



The Prospects of Think Tanks in Uzbekistan

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Abstract

Today we are living in the globalized world. There are many problems we face that all these problems can not be solved solely by government institutions. These issues may be dealt with by civil society organizations as well as non-governmental institutions. Think tanks become indispensable for all parts of the society and state. The article analyzes the importance of think tanks as well as the role of think tanks and their prospects in Uzbekistan.

Keywords: *Think Tank; RAND Corporation; Civil Society; Chatham House; The Club of Rome*

Introduction

Think tanks are considered one type of civil society. The term think tank itself was introduced in the United States of America during the World War II. Past names of think tanks that still seem relevant include “brain boxes,” “idea factories,” and “thinking cells.” The Royal United Services Institute, established in Britain in 1832, and the Fabian Society in 1884, are considered two of the earliest think tanks .[1] The use of the term was expanded in the 1960s to illustrate some groups of experts who formulated different political strategies in the field of international relations and strategic questions.[2] Although the term of think tank was not yet invented, think tanks began to appear around 1900 as a part of community of scholars and scientists to give solutions to economic, military, and social problems of that period.

During this period, Frederick Taylor was considered the Father of Scientific Management, published the enormously influential book, Principles of Scientific Management, which affected not only business, but also government planning. [3] The book keeps its importance for the time of being. The rise of think tanks since that time is connected to a series of main socio-economic, political events that shattered conventional wisdom and forced policymakers to seek innovative solutions to contemporary and complex problems.

By taking into account the above mentioned definitions, it may be concluded that think tanks, which perform as public policy research, analysis, and engagement institutions, formulate policy-oriented research, analysis, and advice on domestic and international issues, enabling policymakers and the public to make informed decisions about public policy issues at global or domestic level. Think tanks may be

affiliated with a political party, a university, a government, or independent institutions that are structured as permanent bodies. By the 1970s, the term think tank was applied to institutions focusing not only on foreign policy and defense strategy, but also on current global as well as domestic political, economic, and social issues.

The Main Part

Regional and international organizations such as World Bank, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) have come to recognize the main role of these institutions play in the policymaking process. The period following World War I saw the establishment of Chatham House and the Council on Foreign Relations.

The social turmoil of the 1960s and Cold War, a number of research centers, such as Urban Institute, The Club of Rome, D66 Policy Research Bureau were created to analyze and combat global challenges. It has been proposed that the first think tank was the socialist Fabian Society, founded in Great Britain in the late 19th century, which sought to influence the country's public policy. For many years, the majority of scholars studying think tanks considered them a uniquely American phenomenon that boomed in the United States because of the perceived exceptionalism of its political system and its rich tradition of private rather than public funding, which benefited think tanks.

The organizations have also flourished, however, in other industrialized countries, such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia, where normally, they have tended to be fewer in number and less well funded than those in the United States. In the early 21st century, more than half the world's think tanks were in Europe and North America. European think tanks vary considerably. In Germany, for example, large, influential think tanks exist, but they are often state funded and associated with political parties or universities. In France organizations similar to think tanks are related to the government in Paris and have a conflictual but subordinate relationship with political parties. In southern Europe, think tanks began to appear in the 1970s. Research on think tanks outside the Western world indicates that an even greater variety of organizations may exist globally.

Think tank researchers influence public opinion and public policy, which is a different focus from traditional academic research at a university. There are numerous definitions about think tanks provided by scholars. Diane Stone, who is a vice president of the International Public Policy Association, one of scholars, for example, defines think tanks "as relatively autonomous organizations engaged in the research and analyses of contemporary issues independently of government, political parties and pressure groups." [4] Andrew Rich similarly defines think tanks as "independent, non-interest-based, non-for-profit political organizations that produce and principally rely on expertise and ideas to obtain support and to influence the policymaking process." [5] Weaver and McGann offer a compatible definition likewise formed by the notion of independence, claim that think tanks are "non-governmental, not-for-profit research organizations with substantial organizational autonomy from government and from interest groups such as firms, political parties, lobbies.

As a matter of fact, policy and economic research organizations have been growing in number and in impact in recent years. A survey of think tanks conducted in 1999 indicated that the two-thirds of all public policy research and analysis organizations around the world were established after 1970 and during 1980. It is not to mention that policy research and analytical centers have been increasing substantially especially in developing and transitional countries in Sub-Saharan African, Eastern and Central Europe, East, South and Southeast Asia, between 2011 and 2018. Similar centers have also appeared in Latin America and the Caribbean, where they began their research around the 1960s and 1970s.

With regard to source of funding of think tanks, they have many possible source of funding – a factor that may impact on the quality and area of research. For instance, some that receive money from political parties or the government bodies are likely to be partial in their proposed solutions, others are more independent, receiving money from a variety of recourses that have no political agenda. In this essence, Bobur Bekmurodov, Chairman of the nationwide movement” Yuksalish” which is the national think tank in Uzbekistan, thinks that “it does not matter where they get their funding from as long as their thinking is independent, that is where integrity of think tanks comes from. This was a totally new thought for me and has changed my understanding completely.” [6] It is a bit controversial understanding that the sources of think tanks’ funding may affect their research process. Apart from that, it puts also in question in terms of their autonomy and independence. Think tanks should not perform research under somehow pressure.

It should be noted that the results of analysis in various fields of issues are published as journals, considered part of the process. These journals are prestigious, such as Foreign Affairs is a part of the Council in Foreign Relations think tank in New York, Foreign Policy is part of the Carnegie Endowment. The National Interest itself does not belong to a large institution or perform research functions, but its editors have worked at think tanks and in government positions. Strategic Issues of Security and Development is also considered well-known journal around the world, published by the Institute for Strategic Regional Studies under President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

According to Global Go to Think Tank Index, there are around 11,175 think tanks in the world, including 1,872 located in the United States and 2,219 located in Europe. [7]

Think Tanks on the International Stage

We can see that the globalization has affected think tanks, especially by increasing their appetite and capacity for international networking. International think tanks and global networks have emerged since the 1990s. International think tanks, although they are based in one country, claim not to have any specific national links. An example is the European Policy Centre in Belgium, which declares a “multi-constituency approach” in its analysis of the EU and the effect of global policy making without preference for any particular member state. Additionally, there is a tendency for transnational communication between think tanks to occur through the creation of regional and international forums such as the Global Development Network, headquartered in New Delhi, which fosters international research and collaboration on development issues. International organizations, such as the World Bank, encourage such activities through the sponsoring of regional and international conferences that promote think tanks and their work. Similarly, think tanks offer their services to international organizations, such as the World Bank and the EU. All this international activity has translated into a proliferation of the number of such organizations globally. [8] Think tank directors and other senior staff members are often considered leading experts in their field and sometimes write pieces for newspapers, political magazines and appear on news and current affairs programmes. The possible range of areas of focus for a job in a think tank is virtually endless because think tanks carry out research that concerns the specific region, community, or issue area(s) for which they operate, be that a continent, country, state, societal group, political party, industry, or theme. [9]

Think Tanks in Uzbekistan

The Global Go To Think Tank Index marks the fifteenth year of continued efforts by the think tanks and Civil Societies Program at the University of Pennsylvania to acknowledge the important contributions and emerging global trends of Think Tanks. [10] It shows that there are 13 think tanks in Uzbekistan. In comparison with other countries in Central Asia, Kazakhstan has the biggest trend, 43 think tanks. As to the characteristics of think tanks in Uzbekistan, these think tanks are considered as state-owned, created by ministers, departments.

For example, Institute for Regional and Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Institute of Forecasting and Macroeconomic Research under Ministry of Economic Development and Poverty Reduction, Center for Development and so on. It is worth mentioning that the number of private think tanks has risen in recent years. For instance, The Center for Political Initiatives “Ma’no”, The Center for Economic Development, The Nationwide Movement “Yuksalish”, “Caravan of Knowledge”, Center for Economic Research. It should be noted that, on 15 July, 2021, International Institute of Central Asia held the official ceremony.

These think tanks are conducting research on both domestic and foreign issues, are making efforts to provide with analyses, making social polls to know the opinions of the society.

Conclusions

However, think tanks in Uzbekistan should take necessary steps to be more productive. It is clear that government can not deal with all challenges we face. So I come to some conclusions to improve the effectiveness of the think tanks in Uzbekistan.

- Think tanks should more collaborate with foreign experts, that may be productive to learn new methods of research, also they should cooperate with regional and global think tanks to get experience;
- More round tables and international conferences should be organized to exchange views with not only local experts but also foreign ones;
- Think tanks should attract more young generations to work with them, because 60 percent of the population in Uzbekistan makes up youth;
- Government should take measures to create conditions for think tanks to do research independently;
- It is also crucially important that government should promote the creation of private think tanks that helps to create competitive sphere for all think tanks in Uzbekistan.

In conclusion, non-governmental organizations, think tanks have become inalienable parts of civil society in recent years. Uzbekistan has taken a number of steps to support the creation of think tanks. Think tanks may also influence decision-making process in government. However, there are some challenges we should overcome. If above mentioned suggestions are taken into account, it is likely to be more fruitful for the next actions of think tanks.

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