

SUBSECTION 5. Innovations

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MODERN GOALS AND TASKS OF CANADIAN THINK TANKS

Think tanks are independent institutions organized to conduct research and produce independent, policy-relevant knowledge [1].

Despite the fact that think tanks phenomenon is already common, nowadays only a small percentage of the world's citizens familiar with it, even less with the mechanisms and purposes of the think tanks' activity.

However, the importance of such research centers is directly proportional to their popularity. According to the Director of Policy and Planning of USA Richard Haas, of the many influences on foreign policy formulation, the role of think tanks is among the most important and least appreciated [1].

The first think tanks emerged in the U.S., UK and Germany in the early twentieth century. Since the beginning of its development the main tasks of the think tanks were developments in the military sphere. Currently, the field of think tanks' activity is much expanded, it includes studies in foreign policy and in social sphere of a particular country or region, analyzes of internal transformation and foreign policy strategies, global international threats, etc.

Canada is one of the countries where think tanks have acquired its expansion in the mid-twentieth century and now are one of the most effective tools to inform the public about domestic and foreign policy, as well as serve as an additional tool to aid decision making for the government.

Nowadays there are more than sixty influential think tanks in the country (among nearly 100 think tanks represented in Canada) whose activity is not limited only by political issues. In Canada, the country with one of the world's highest standards of living, great emphasis of academics and researchers is making in the social sphere and human and civil rights ensuring.

From more than 60 popular and influential Canadian think tanks about 72% engaged in research in the field of domestic policy, 28% make their researches in foreign matters orientation where only 6 think tanks work with "traditional" for the first think tanks weapons and security issues [2-5].

Most of Canadian think tanks devote its attention to economic and social development of the state and governance issues.

Fraser Institute, one of the most influential and prominent Canadian research centers, which explores the impact of public and social policy on society, in its turn, gives a comprehensive definition of immediate think tanks' tasks. According to this definition, think tanks conduct research on specific problems, encourage the discovery of solutions to those problems, and facilitate interaction among researchers, scientists, economists, and academics in pursuit of these goals. Think tanks can be associated with universities or governments, or they can be stand-alone private organizations [6].

An important feature of modern think tanks in Canada is their prevalence throughout the state. However, only a few think tanks dealing with nationwide issues instead exploring politics and governance issues in certain provinces or territories of Canada. The aforementioned Fraser Institute and Social Research and Demonstration Corporation refer primarily to the research centers which have a wide network of offices across the country.

Again, many research centers focus their activity on issues and problems of individual provinces, for example, Chantier de l'économie sociale (Social Policy Research Institute) deals with the social economy of Quebec and GPI Atlantic works on issues of Nova Scotia and etc.

However, modern Canadian think tanks do not outline research and solving of certain problems as a single goal, nowadays it's important to report about this problem to society and ensure feedback with citizens.

So far as think tanks as a phenomenon characterize primarily democratic societies, people here play an integral role of the "main carrier of the power." Population in a democratic state has the main rights to vote and re-elect their government. Therefore, democratic governments tend to listen to the "voice of the people" which affect on their presence or absence in government circles.

Democratic society is intended to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of its citizens, giving them the right to defend their personal needs and views. In this case, in a democratic Canadian society think tanks are beginning to play the role of an auxiliary unit in communication between government and citizens, demonstrating and explaining the government's decision for the citizens, also pointing to the government on the main concerns and needs of the population.

For example, the aforementioned Fraser Institute seeks to solve main policy problems through propagation in Canadian society the ideas of usefulness of market making and distributing of individualism, helping citizens to increase their awareness of public issues, domestic and foreign policy. Institute researchers work to provide the Canadians with as much information as possible about the Canadian government's unpopular decisions and with enough knowledge to stand against such decisions and appeal for their rights.

Currently, the Institute publishes evaluations of 5,700 high schools providing education to three million children. These report cards were very popular among parents who use it as a "guide" in choosing a school for their child. As a proof of survey popularity serves the fact that the report cards are downloaded more than one million times from the Institute official website every year [7].

According to researchers of another popular Canadian think tank The Council of Canadians, political literacy of the population is crucial to the establishment of stability and prosperity in Canadian society and within the country. In order to better inform Canadians about public policy issues quarterly Council of Canadians present manuals titled Canadian Perspectives with the main goal to encourage Canadians to be more actively involved in the process of shaping policy [8].

Naturally, in modern conditions we can not say with absolute certainty about the "purity" of intentions of the think tanks in informing citizens exclusively for the citizens purposes, which is primarily reflected in the fact that although most of the think tanks in the country represent themselves as "independent" centers, they do not devoid of ideological coloring and outside influence.

The Canadian Constitution guarantees its citizens the right to defend their interests, also rights of researchers to cover issues of domestic and foreign policy following in their studies to certain ideologies or goals. Thus, Canadian think tanks direct their research in different vectors, hence their formal separation on conservative free-market oriented and left-oriented associations, as well as centrist with no ideological colors.

Conservative or right-of-centre free market oriented think tanks include primarily Fraser Institute, CD Howe and Mackenzie Institute. Conservative think tanks, in this case, are the centers that follow the next tasks and concepts: a free market system (including low taxes, privatization and deregulation), limited participation of government, individual freedom and values, and / or religious expression, traditional family values, and a strong defence [9].

To the left wing or liberal (by American terminology) think tanks belongs Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Caledon Institute of Social Policy [9]. These think tanks promote state interventionism in the name of reducing inequalities and to ensure social justice, if it embraces strong collectivist and communal values and advocates a lower spending on defence and national security.

If think tanks are not in favor of a certain ideology, they are called centrist. Centrist think tanks in Canada first and foremost include Canada West Foundation and the Pearson-Shoyama Institute [10].

Availability of multilateral coverage of special events and government decisions for Canadians is a clear advantage, because information is not submitted under separate angle and citizen participation in public life is not governed by certain ideas or ideologies, each Canadian chooses which views to follow.

On the early stages of think tanks' development most researches were outputted in the form of books or collections. For now, with the increasing role of the Internet in the development of society, think tanks began to publish short reports that could attract the attention of citizens and would not be too big to get people lost their interest to the material.

Conferences and bilateral dialogues are the core weapon with which think tanks tend to pay interest to the public policy issues and their solutions. In its turn, the bilateral dialogues and conferences conducted by think tanks eventually embodied in the materials that centers prepare for the government, which show the views of the public on individual decisions of the government and also point to the urgent needs and problems that arise in society and need solving by the authorities.

Although almost all the think tanks focus on its "independence" from government, private research centers receive allocations from the government for some researches, while many government officials analyze think tanks' materials to broaden their understanding of certain problems in public life and its solutions.

It can be summarized that in a democratic society such as Canada think tanks play not only a role of new analytical information about specific problems and their solutions generator, but also become a bridge between the government and society in their dialogue, helping citizens to get acquainted with the government's decisions and at the same time demonstrating main concerns and needs of the population to the government.

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