relations with Jiang Zemin and Bill Clinton were regulated by the principle that the bilateral relationship should unfold as a 'strategic partnership'. The following Bush administration, on the contrary, shifted away from this precept, and inaugurated the vision of China as a threat and a competitor for the United States' hegemonic power. Mutual relations between the two countries were already tense, as a consequence of American (probably) incidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia. Irrespective of this, the American Republican leadership conceived China's growth as unequivocally outrageous, and the Bush administration launched in response a ABC (Anything But Clinton) perspective relative to the US-China relationship.

Bilateral relations were profoundly changed by September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United

[ahead?ac=1](#)

413 Ibid.

States. China expressed its sympathy for the American disgrace, both verbally and with a concrete support of the war in Afghanistan. The United States, even though not altering their fundamental point of view toward China immediately, did begin to perceive the potential benefits that cooperation with China could bring about.⁴¹⁴ Following Bush words, China became for the United States a 'strategic partnership', where the United States declared to be willing to cooperate with China on specific issues, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, even though resolute not to renounce their hegemony.

414 Article by Anna Rabin, "US-China Relations in the Bush Era—Strategic Partners or Competitors?", *INPEC International Politics, Energy Culture*, February 1, 2012, <http://inpec.in/2012/02/01/us-china-relations-in-george-w-bush-era-hu-jintao/>

4.4. Examples of some American think tanks assessing US-China relations

As aforementioned, starting from China's opening-up and reforms, the number of America's China Watchers has grown at an unprecedented rate. Most recently, as a consequence of real or unfounded global threats, several think tanks in the United States have devoted much research effort on the analysis of US-China relations.

As a think tank of the liberal side, the John L. Thornton Center has been more cautious than other conservative think tanks in advancing prospects of a negative evolution of US-China relations in the near future. On the contrary, some researchers working for the Center have argued that foreseeing an imminent direct confrontation between China and the United States would be “well wide of the mark”.⁴¹⁵ Richard Pollack, director of the John L. Thornton Center, and a specialist on East Asian international politics and security, stated that any “characterizations of 'us versus them' are well wide of the mark. Competition is inherent in international politics, but this does not automatically imply something malign”.⁴¹⁶

Similarly, Richard Bush, director of the Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution, examined the characterizing features of China's growth, in order to distinguish it from the other past hegemonic transitions, and to outline the novelty of this 'revival' major power. In a recent report published in September 2013, Richard Bush stressed the improbability of a forthcoming clash between the two countries, for a couple of reasons. First of all, China's growth is, for the moment, still focused on a regional, rather than global, basis; moreover, even on the regional level, it is constrained by the United States regional presence. Second, the astonishing quantitative growth experienced by China is somehow exaggerated by the large Chinese population. Third, Chinese leaders need to keep a steady eye on a number of internal social challenges. Despite this,

415 Retrieved from an article by Jonathan D. Pollack, “U.S. and China Need to Transition to a Redefined Global Order”, *The Brookings Institution*, July 25, 2013, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2013/07/25-us-china-global-order-pollack>

416 Ibid.

Richard Bush outlined those sources of frictions that could, on a long-term basis, provoke a downturn in US-China relations, including China's inflexible position toward the unification issue, and its resulting attitude to Taiwan, and China and the United States' respective positions toward North and South Korea.⁴¹⁷

The Cato Institute has not advanced extremely pessimistic positions with regard to the Chinese increasing participation in the international stage. China has been pumping up its military spending and it could therefore seem to be on the brink of representing a real challenge to the American hegemonic position. However, as outlined by Cato's researchers, the challenge it posits is still limited, and “America’s advantages remain overwhelming, including in military strength”.⁴¹⁸

Several other think tanks in the United States have been looking at China's economic boom with an increasingly alert and wary eye, reflecting the perception that China is, in fact, going back on its promise to 'rise peacefully', and it is, on the contrary, becoming more aggressive, assertive, and reactive to outside stimuli.

According to scholars serving as Senior Fellows at the Hudson Institute, for instance, “the notion that unconditional US-China engagement is the way forward has declined in prominence”.⁴¹⁹ Michael Pillsbury, author of the article “The Sixteen Fears: China's Strategic Psychology”, has argued that a second approach toward China has proven successful among later policy leaders, which could be defined as a “meet-force-with-force” approach, which aims at maintaining, or recovering, the established balance of power (favorable to the United States), as it was before China's destabilizing entrance into the world economy.⁴²⁰ Indeed, more attention and relevance are attached by the author to a third, assertive American attitude vis-à-vis China, which can be best

417 Retrieved from an article by Richard Bush, “China's Challenge to the United States”, *The Ripon Forum* 47, no. 13 (2013), <http://www.riponsociety.org/forum133rb.htm>

418 Article by Doug Bandow, “No Need to Fear China's Military Build-Up”, *CATO Institute*, June 13, 2013, <http://www.cato.org/blog/no-need-fear-chinas-military-build>

419 Article by Michael Pillsbury, “The Sixteen Fears: China's Strategic Psychology”, *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 54, no. 5 (2012): pp. 149–182.

420 *Ibid.*, p.150.

summarized by the three concepts of “reassurance, cost imposition and dissuasion”, whose aim is still, nevertheless, that of counter-balancing China's rise.⁴²¹

The year 2013 will be recorded as an important moment in US-China relations. Parallel to the similar efforts by other Asia-focused think tanks, the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy has assessed the outcomes of the two-days official meeting between American President Barack Obama and Chinese Chairman Xi Jinping. The encounter, which many paralleled to the 1972 meeting between Richard Nixon and Mao Zedong, took place in California on June 7–8, 2013. According to a board of trustees working for the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center, the meeting can be assessed as relatively positive, with good propositions from the two sides, together with the obstinate permanence of thorny problems. Assessing the positive aspects of the meeting, James Sciutto, Paul Haenle, Yan Xuetong, Gregory Gilligan, and Cui Liru, authors of the article “A New Type of Great Power Relations Between China and the United States”, stressed the good willing of both political leaders to realize fair cooperation and mutually beneficial competition, in hopes of “avoiding the unhealthy competition or conflict that is historically produced by the rise of new powers”.⁴²² Nevertheless, several points of friction are argued to have remained, including clashes on cybersecurity and warfare, and China's maritime disputes in the East and South China Sea. However, in the standpoint of the Carnegie experts, there is space for bilateral cooperation, when agreement is to be achieved upon cyber cooperation, stabilization of the Korean peninsula, and honest dialogue, which would bring about improved “military-to-military” relations, as well as “people-to-people” relations. Moreover, it has been stated by Carnegie scholars that US-China relations are not likely to evolve into a major conflict as far as China's own foreign issues are concerned: these, including the highly controversial Taiwan issue and the East and South China Seas, are “third-party problems; they are not U.S.-China issues. Thus, the threat of conflict is

421 Ibid., p. 151.

422 Article by James Sciutto, Paul Haenle, Yan Xuetong, Gregory Gilligan, Cui Liru, “A New Type of Great Power Relations Between China and the United States”, *Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy*, July 6, 2013, <http://carnegietsinghua.org/2013/07/06/new-type-of-great-power-relations-between-china-and-united-states/ggd8>

low”.⁴²³ Even before the summit, Carnegie-Tsinghua Center's experts had been foreseeing the engagement promised by the two leaders to find areas of cooperation, not only on traditional fields like military, economy, and regional security, but also on non-traditional ones, such as “cyberattacks, threats in space, climate change, pandemics, human rights, and energy policy”.⁴²⁴ Carnegie Endowment and its affiliated Centers have supported a relatively optimistic viewpoint of US-China relations, asserting that if the two countries were able to cooperate, many of the challenges faced by both could find a resolution. This is the case, for instance, of the problem of China's extremely low level of GDP used for consumption. Academics at Carnegie have asserted that “the world can function with a group of underconsuming countries only if they are balanced by a group of overconsuming ones”, and that China reduced investments can be counterbalanced by other states, like the United States, whose “investment exceed the savings”.⁴²⁵

The Hudson Institute has, on the contrary, stressed the 'realist' side of the US-China relations, pointing out that China is engaging in a series of domestic and international adjustments aimed at overthrowing the American supremacy and hegemony. For instance, the Hudson Institute stated in quite frank terms that the Chinese growing military spending is going to represent an unequivocal threat to the US military presence in the Pacific region, whereas American objective since the end of the World War II has been “to maintain a distributed and powerful presence across the globe”.⁴²⁶ Realist perspectives on increasingly unbalanced relations to the US detriment are expressed by Seth Cropsey's words, who stated:

423 Words by Cui Liru, retrieved from the article mentioned in note 421.

424 Article by Douglas H. Paal, “U.S.-China Summit: Time to Make History”, *Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy*, June 4, 2013, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/06/04/u.s.-china-summit-time-to-make-history/g8by>

425 Article by Michael Pettis, “China Reforms Face Headwinds at Home and Abroad”, *Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy*, September 23, 2013, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/09/23/china-reforms-face-headwinds-at-home-and-abroad/go54>

426 Article by Seth Cropsey, “China's Growing Challenge to U.S. Naval Power”, *Wall Street Journal*, June 21, 2013, http://www.hudson.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=publication_details&id=9635&pubType=China. Seth Cropsey served as Deputy Undersecretary of the Navy in the Reagan and Bush administration, where he was in charge of issues like “the Navy’s position on efforts to reorganize DoD, development of the maritime strategy, the Navy’s academic institutions, naval special operations, and burden-sharing with NATO allies”. Cropsey also served as chairman of the Heritage Foundation's Asia Studies Center from 1991 to 1994, and as visiting fellow of the American Enterprise Institute.

The growing disparity between Chinese and U.S. military investment will eventually alter the balance of power in the Western Pacific. This shift will likely lead either to military conflict or to tacit American acknowledgment of Chinese dominance. A war would be disastrous, but Chinese dominance would not bode well either: The U.S. ability to shape the international order would end with Chinese supremacy in the most populous and economically vigorous part of the world.⁴²⁷

The Asian Studies Center of the Heritage Foundation has similarly been among the hard line supporters of a skeptical and wary American attitude toward China's rise. Indeed, the Heritage Foundation's Asian Studies Center has recently underlined the lack of transparency of Chinese official data on various issues, including unemployment rates, bank debt, public health, and social inequality. All the information and data in these fields, according to the Heritage Foundation's experts, have been manipulated and distorted by the Chinese Communist Party; therefore, the so much acclaimed China' rise is, in fact, much more limited than Chinese leaders have presented.⁴²⁸

427 Ibid.

428 Article by Derek Scissors, "How to Make China More Honest", *The Heritage Foundation*, September 4, 2013, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/09/how-to-make-china-more-honest>

CONCLUSIONS

The present dissertation is by no means intended, nor has it the presumption, to be definitive in its contents. At the same time, it may not have exposed groundbreaking proposals in the field addressed. On the contrary, it has emerged out of the intent to examine, from a quite narrow perspective, two fundamental countries in the world today. The United States and China have been the center of interest of disparate comparative studies over the past century, ranging from analysis of cultural differences, economic and financial parameters, to strictly political divergences, among others.

However, beginning with the recognition of the growing relevance and influence exerted by think tanks all over the world, the premise of this thesis was that it may have been useful to conceive US-China relations through the lens of such parameter, too. As specialized and high-level research institutes, think tanks provide advanced knowledge and expertise to policy makers and the political leadership surrounding them; therefore, they have become part of the 'policy community' circle that is empowered to carry out, alter, or delete policy choices. Considerable research studies have been published on think tanks in the United States, the home country of this kind of research centers, and in other countries where they later developed, in particular European countries, such as England and Germany. Literature on the Anglo-American think tank tradition is therefore quite copious, and the sections of this thesis devoted to the United States have, indeed, proven more flowing to be written. On the contrary, a first difficulty encountered while drafting the chapters on Chinese think tanks has been the limited amount of accessible information edited both by Chinese and Western authors. Articles and concise books on China's domestic and foreign policy decision making process do exist, but the impression that one often receives is that their contents and findings are sometimes constrained within specified limits. Consequently, starting from this premise, even though

necessarily melting data from direct and indirect sources, the efforts have been directed mostly to the direct ones, including think tanks' official websites and transcribed records of official speeches.

The final target of the thesis has come to light along with the drafting itself: initially, the dissertation was inspired by the desire to carry out a research that could underline the differences of think tanks developments in the United States and in China, as a result of their completely divergent political and cultural background. Indeed, divergences did emerge, and in most cases they were the result of the two opposite environments. Nonetheless, while the thesis took shape, it was interesting to notice that the basic functioning and leading principles of these institutes presented some common points, or at least that some historical turning points were equally relevant for both countries.

As a consequence, the whole structure of the thesis was conceived in order to have clear in mind, and distinctly visible in front of the reader's eye, the comparative framework of the text.

The thesis got under way with a necessary introductory digression on the role of ideas within the policy decision process: a brief analysis of the diverse types of ideas and policy actors expressing them was provided in order to explore their relevance inside the political sphere. Such a parenthesis was useful to underscore the importance of ideas in shaping any policy decision. In particular, it was outlined that, when adequately expanded, ideas become knowledge, and knowledge has constantly been connected to power. Thus, the attention attached to think tanks as 'idea brokers' and banks of knowledge for leaders in power or 'in exile'.

The whole thesis has unfolded around this preliminary assumption: knowledge and power are necessarily linked, since power without knowledge could evolve into the most worrisome systems, while knowledge serving no power would miss any useful application and its basic foundation. Additionally, even though knowledge has accompanied the evolution of power throughout all its stages, historical evidence seems to have proven that such relationship becomes even stronger during moments of instability, uncertainty, and transition, both domestically and

internationally. In times of transition or crisis, the leading government finds itself at important junctures in the political path to follow, and that is exactly the interstice where think tanks, as expression of the most accredited knowledge and expertise, find fruitful opportunities to intervene.

The first two Chapters aimed at providing the readers who had only little knowledge about think tanks with a solid background on the issue, and they respectively retraced the progressive evolutions of such institutes in the United States and in China. In particular, they pointed out that, in the United States, experts filling think tanks were appreciated for their objective and neutral knowledge. Their role was associated with that of doctors of the society, and their ideas were eagerly sought by politicians striving to solve social ills; simultaneously, they were perceived as experts-amateurs. These early functions began to teeter when, starting with the Second World War, and the Cold War right after, policy leaders demanded more technical and specialized responses from think tanks' trustees. Such change in the expertise demand brought about an evolution in the organizational framework on the supply side: early think tanks, referred to as studentless universities, began to be joined by contract research organizations, of which a first example was the RAND Corporation. Experts-doctors had been replaced, or at least were now accompanied, by experts-engineers, who exerted great influence during the whole course of the Cold War, when geopolitical circumstances forced experts to provide *ad hoc* solutions, rather than purely academically relevant outcomes.

In China, think tanks followed a diverse development path. They were named in two different ways (*Zhinuan Tuan* and *Zhiku*), according to the context of reference, and they were initially marked by a solid connection with the Central Government, the Communist Party, and the People's Liberation Army. Once again, important changes in the original think tanks' structure occurred along with relevant policy changes, in particular with the launch of economic reforms in 1978. Nevertheless, the lack of adequate political reforms sparked the social movements that, in, 1989, would shake China, and the whole world as a consequence.

The year 1989 was a watershed moment in the development of think tanks in both countries, probably more in China than in the United States. As a consequence of the Tiananmen crackdown, existing think tanks were shut down immediately, and they could be started up again only after Deng Xiaoping's Southern Tour in 1992. The dramatic, repressive events had consequences on think tanks' structure, since they marked the new needs on the leadership side. The international engagement and the tight links that some think tanks' members had established with foreign academics could no longer be ignored; therefore, Chinese top leaders, while retaining their strict control over the community of intellectuals, and sometimes translating it into occasional punishment, nevertheless downsized it considerably. American experts were more and more flung into the political brawl and they increasingly provided distinctively liberal, conservative, libertarian, or centrist responses; on the other side of the world, their Chinese counterparts demanded increased neutral and objective specialization, as a result of the new, unprecedented challenges posed to China by its growing participation into the world politics.

Following the simultaneous developments of think tanks in the United States and in China in Chapter Three, it could be argued that such a parallel, though opposite, evolution, continued over the 1990s, with the United States sensing the crushing difficulty of being the only world superpower, and China vying with other countries for the world competition. American-based think tanks acknowledged the benefits attainable by the skilful use of marketing tools like television appearances, journals, and radio broadcasts as successful channels to win the fierce competition among the huge numbers of existing think tanks. Think tanks espoused to traditional ideological or political traditions were joined by others that expressed the reactions from the margins of the 'ideas industry', and the perceived need of readjustment and renovation, if a hegemonic position was to be maintained (CSIS and Cato Institute, for instance).

In the 1990s, Chinese think tanks, in particular those focused on economic issues, experienced greater opportunities to influence high-level policy resolutions, and the quality of their expertise

was improved by contacts with foreigners and by the adoption of new techniques of ideas marketing. Both intellectuals and policy makers in China were much more educated and specialized, if compared to the 1980s or earlier; therefore, the distance separating them was perceived to have both narrowed and broadened. Think tanks established in those years stood in a less dependent position relative to government bureaucracies, and could better exploit the links with Western specialists.

At the same time, as a consequence of Chinese growing prominence on the world stage, several American think tanks were opening their own affiliated centers specifically devoted to China: the Carnegie Foundation and its Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy; the Brookings Institution and its John L. Thornton Center; the CSIS and its Freeman Chair in China Studies, just to cite some examples.

The year 2001 was another, decisive turning point in think tanks' history in the two countries analyzed, further pinpointing the ongoing shift in global power positioning and distribution from the West to the East. Terrorist attacks were painful assaults against the United States' power, an occurrence that US leaders had previously firmly thought as unlikely to happen. China's admission into the WTO the same year seemed to confirm Asian states' aspiration to be more active participants in the international arena. China displayed a marked nationalism, a strong hope to restore its glorious past, and to obtain international recognition.

The balance of global power seemed to be budging from one world pole to the other, thus shaping the power transition that many academics and policy analysts had proposed and predicted starting from the late 1970s, including Joseph Nye, pioneer of the concepts of 'soft power' and 'smart power'. The relevance of year 2001 has been analyzed by think tanks of both countries, as covered in Chapter Four, resulting in various perspectives. These ranged from optimistic viewpoints about future cooperative relations between the United States and Asia, China in particular, to a more fatalistic forecast of an inevitable “Clash of Civilizations” between the hegemonic power in decline

and the new rising powers.⁴²⁹

Along the way, think tanks have expanded their functions, from that of 'policy advisers', to 'information filters', 'policy defenders', 'introducers of new ideas', 'policy interpreters', 'policy entrepreneurs'. As a result, their ability to influence directly policy choices has encountered increased opportunities even in China, as it can be inferred from the official introduction of several terms issued by domestic think tanks' trustees: among these, 'Three Represents Theory', 'Scientific Development', 'Peaceful Rise', and 'Chinese Dream'.

In the last part of Chapter Four, the focus was on a couple of inferences issued by accredited American think tanks reflecting on the US-China relationship, as representative of the ongoing international discussion under way. Similarly to the reflections on China's 2001 access to the WTO, US-based intellectuals today still view bilateral relations through different lenses. Some of them are prone to forecast inevitable clashes with the Chinese rising power, as a result of mutually incompatible cultural, political, and economic traditions. Supporters of this standpoint, namely most conservative think tanks, consider China a dangerous competitor, which should be arrested before it reaches a dangerous point of no return. According to them, China has the blatant ambition to oust the United States from its actual position, and to occupy itself that privileged place. As a consequence, even the latest meeting between US President Obama and incoming Chinese President Xi Jinping on June 7-8, 2013 in California has been evaluated as a sort of battlefield, with Chinese leaders remaining firm on their positions, or eluding some of the most urgent issues. Generally speaking, conservative think tanks like the Hudson Institute and the Heritage Foundation have backed a realist approach with regard to US-China relations, implying that mutual confrontations will necessarily be concluded with the victory of one power, to the detriment of the

429 The term "Clash of Civilizations" was first used by the political scientist Samuel Huntington during a conference at the American Enterprise Institute, a relevant Washington-based think tank. The concept referred to the conviction that, in the post-Cold War world, the major source of conflicts would be connected to cultural and religious differences. The concept, first elaborated in 1992, was further explained the following year in an article published on *Foreign Affairs*, the bimonthly journal edited by the Council of Foreign Affairs, another "non-profit and nonpartisan membership organization dedicated to improving the understanding of US foreign policy and international affairs through the free exchange of ideas". The concept of "Clash of Civilizations" is claimed to be the response to Francis Fukuyama's work *The End of History and the Last Man*. See <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/about-us>

other, and that China is not seeking for cooperative alliances, but for beneficial contacts that could help overthrow the hegemon of today.

Liberal oriented think tanks, on the contrary, have supported a more cooperative approach to US-China relations, stressing the broad spaces for future collaboration, especially under the current political leadership of both countries. American think tanks like the Brookings Institution and the Cato Institute have been enthusiastic about the synergic agreement on traditional and non-traditional issues of the last bilateral meetings, including 'cyberattacks', nuclear power, energy policy, and climate change.

In conclusion, think tanks cannot be said to have had a negligible function in both North American and Chinese political life. Think tanks in the United States emerged as boards of experts providing cures for social ills; they evolved into specialized institutes working on a research contract for a client; and they later became defenders of specific political ideologies, yet maintaining, throughout the whole set of evolutions, the ambition to be government-independent and non-profit research centers. Neutrality and objectivity have been their distinctive features in early days, but they have been progressively waning since the late 1980s.

Chinese think tanks emerged distinctly as government-dependent research centers, with tight-knit linkages to the top power, and reduced opportunities to express freely 'counterrevolutionary' or dissonant viewpoints. In their early days, in particular, Chinese think tanks were representative of official positions, and this contributed to the suspension of their activity during the Tiananmen crackdown and its immediate aftermath. Contrary to the trends in the United States, however, once Chinese think tanks emerged out of the two/three years silence of the early 1990s, they became much more neutral and objective spokesmen, voicing the growing internationalization.

As stated in the introduction of this dissertation, think tanks have marked important passages throughout history, and their functioning has marked and has in turn been marked by transitional

and thorny events. Experts have constantly been tempted by power and by the chances of entering the 'policy elite'. Developments in the historical process of North American and Chinese think tanks have demonstrated such a thesis, and have revealed that, particularly during unstable moments, political leaders are strongly susceptible to specialized expertise and knowledge. In those moments, the urgency and promptness demanded to solve unexpected or sudden circumstances are the leading factors in the policy making process, as seen in the introductory paragraphs on ideas and their entrance into the policy agenda. Differences in the developmental process of such policy research institutes in the two countries analyzed are the obvious reflection of their divergent, yet evolving, political structure: American think tanks have greatly contributed to socially and politically relevant issues since their very onset; Chinese think tanks have been long excluded from providing any contribution to politically sensitive issues, which could destabilize the power and authority of the government. Both countries have undergone unpredictable and, at times, denied changes. The beginning of the turning point concerning the global distribution of power, which can be thought of as the initial unraveling of a new 'hegemonic transition', could be placed at different times. What is certain, is that it must not be thought as a unique, revolutionary moment, but rather as a progressive trend whose end is still blurred and confused.

In transitional phases of global power unbalance like the one unfolding today, it is obvious that think tanks' trustees, due to their attested expertise, will continue to exert a decisive influence on top policy decisions. Power transitions have rarely unfolded peacefully in the past, and hegemons on the wane have traditionally strove till the final defeat and overthrow, hoping to retain their privileged position. It is nevertheless true that each past transition has diverged from previous ones, since the system ruled by each hegemonic power was the one they had themselves shaped, differentiating it from any past or future one. It is therefore problematic to forecast any distinct future evolution: such 'forecasting capacity', which think tanks are often called to carry out, surely accounts as one of the most difficult, but at the same time attractive, skills to leaders in power.

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