A Preliminary Study of Southeast Asian Foreign Policy Think Tanks’ Attitudes towards China

Dr. Ngew Chow Bing
Deputy Director, Institute of China Studies, University of Malaya

Introduction

In 2013, Decision of the Central Committee of the CPC on Some Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Deepening the Reform was adopted at the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee. The Decision proposed the goal of strengthening the building of new types of think tanks and establishing and refining the system of policy consultation. This was the first time that the expression “think tank” had appeared in the documents of the CPC Central Committee. In October, 2014, the sixth meeting of the Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reforms reviewed Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of New Types of Think Tanks with Chinese Characteristics, drawing up a blueprint for the building and development of domestic think tanks.

In recent years, the Chinese government has attached great importance to the role of the think tank and given vigorous support to its construction. Meanwhile, it has also strengthened the exchanges and cooperation between Chinese and foreign think tanks and pay much attention to the foreign think tanks’ studies on China, their attitudes and predispositions.

The definition of “think tank” has varied since the conceptualization of the expression. Some Chinese scholars compare “think tank” to the “external brain of leaders” which means “the personnel and organizations that assist leaders in making policies by giving advice, gathering information and facilitating the policy-making process...In fact, they are equal to the brains of the leaders, helping to think over and study issues.” ¹US scholar Rich defines think tanks

---