

**Introduction to the Special Issue—
Between Power and Knowledge:
Think Tanks in Transition
In Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary
of the Institute of International Relations**

ARTHUR S. DING



In this issue, there are four articles. Three articles deal with the Institute of International Relations (IIR) from different perspectives ranging from institutional origin, relations with the state in the context of power vs. knowledge, and the transition to a new environment. The fourth article, focusing on the Korea Institute for National Unification, examines think tank development in South Korea. The rationale for this arrangement is simple: IIR, the publisher of this journal, celebrated its sixtieth anniversary in April 2013.

IIR was established on April 1, 1953. In February 1953, Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) instructed Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國) to set up a new unit in order to study international political and Chinese communist affairs. It should be pointed out that the Republic of China (ROC) government was still in a shaky situation at that time after moving from main-

ARTHUR S. DING (丁樹範) is a research fellow and Director of the Institute of International Relations at National Chengchi University, Taipei, Taiwan. His research focuses on China's security policy, national defense policy, arms control and non-proliferation policy, and international relations of East Asia. He can be reached at <ding@nccu.edu.tw>.

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land China in 1949. In such circumstances, the mission of this new unit was simple: to provide strategic analysis and policy recommendations to the government.

As time has gone by, as analyzed in the first three articles, the IIR's mission has evolved from providing analyses and policy recommendations to engaging in academic research. Its role has also changed from being a think tank serving the state to a civilian institute dedicated to academic research under a civilian university, National Chengchi University (NCCU). In August 1996, the IIR made a critical choice to become fully integrated with NCCU. Its Chinese title also changed from 國際關係研究會 (*guoji guanxi yanjiuhui*) to 國際關係研究所 (*guoji guanxi yanjiusuo*), and finally to 國際關係研究中心, but its English title, the IIR, has always remained the same.

In April 2013, the IIR reached the age of sixty. The sixtieth year is a significant number in Chinese culture. It implies a mature status after experiencing different situations. The number also calls for a review of previous experiences and practice in order to develop a new direction and map out a new program. A proposal for organizing a conference was made as part of the celebration programs.

After long deliberation, an idea regarding organizing this conference with a focus on the transformation of think tanks was put forward. This idea was significant as the IIR evolved from a government think tank into an academic-oriented institute under a civilian university. In the end, the theme of the conference was settled: Between Knowledge and Power: Think Tanks in Transition.

The approach was to conduct comparative studies on different types of think tanks under different political systems and the roles that these think tanks play. Scholars from different countries were invited to address the development of think tanks that they were familiar with or at which they had done research. These four articles are based on conference papers delivered at the conference, with the authors having made revisions following the conference.

Chien-wen Kou's article examines the IIR's specific change in terms of relations with the state, the educational background of the IIR's

research staff and the editorial policy of the IIR's three journals. Entitled "The Changing Role of the Institute of International Relations in Taiwan's China Studies: Trajectories and Dynamics," his article analyzes the causes contributing to the change.

Kou identifies three stages in the development of China studies in Taiwan beginning in the 1950s. They are: rebellion communist studies (匪情研究) from the 1950s to the mid-1980s, Chinese Communist studies (中共研究) from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, and contemporary China studies (當代中國研究) from the the mid-1990s to the present. The generational change of China studies analysts as well as major political and academic events serve as the criteria distinguishing the three stages.

The IIR's development echoes the three stages. During the first stage, due to the prohibition of circulation of China-related materials in Taiwan, the goal of China studies was twofold: to serve the state while at the same time demonizing China. Under these circumstances, the IIR served as an information center to provide analyses and policy recommendations to the state and to build an outreach linkage.

The IIR has had to adapt to the new environment upon entering the mid-1980s. China's reform and open door policy, the thawing of Taiwan-China relations, the normalization of US-China relations, Taiwan's democratization, the institutionalization of higher education in Taiwan, the coming of the Internet age, and the generation change of China analysts in Taiwan have all contributed to this adaptation. The IIR was not able to monopolize information while the generation change brought change in terms of the research methods, research topics, and publications to the IIR. The critical choice of fully integrating with National Chengchi University (NCCU) by the IIR cut its relations with the state in 1996.

After fully integrating with NCCU, the IIR became a regular academic research institute. Relations with the state have been cut and all privileges, if any, during the Cold War era have been totally removed; its future depends upon the support of NCCU. Under these circumstances, the IIR has to compete for research output and policy influence with other civilian research institutes in a democratized and pluralistic society; the IIR's academic publications have to follow regulations promulgated by

the Ministries of Science and Technology (formerly the National Science Council) and Education.

Philip Hsiaopong Liu's paper, entitled "Gathering Scholars to Defend the Country: The Institute of International Relations before 1975," laid down the groundwork for this conference. His paper not only examines the IIR's development through history, but traces a similar institution of the 1930s, the Institute of International Affairs (IIA). He further compares the similarities and differences between the two institutes.

He argues that the IIR, like the IIA, was established during a time of national crisis. The ROC on Taiwan remained shaky in the early 1950s, Liu points out, because there were intensive military conflicts in the Taiwan Strait, and the US had not signed the mutual defense treaty with Taiwan. Under these circumstances, there was a need for a research institution that would be able to provide strategic analysis and policy recommendations to state leaders.

However, the question concerns why an institution like the IIR was preferred and established. Could a regular intelligence bureaucracy perform the functions that the IIR did? The way that the IIR, like the IIA, recruited analytical staff and the way the IIR was run can provide some hints, and that was why intelligence units could not perform those functions.

The composition of the IIR's research staff was unique. At the beginning, many of the IIR's analytical team came from two sources: former enemies who defected from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and former special agents who had fought the CCP for decades. Both groups of people had first-hand experience of dealing with and practical knowledge regarding the CCP.

The talent pool expanded later. Earlier, college graduates were hired, and later, those returning from western countries with doctoral degrees were recruited. The purpose was simple: there was a need to bring a new generation of analysts with good academic training so that high quality analysis could be continued as those with practical experience were to retire in the future.

In addition to the diverse nature of the talent pool, easy access to the outside world was important for such an institution. Easy access to the

outside world would enable this institute to collect more information and this would be conducive to better strategic analysis.

The IIR's transformation into an academic institution was relatively smooth. This could be attributed to the recruitment of high quality research staff with doctoral degrees, along with regular and frequent exchanges with foreign universities/institutions and the publication of high quality journals. All the above moves laid a solid ground for the IIR's transformation after the Cold War had ended in the early 1990s.

Titus Chen's paper, entitled "The Cold War Origins of the Sino-American Conference on Mainland China: An Obscure Legacy of Chen-tsai Wu in Trans-Pacific China Studies," examines the IIR's role from the framework of power vs. knowledge and takes the Sino-American Conference on Mainland China (SACMC) as a case study.

Chen argues that power and knowledge are complementary to each other. There is no doubt that the IIR was more a product of power than an academic decision under the KMT's authoritarian regime during the Cold War era, and it served the state. Nevertheless, without knowledge, power is not sustainable, and this is particularly the case when power holders are exposed to an unprecedented crisis.

The SACMC series reflects this dyadic relationship. The first SACMC was held in December 1970 when the ROC government on Taiwan was faced with an unprecedented challenge which was characterized by growing calls inside the US for engaging the People's Republic of China in the context of splitting China-Soviet relations and growing pressure for the pulling out of US forces from the war in Vietnam. If the growing call was materialized, the ROC's legitimacy as the only representative government of China would be jeopardized and the KMT would be challenged domestically in Taiwan.

The SACMC was designed to buttress the likely unsustainability of power. Faced with the tremendous challenges, Chiang Kai-shek and his national security chiefs could not work out coping strategies, and the SACMC conference recommendation, strongly proposed by former IIR Director Chen-tsai Wu (吳俊才) over a period of four years, was adopted. With the IIR's unique collection on Communist China, many American

China analysts benefited, and the IIR performed the role of legitimation through persuasive scholarship. This case illustrates that the asymmetric relation of power and knowledge can be transformed into a symbiotic one, and knowledge can help sustain power.

The “persuasive” approach of international legitimation has long-term repercussions. First, it became a rich source of inspiration and experience for the execution of Taiwan’s informal diplomacy over the next four decades, according to Chen’s analysis. This was particularly the case with former President Lee Teng-hui’s (李登輝) flexible diplomacy which emphasized substance and actual results over formality and protocol.

Secondly, it laid down a solid ground for academic development in Taiwan. Specifically speaking, the IIR has exerted a dominant influence over the curriculum of China and international studies in higher education institutes in Taiwan, helping with the IIR’s transformation.

The fourth paper examines the role of public think tanks in policy making in South Korea and the Korea Institute for National Unification (KINU) is the major case, although other public think tanks are briefly touched upon. The author, Dr. Sung Chull Kim, frankly points out that public think tanks in South Korea play no role in policy making and an alternative role is to produce knowledge and vocabulary to envision an epistemic community for deliberating strategies for engaging North Korea.

Kim goes on to explain the factors contributing to the proliferation of think tanks in South Korea. They are: the end of the Cold War, globalization coupled with local autonomy, and a growing budget allocated to these institutes as a result of rapid economic growth after the 1997/98 Asian Financial Crisis.

Nevertheless, these public think tanks are highly susceptible to domestic political influence. On the one hand, these institutes are arms of different administrative agencies, and in fact, they become part of bureaucracies. Furthermore, the budget for these institutes comes from the South Korean government, and the lack of financial independence serves as a constraining factor. On the other hand, each president of a different ruling party as a result of democratization has his/her own close aides

without relying on these institutes' support. What is worse is that a lack of access to the top leaders precludes them from obtaining necessary information for deliberating policy.

In the end, public think tanks do not advocate policy. Instead, in order to find a niche, these think tanks focus on research and the analysis of events or the current situation and their policy implications. In addition, these think tanks, such as KINU, serve as a knowledge producer. For instance, KINU has compiled and edited the collected works of North Korean leaders from Kim Jong-il to Kim Il-sung for public use, has performed quantitative and qualitative analysis of the content of the main periodicals published by North Korea, has served as a bridge to coordinate and push programs toward North Korea by organizations in South Korea, or has built itself as a center to engage North Korea internationally.

There are no similarities between the IIR and KINU, and they have different destinations. Nevertheless, the IIR used to have direct access to Taiwan's top leader, Chiang Ching-kuo, a privilege that KINU and other South Korean think tanks only aspire to have. However, not being directly affiliated to any administrative agency left IIR with no other alternative but to transform itself into an academic institution.