

DEMOCRACY THINK TANKS IN ACTION

Translating Research
into Policy in Young and
Emerging Democracies

TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO POLICIES

The Experience of South Korea's
East Asia Institute (EAI)

Sook Jong Lee

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The World of Think Tanks in South Korea

Think tanks have become an integral force in the contemporary policy processes of most countries. Public-policy scholar Diane Stone defines them as “a vehicle for broader questions about the policy process and the role of ideas and expertise in decision making.”¹ Think tanks serve both government and civil society by generating influential policy ideas and ultimately enabling better governance. These functions are not limited to domestic issues. Aided by a rapid transmission of information, today’s think tanks copy and learn from one another as they address similar policy questions. A significant number of think tanks disseminate their research output widely, and engage in international networking and exchanges. Political sociologist Inderjeet Parmar even argues that institutes involved in global affairs engage in unofficial diplomacy through international conferences.²

American think tanks in particular have been widely recognized as influential in both domestic and international public affairs. Political scientist David M. Ricci writes that about one hundred think tanks thrive in the metropolitan Washington area, and that the ideas circulated there make a commendable contribution to society’s perennial search for political wisdom.³ He finds that today’s Washington think tanks emerged during the 1970s and 1980s to support a nationwide campaign by conservatives against what they saw as the dominant liberal policies and ways of life. Furthermore, he argues, the trends of the new American politics—the rising importance of expertise in campaigning and governing, an increasing dissonance in values, and the need to market political wares—have contributed to the growth of think tanks.⁴ Historian James A. Smith says that the proliferation of U.S. think tanks reflects the distinctive way in which Americans have sought to link knowledge and power.⁵ The knowledge and analytic techniques of experts are increasingly utilized in public service, as rational planning and scientific methods have come to be widely recognized as practical tools for improving policies. Emerging countries require planning and advisory institutions as much as developed countries, leading to the rising number

SOUTH KOREA

Capital: *Seoul*

Population: *49 million*

Internet Penetration:
81.46 percent

Press Freedom Status:
Partly Free

Political Rights and Civil
Liberties Status: *Free*

GDP per capita, PPP
(Current Int’l Dollars):
\$33,397

**Sook Jong Lee is President of the East Asia Institute.*

of think tanks around the world. Policy experts R. Kent Weaver and James G. McGann maintain that officials in both information-rich and information-poor societies need research that is understandable, reliable, and useful, and such demands have helped to foster the development of independent public-policy organizations, or think tanks.⁶

The 2012 *Global "Go-To Think Tanks" Index* shows the proliferation of think tanks around the globe.⁷ Although North America and Western Europe dominate with 59 percent of the world's 6,300 think tanks, the report suggests that other regions are catching up. Among non-Western regions, Asia has the largest number of think tanks, accounting for 19 percent of the global total. Broken down by country, China has 428 think tanks (the second most in the world), India has 261 (fourth), and Japan has 108 (ninth), though all three trail well behind the top-ranked United States, with 1,815.

The rise of think tanks can be understood within the larger context of the growing number of nonprofit organizations (NPOs) in the world. As policy researcher Lester Salamon has expressively put it, the "associational revolution" in the last quarter of the twentieth century—aided by the information revolution, democratization, and globaliza-

tion—is a key force behind the rise of think tanks.⁸ These organizations help to develop and assess policies and mediate between civil society and more formal political institutions, such as political parties, the executive branch, and legislatures. At the same time, think tanks operate in a variety of political systems, meaning their organizational forms and roles vis-à-vis political powers can differ. In this sense, the global presence of think tanks in itself does not mean that most countries have a marketplace of ideas like the United States. Although the majority of think tanks aim at producing quality research and ultimately seek to influence public policy, the ways in which they engage the public and formal governance institutions vary considerably.

In South Korea, as in many other countries, scientific planning of public policies and democratization contributed to the rise of think tanks. In fact, South Korea's major think tanks were only established after the country's rapid industrialization, with the aim of assisting the government's policy planning. Democratization would likely have contributed to the growth of private think tanks, but it is difficult to determine how many were built following the 1987 democratic transition in South Korea.

Weaver and McGann divide think tanks

About the East Asia Institute



The East Asia Institute (EAI) was established in 2002 as an independent think-tank dedicated to developing ideas and formulating policy recommendations on the main challenges facing the region. Based in Seoul, South Korea, EAI strives to transform East Asia into a society of nations based on liberal democracy, market economy, open society, and peace. To this end, EAI works to promote liberal values and ideas, including diversity, tolerance, accountability, and transparency, through research, education, and international exchange. EAI was established to pursue and develop innovative and fresh ideas and is rooted in the belief that knowledge and good ideas can change the world.

EAI seeks to achieve its goals by creating influential publications that result from the hosting of scholarly seminars, forums, and education programs. EAI conducts research activities through two main programs: foreign affairs and security and governance research. Working together with recognized scholars and leading policymakers, EAI seeks to lead the way in forming a true knowledge-network community in Northeast Asia by setting up a system of joint research and scholarly exchanges in the U.S., China, and Taiwan, as well as many other countries.

into four types: academic (university) think tanks, for-profit contract researchers, advocacy think tanks related to interest groups, and those that represent the research arms of political parties.⁹ In Northeast Asia, advocacy think tanks dedicated to winning the war of ideas are rare, and party think tanks tend to be relatively new, weak, and not very influential. The Youido Institute was the first think tank created by a political party. It was founded in 1995 to improve the policies and strategies of the Grand National Party, South Korea's main conservative party. The Democratic Party, the leading progressive party, reconstituted its advisory organization as the Institute for Democracy and Policies in 2008. Most political parties established think tanks after a 2004 revision of the Political Party Law required them to do so with government subsidies. The purpose of the legislation was to encourage political parties to develop better policy platforms.

As public-policy scholar Makiko Ueno observes, the majority of think tanks in Northeast Asia (China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan) are affiliated with or have strong ties to government ministries or higher education institutions.¹⁰ I divide think tanks in South Korea into the following three categories based on their funding source: public think tanks established and funded by the government, profit-seeking think tanks created by big business, and nonprofit think tanks, including those affiliated with universities and civic movements.

Public think tanks in South Korea are large institutions created and funded by the central and local governments. Those formed by the central government will be referred to hereafter as "national think tanks." Most were founded in the 1970s and 1980s based on a specific act to financially support and monitor them. For example, the Korean Development Institute (KDI), the most famous and oldest national think tank, was founded in 1971 following the promulgation of a law to that end in the previous year. KDI's website states that it was founded "in recognition of the need for a think

tank that researches economic policy issues concerning Korea in both systematic and applicable ways, and assists the government in formulating the 'Five-Year Economic Development Plans' and related policies."¹¹ The Institute is funded by the Economic Ministry and has changed its official title over the years. Local governments have also established their own think tanks. The Seoul Metropolitan Government formed the Seoul Development Institute in 1992 to respond to various urban challenges facing the capital. The Gyeonggi Provincial Government founded a think tank in 1995, and other local authorities followed suit.

In order to cultivate research autonomy and encourage revenue activities, the Korean government passed the Act on Foundation, Management, and Growth of Government-Financed Research Institutes in 1999. Centers dealing with science, technology, economic, social, and humanities policies were created under the Prime Minister's Office with the aim of reducing redundant research and facilitating interministerial policy research. Currently, there are two centers coordinating national think tanks: the National Research Council for Economics, Humanities, and Social Sciences (NRCS) for twenty-three related national think tanks, and the Korea Research Council for Industrial Science and Technology (ISTK) for thirteen national think tanks. The country's national think tanks maintain an arms-length relationship with each government ministry in choosing policy agendas and promoting specific public policies. The Ministry of Knowledge Economy and the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology fund a greater number of national think tanks than other ministries. In terms of annual expenses and number of experts, Korea's national think tanks are quite large when compared with those in the West. Table 1 shows the scale of the major national think tanks' annual expenses, with revenues from government funding and other sources, and the main government ministry with which they work.

South Korea's conglomerates also began

TABLE 1: MAJOR NATIONAL THINK TANKS IN SOUTH KOREA

1.	Korea Development Institute / KDI	Ministry of Knowledge Economy	\$62,452,210	(69%)
2.	Korea Energy Economics Institute / KEEI	Ministry of Knowledge Economy	\$27,703,486	(31%)
3.	Korea Environment Institute / KEI	Ministry of Environment	\$22,953,897	(50%)
4.	Korea Information Society Development Institute / KISDI	Ministry of Knowledge Economy	\$24,448,577	(24%)
5.	Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation / KICE	Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology	\$123,632,904	(22%)
6.	Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs / KIHASA	Ministry of Health and Welfare	\$25,352,478	(54%)
7.	Korea Institute for Industrial Economics and Trade / KIET	Ministry of Knowledge Economy	\$21,451,432	(62%)
8.	Korea Institute for International Economic Policy / KIEP	Ministry of Strategy and Finance	\$27,007,179	(72%)
9.	Korea Institute for National Unification / KINU	Ministry of Unification	\$10,418,649	(82%)
10.	Korea Institute of Public Administration / KIPA	Ministry of Public Administration and Security	\$10,836,433	(75%)
11.	Korea Institute of Public Finance KIPF	Ministry of Strategy and Finance	\$19,285,529	(83%)
12.	Korea Labor Institute / KLI	Ministry of Employment and Labor	\$14,138,050	(78%)
13.	Korea Legislation Research Institute / KLRI	Ministry of Justice	\$9,403,166	(72%)
14.	Korea Maritime Institute / KMI	Ministry of Land Transport and Maritime Affairs / Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries	\$26,694,923	(42%)
15.	Korea Research Institute for Human Settlements / KRIHS	Ministry of Land Transport and Maritime Affairs	\$34,642,332	(45%)
16.	Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training / KRIVET	Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology	\$30,918,606	(47%)
17.	Korea Rural Economic Institute / KREI	Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries	\$27,270,997	(47%)
18.	Korea Transport Institute / KOTI	Ministry of Land Transport and Maritime Affairs	\$33,798,979	(27%)
19.	Korean Educational Development Institute / KEDI	Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology	\$29,385,866	(42%)
20.	Korean Institute of Criminology / KIC	Ministry of Justice	\$7,934,435	(86%)
21.	Korean Women's Development Institute / KWDI	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family	\$13,419,254	(75%)
22.	National Youth Policy Institute / NYPI	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family	\$7,881,671	(73%)
23.	Science and Technology Policy Institute / STEPI	Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology	\$14,864,631	(61%)

* The numbers in parentheses refer to the share of governmental funding in the organization's total expenditure. Dollar amounts are based on a 2010 conversion rate of 1,156.1 won per U.S. dollar.¹²

to establish think tanks. The Samsung Economic Research Institute (SERI) was created in 1986, and the Hyundai Research Institute was also founded. The

POSCO Research Institute (POSRI) was established in 1994, nine years after the Pohang Steel Company built its own technical research institute. These private

think tanks are funded by their business groups and primarily study economic trends and related topics. They disseminate information and engage in consulting or educating business personnel and ordinary citizens. These major private think tanks are interested in promoting business interests, and their research is often customized to meet the demands of their donor conglomerates. Although some programs are dedicated to corporate social responsibility, they rarely engage in framing public policy, other than through the narrow scope of industrial or business inquiries. It is difficult to ascertain their revenue sources and expenditures due to lack of transparency in their finances and management. SERI's annual budget equals that of the Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE), the largest national think tank in terms of expenditure (see Table 1).

There are only a few independent nongovernmental and NPO think tanks in South Korea. They tend to be fairly small and are usually connected with higher education institutions. University-affiliated think tanks are more oriented toward academic research even when conducting policy studies, and are often isolated within the academic community and lack full-time researchers. Notable think tanks in this category are the Asiatic Research Institute at Korea University, the Institute for Far Eastern Studies at Kyungnam University, the Institute of East and West Studies at Yonsei University, and the Center for Social Sciences at Seoul National University. Among nonprofit think tanks that are not affiliated with universities, the Sejong Institute is the largest and oldest. It has its own endowment and foundation. However, the Blue House (South Korea's presidency) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade have influence on the selection of its board members and chairman due to the legacy of government intervention

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when it was founded. Some civic movement organizations also created think tanks. The Hope Institute was formed by civic movement leaders in 2005 with the mission of providing alternative public policies on topics like small businesses and the environment, and helping the development of rural and local communities. News media, in particular several newspaper companies, have set up in-house think tanks, though their impact is very limited. Many NPO think tanks are in essence run by an individual with a limited number of staff. They tend to be ephemeral and rarely noticed by the Korean public. The biggest challenge for NPO think tanks is gathering enough financing to maintain staff and operate programs, as they face a tough and competitive environment for fundraising activities.

The establishment of more NPO think tanks is certainly desirable as a means of capacity building in the civic sector and promoting more

democratic governance in South Korea.¹³ However, the think tank environment of South Korea makes it difficult for them to survive. Unlike their government- and conglomerate-funded counterparts, NPO think tanks are in a desperate struggle for funding. There are two basic types of grant-making foundations that can fund the work of NPO think tanks. Government foundations, such as the National Research Foundation, distribute large grants for research, but to academic institutions rather than independent think tanks. Private foundations tend to be more focused on student scholarships and other philanthropic activities. Therefore, it is very difficult for NPO think tanks outside universities to find financial resources. This funding issue is one of the main reasons why there are not many NPO think tanks in South Korea.

The East Asia Institute's Growth

The East Asia Institute (EAI) was founded in 2002 by Korea University professor Kim Byung-kook. While it began with a handful of staff members, EAI has grown rapidly, doubling its expenditures and increasing its endowment sevenfold. The number of full-time staff with master's and doctoral degrees has increased to fifteen. EAI has also built a strong reputation at home and abroad. It has been ranked either fifth or seventh among foreign-policy think tanks in South Korea by the daily newspaper *Hankyung*. It was also recognized as twelfth among Asian think tanks in the 2010 *Global "Go-To Think Tanks" Index*.¹⁴ EAI's research programs are carried out by six centers: the Center for Public Opinion Research, the Asia Security Initiative Center, the Center for China Studies, the Center for Japan Studies, and the Center for Values and Ethics. More routine or ad hoc research panels are created to examine specific issues and challenges. Around one hundred scholars participate in EAI's network for various research projects. EAI's strength also lies in its capacity to produce and disseminate public opinion surveys. Cross-national surveys are carried out in collaboration with a diverse range of international partners, such as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. The Institute hosts conferences and roundtables with experts under the names Smart Talk, InfraVision, and Global Net 21. Its EAI Fellowship program draws scholars based in Asia, Europe, and North America every year. Academically, the EAI publishes the *Journal of East Asian Studies* and thematic books and reports, and offers internships to college students at home and abroad. As of

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summer 2011, 236 students had participated in this program.

The rapid growth of EAI relies on four strategies. The first is proactive external project financing. With a small endowment of US\$2 million, EAI has to mobilize funding to meet an almost equal amount of annual expenditure. In 2011, roughly 70 percent of expenditures were composed of research funding from outside institutions or individuals. With a very competitive funding environment for NPO think tanks at home, EAI has been looking to overseas institutions to raise funds for research and other programs. Currently, the MacArthur Foundation, based in Chicago, supports EAI's Asia Security Initiative Program. Other research funds come from the government, newspaper companies, and some domestic grant-making organizations. Government projects have been limited, however. Among programs other than research, the Luce Foundation in New York has supported the *Journal of East Asian Studies*. The Chang Ching Kuo Foundation and the Japan Foundation are both supporting the EAI Fellowship program, together with YBM, a South Korean educational company. The Samyang Company, another Korean firm, supports EAI's essay competition for students. In order to stabilize individual contributions, a group called Deseo was created to bring together prominent business figures to support EAI. Its members and other individuals contribute about 20 percent of the Institute's annual expenditure. This proactive search for varied funding sources has been quite successful. However, the heavy reliance on outside funding results in financial insecurity, and the Institute

is attempting to increase its endowment to facilitate sustainable growth.

The second strategy is utilizing research networks of nonresident scholars. With a limited budget, EAI is unable to host a large number of experts. Instead, it has reached out to external scholars, most of whom are teaching at leading universities in South Korea. Independent research carried out by EAI's in-house staff has been limited mainly to opinion research. This network-based approach is useful, as it allows the Institute to target a group of distinguished experts according to a specific research topic. Every year, ten to twelve groups of scholars carry out research projects. The opportunity to collaborate with other leading academics in their field is a major incentive for scholars to participate. The leadership of a senior scholar who can convene colleagues and coordinate collaborative research is a key to the success of such projects. Since scholar networks operate voluntarily, personal ties and mutual respect play an important role in sustaining these networks.

The third strategy is active international networking. Most public think tanks in South Korea are government funded and therefore have a principal-agency relationship with a particular ministry. For NPO think tanks, with no principal or official customer for policy research, establishing a reputation is a very difficult challenge. International attention is often effective in attracting more focus from the policy community within South Korea. As a latecomer in South Korea, EAI has looked out to the larger world and tried to develop networks with international think tanks and institutions as well as individual scholars and experts. Rather than competing at home, where the idea market is very much compartmentalized between agent think tanks and funding principals, many of EAI's activities have focused on operating outside of the country and drawing international attention to South Korea. Publishing the Social Sciences Citation Index-accredited *Journal of East Asian Studies* through networks of internation-

al scholars is one example of this strategy. Engaging in cross-national opinion surveys with overseas think tanks and media outlets is another.

The fourth and final strategy is innovative dissemination. Effective dissemination of research products is a requirement for any think tank that wants to have major impact. EAI is a front-runner among South Korean think tanks in electronically disseminating research products. The twenty-first century idea market is globalized and moves at a rapid pace. Naturally, an English-language website with readable content is critical for interacting with experts around the world. EAI has benchmarked the websites of renowned global think tanks in order to follow international standards and qualities. Distribution via e-mail lists and social-networking services like Twitter has also been introduced. Creating extensive English-language content is challenging, since much of the original research output is in Korean. EAI's staff translates these Korean texts into English to expose them to a wider global audience. A Chinese version of the website was recently developed, with Chinese translations of several research products.

EAI's Efforts to Translate Research into Policies

Think tanks collect, synthesize, and create a range of information products, often directed at a political and academic audience, but also sometimes for the benefit of the media, interest groups, business circles, international civil society, and the general public of a nation.¹⁵ Producing research for the government or the legislature is a more direct path for translating policy ideas into public policies, and it can be difficult to determine whether think tanks have had influence on policy changes when they take the indirect path of informing the general public or interest groups. One could argue that merely shaping public opinion with no consequential policy changes should be considered a major contribution by think tanks. All think tanks are aimed at influencing public policies directly or indirectly, but they

are more sensitive to their own influence on the government, the media, and civil society.

Think tanks in South Korea tend to direct their products to the relevant government department. Under the legacy of the “developmental state,” in which the government has played a strong role in both assisting and regulating business and society, it is natural for South Korean think tanks to harmonize their policy interests with those of specific public officials in order to gain policy influence. At the same time, the phenomenal development of internet-based communication has driven an increase in the provision of information and policy ideas to the media and the general public. Demand for think tank ideas among both the public and the private sectors has grown.

The policy-making process has become increasingly complex to meet external demand and global standards. Technological convergence and market integration are driving forces in this process. Internally, there is also a greater need for more customized policy responses to satisfy increasingly fragmented and diverse social groups. With these changes in the policy-making environment, the South Korean government has identified the need to tap into the expertise of think tanks for the sake of more effective and efficient public policies.

Translating ideas into policies may be easier for government-funded national think tanks, since their research is more readily adopted by the government bureaucracy due to their principal-agency relations. The policy ideas these think tanks submit are usually instrumental to making selected policy goals feasible. National think tanks essentially have an automatic path to influence decision makers. One could view this relationship from a critical standpoint, arguing that the think tanks are employed by the government as tools to provide intellectual legitimization for policies. In this sense, they would have little impact on the government.

Translating ideas into public policies is particularly difficult for NPO think tanks, which do not have a principal government office that commissions specific research projects. Accordingly, NPO think tanks are more willing to participate in the hot issues of public debate. With organizational and financial independence from the government, their output is likely to be bolder and even critical of contemporary government policies. Preserving intellectual autonomy from the government and partisan politics is desirable for NPO think tanks as they seek to maintain their credibility and influence in civil society. At the same time, NPO think tanks need to have some kind of engagement with government to influence policies. Therefore, they try to strike a delicate balance between dependence on government and total isolation from it.¹⁶

EAI is a nonpartisan NPO think tank. It does not receive regular financial contributions from governments or political parties. On occasion, the central and local governments have commissioned research projects related to public-policy issues. Although the portion is small when compared with the total annual research output, some research commissioned by the government is important to have an impact. For example, a three-year research project on South Korea’s mid-term foreign policy is an effort to help the Foreign Ministry with its overall policy goals and strategies over the next five years. In this project, public officials participate regularly in seminars to exchange views and discuss ideas suggested by experts. Aside from projects commissioned by the government, EAI seeks to maintain interaction with government officials and politicians to influence policy debates. They are frequently invited to speak at seminars and conferences. Dialogue between policy implementers and experts in the private sector is continuously undertaken, in addition to unilateral dissemination of EAI’s research to officials and politicians.

Finding concrete examples of the impact that EAI has made on policy is not

easy, since such causality is rarely clear. For instance, many experts from EAI's research networks are advising the government as policy council members. They are also frequent contributors to the media through columns on policy issues. Therefore it is difficult to discern whether these "idea brokers" are influencing public policies through EAI's research output or through their other activities.

Nevertheless, there are cases in which EAI's influence is demonstrable, including the following:

Research on Presidential Transitions

EAI has engaged in a great deal of research on democracy and good governance in South Korea. Amid the presidential election campaign in late 2007, the Institute launched a special research project on a successful presidency in South Korea. By delineating what a president should and should not do during a transition, EAI tried to assist the new administration that would be inaugurated in late February 2008. Taking a bipartisan approach, EAI consulted key advisers who had participated in the presidential transition teams of three past administrations. The study integrated some theoretical concepts from political science literature with the voices of experienced high-level government officials, and the results were published in December 2007 in the form of a book entitled *Presidential Transitions in Korea*. The new presidential transition team set up after Lee Myung-bak's victory then requested the book and debated its policy recommendations.

There are two reasons why this book had an impact. First, there had been very little research focused on the role and tasks of a presidential transition team. While many suggestions had been made on a successful presidency in the past, they had not paid due attention to the transition period, since it would not last longer than two months. Second, the book included vivid recollections and advice from participants in past transition teams. Many of them had served new governments as high-ranking

public officials. Tapping wisdom from these experienced policy elites made the suggestions in the book more persuasive. Whether some of the recommendations were adopted by the new government is difficult to determine. However, Kim Byung-kook, who planned this research project, was nominated as senior secretary on foreign affairs and security in the President's Office, though he himself was not a member of the transition team.

A New Foreign-Policy Paradigm for "Complex Diplomacy"

Scholars belonging to EAI's National Security Panel, chaired by respected senior scholar Ha Young-sun of Seoul National University, have coined the concept of a "complex diplomacy" as a new paradigm for South Korea's foreign policy. International-relations literature has emphasized the increasing role of NGOs, multinational corporations, and intergovernmental organizations in international affairs, which have traditionally been dominated by the world's governments. With increasing market integration and institutional networking across national boundaries, foreign-policy issues are now addressed across bilateral, regional, and global levels of interaction. In addition, the realm of foreign policy has been diversified from conventional security and trade policies to nonconventional challenges such as development assistance, climate change, energy security, science and technology, and human rights. Multiple actors, multilayered spaces, and the issues encompassed by foreign policies increasingly require policy makers to view international affairs in a much more complex way. EAI's foreign-policy scholars argue that South Korea must adopt this way of thinking, as its future success lies in proactive networking with the rest of the world, in addition to major powers such as the United States, China, and Japan.

After several years of advocating a "complex diplomacy," EAI has seen this notion become incorporated into the thinking of the Foreign Ministry. At his inaugural speech on 8 October

2010, Foreign Minister Kim Sung-hwan described new foreign-policy strategies including “total diplomacy” for multiple actors and “complex diplomacy” for issue contents, as well as “digital-network diplomacy” and “soft-power diplomacy.” Several EAI scholars also participated in a workshop with the Foreign Ministry to discuss new visions and goals. And as noted above, EAI has been commissioned to carry out a project on the government’s mid-term foreign policy.

In this case, the translation of EAI ideas into actual policy strategies can be said to have occurred. There were many factors behind this success. Inviting key public officials to EAI and engaging in dialogue with them was very effective. Another factor was the individual involvement of scholars from EAI networks in advisory councils. Both individual and organizational ties and institutional research output can be important in creating policy impact.

Opinion Survey Research

Both domestic and cross-national opinion surveys are areas in which EAI has enjoyed a competitive edge over other think tanks in South Korea. Designing opinion surveys on public issues and offering good analysis serve both decision makers and civil society. EAI engages in six or seven polling projects a year, and in every election year an election study panel is chaired by Professor Lee Nae-young of Korea University. Its accumulated data set is open to the public and contributes to both academic and policy studies of election and voting behaviors. Other leading data sets include polling on institutional trust, national identity, and national security.

After polling, EAI has published opinion briefings and sent them to politicians and public officials, in addition to posting them on the website. For the general public, survey analyses are usually disseminated through newspapers. As a majority of polling is carried out in partnership with major media companies, it is relatively easy to diffuse polling

results to a wide audience.

It is difficult to analyze the causal relationship between EAI’s opinion surveys and any policy changes. Still, the main purpose of opinion surveys is to diagnose what the public wants regarding contentious ideas and concerns. In doing so, opinion surveys can also help raise citizens’ awareness of public issues and encourage their participation in the debate. For decision makers, opinion surveys can serve as reference points, so that politicians and government officials are able to deliberate legal or policy matters in the context of public preferences. In addition to these broader contributions, the distribution of opinion surveys via the media has the benefit of promoting awareness of EAI itself. The Institute is one of the most searched-for think tanks on major internet portals, and its survey results, such as the approval ratings of presidents and other politicians, are often quoted.

Lessons from EAI’s Experiences

EAI’s growth and performance have been widely recognized at home and abroad. In an environment where government-funded think tanks dominate, EAI has provided an alternative model for NPO think tanks that have to operate with limited resources. This model is based on active projective funding, network-based research, and proactive international contacts. It is difficult to follow this example without a group of policy-minded scholars who are committed to building an innovative institution independent of both the government and the universities to which they may individually belong. In order to manage the nonresident scholar networks, EAI has relied on able program officers and staff who conduct their work autonomously. The leadership of EAI delegates most routine tasks to its staff, focusing instead on strategic decisions such as funding and research planning.

In order to translate research into policies, EAI has tried to directly engage in dialogue with public officials and politicians, and reached out to decision

makers and opinion leaders through the active dissemination of research products. EAI also places a high priority on providing information to civil society as a way of educating and engaging citizens on major public issues. Despite these efforts, it is still difficult to clearly establish where research has had a policy impact. This is largely due to the fact that the policy-making process is often a black box, with little public information on which individual or institution is responsible for specific policy choices. In addition, it is impossible to separate the contributions of EAI's scholars from their other channels of influence. Nevertheless, in several cases it is quite obvious that the policy influence of individual experts would not have been possible without EAI's collaboration with the government and media.

Although EAI experiment has so far been very successful, it faces several challenges in organizational sustainability. Financial dependence on external project funding is one of the main concerns. In order to stabilize an internal source of financing, EAI is searching for more philanthropic donations from individuals. Moreover, most of EAI's staff spends much of their time on administrative tasks rather than direct production of research output. For the Institute to grow further, it will need to develop a research capacity made up of resident experts. This matter is of course related to the need for stable funding.

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