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THINK TANK: HE WHO OWNS THE INFORMATION, OWNS THE WORLD

A.V. Doroshkevich
Scientific tutor L.V. Bedritskaya
BSEU (Minsk)

The current political landscape is fraught, treacherous and more difficult than ever to navigate. In a globalized world faced with increasingly complex relations and interactions, a world that generates an environment of risks and opportunities the governance of different countries has opened the door to other socio-political players.

Think tanks – just like lobby groups, NGOs, public relations agencies, multinationals or transnational institutions – are being launched, at an exponential rate and with great authority, into the debate on and design of public policies in all

areas: health, education, culture, law, economics, security, defense, environment, natural resources, energy and international relations.

A think tank is an organization, sometimes called a policy institute or public policy organization, made up of highly intelligent, experienced, and educated people who focus on a particular issue and attempt to define, discuss, and remedy it.

The term *think tank* was first used in military jargon during World War II to describe a safe place where plans and strategies could be discussed, but its meaning began to change during the 1960s when it came to be used in the United States to describe private nonprofit policy research organizations. 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.

Economic think tanks are essentially economic policy institutes that work to develop and propose economic strategies and policies to benefit the overall economy. Why a think tank? Think tanks are a global phenomenon which plays a critical role for governments and civil societies around the world by acting as bridges between knowledge and power. Governments and individual policymakers, throughout the developed and developing world, face the common problem of bringing expert knowledge to bear in government decision-making.

The challenge for the new millennium is to harness the vast reservoir of knowledge, information, and associational energy that exist in public policy research organizations so that it supports self-sustaining economic, social, and political progress in every region of the world for public good.

Based on the Global Go to Think Tank Index Report Chatham House (the UK) took the first place and became the top think tank in the world in 2016. Chatham House has created the Queen Elizabeth II Academy for Leadership in International Affairs to develop a new generation of leaders capable of crafting innovative responses to the most pressing challenges facing their countries and regions. Chatham House experts develop new ideas on how best to confront critical international challenges and take advantage of opportunities from the near- to the long-term.

French Institute of International Relations (IFRI) (France) and Bruegel (Belgium) follow the UK think tank. The institutes:

- engage governments, the private sector, civil society and its members in open debates and confidential discussions about significant developments in international affairs;
- produce independent and rigorous analysis of critical global, regional and country-specific challenges and opportunities;
- offer new ideas to decision-makers and opinion shapers on how these could best be tackled from the near to the long term.

Think tanks are gaining importance as private expertise resources that influence national and international policies and public opinion, creating a space for dialogue between governments and civil society, and playing a role of a mediator. Think tanks, however, still face an operating environment that is full of tensions and disruptions. To successfully navigate it, they must understand the threats and opportunities facing all knowledge-based organizations and adapt to meet the market's new demands.

As for Belarus, it has a potential for developing in economic, political and technological spheres. But the main obstacle for these is an old inefficient management system. Belarus needs serious interventions, first of all, in internal policy. The government is not able alone to change the situation, and they should delegate opportunities to the non-governmental organizations to improve current economic and political positions. Despite the limited support from the state there are some leading think tanks in Belarus who work out the ways of transformation, and organize economic and political forums. They have achieved great results for several years, and set a good example to others. A few organizations set such goals as developing the effectiveness of their cooperation with each other as well as with state; guarantee that the general public will have the possibility of receiving objective and up-to-date information about major problems, tendencies and perspectives; and strengthen the role of non-government research and analytical centers in preparing reforms in the country and formation of civil society in Belarus.

With information overload comes a need for talented editors and skilled curators, that is, organizations as much as individuals who help those within political and economic processes to discern the reliability and usefulness of analytic products. Potentially, think tanks could transform into significant standard-setters and arbiters of quality of the 21st century economy and policy analysis. If they do not, they risk becoming just another group in the overpopulated 'post-truth' policy advice industry.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION IN THE CONDITIONS OF ECONOMIC SANCTIONS

A.V. Zakharova
Scientific tutor: I.Y. Okhrimenko
DonNUET (Donetsk)

Russia's dependence on the developed countries can be seen in a number of important areas such as ensuring the country's strategically important products: