

# THINK TANKS IN NEPAL: EMERGENCE AND GROWTH

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## Abstract

*Think tank is bridging gap among academic and policy making communities, states and civil society to serve in the public interest as independent voices that translate applied and basic research into a language, form that is understandable, reliable, and accessible for policy makers and the public. Hence, Nepal is officially far from it. Although, practices in Nepal is very limited as well as narrow ideas, thinking, and approaches to sake prosperities of divergent Nepali societies and cultures. Government investment is very poor in these works. However, newly opened universities, private institutions and NGOs are work like as hybrid, are engaged in educational research activities. Over the last 10-15 years, governments, and civil society have come to rely on it, and this trend will continue to input better future of Nepal.*

## Key words

Think tank; university; institution; civil society; public policy

## Introduction

Think tank is broadly defined as public-policy research analysis and engagement organizations that generate policy oriented research, analysis, and advice on domestic and international issues, which enable policy makers and the public to make informed decisions about public policy issues. It may be affiliated or independent institutions and is structured as permanent bodies, not ad hoc body. It bridges the gap between academic and policymaking communities and between states and civil society, serving in the public

interest as independent voices that translate applied and basic research into a language, form that is understandable, reliable, and accessible for policymakers and the public. Think tank links with many governmental, non-governmental, independent and autonomous institutions too.

The growth of public policy research organizations, or think tanks, over the last few decades has been nothing less than explosive. This past decade, however, has shown the first marked decrease in the rate of establishment of new think tanks. Despite this recent trend,

think tanks continue to increase their role and influence in countries around the world. The potential of think tanks to support and sustain democratic governments and civil societies around the world is far from exhausted. Today policymakers and civil society throughout the developed and the developing world face the common problem of bringing expert knowledge to bear on government decision-making. The challenge is to harness the vast reservoir of knowledge, information and associational energy that exists in public policy research organizations in every region of the world for public good (McGann, 2012)."

Think Tanks are enhanced due to information and technological revolution, end of national governments' monopoly on information, increasing complexity and technical nature of policy problems, increasing size of government, crisis of confidence in governments and elected officials, globalization and the growth of state and non-state actors, need for timely and concise information and analysis "in the right form at the right time and in the right hands." Think tanks at global level have expanded considerably since the 1990s. These think tanks have responded to the need of policymakers and the general public for information that is useful, reliable, accessible, and understandable. Although this need has been an inherent dynamic of the policymaking process, the forces of globalization have fostered and markedly accelerated the growth of independent think tanks, due to their unique ability to strengthen the research-policy bridge and thus increase the quality and effectiveness of the policymaking process. As a result, think tanks can now be found in most countries of the world. But in Nepal this practice is reversed. Although, some work is growing gradually during last decades in fragile (McGann, 2012).

### **Think tanks in South Asia**

The unique matrix shaped the trajectories of history of think tanks in South Asia. South Asian thinks like planning commission,

government implementing body research institute and so on although some common threads among South Asian of their post-colonial histories. The post-independent era of state-led growth, much of space has been structured by government to acquire policy advice and data, with international institutions too. In South Asia, two distinct think tanks are in practice, one is 'despotic power and another is 'infrastructural power.' The despotic power to 'the range of actions which the elite is empowered to undertaken without routine, institutionalized negotiation with civil society groups' whereas infrastructural power refers to 'the capacity of the state to actually penetrate civil societies and to implement logistically political decision throughout the realm'. The first sense denotes power by the state elite itself over civil society. The second denotes the power of the state to penetrate and centrally coordinate the activities of civil society through its own infrastructure (Mann, 1984, Srivastava, 2011).

Policy research undertaken by think tanks in South Asia has focused primarily on: 1) research-based think tank, involve in project specific research for policy advocacy, 2) action-based think tanks which are largely non-governmental advocacy organizations that rely more on activism and pursue a variety of avenues for policy advocacy, 3) hybrid think tanks, which were initially set up as research institutes but have over a period of time acquired degree-granting powers and 4) private foundations and trusts which are engaged in educational research activities.

Think tanks in South Asia, despite the fact some obvious contrasts, show a great degree of functional similarity in terms of the knowledge being produced. A dynamic interplay between *endogenous* and *exogenous* factors determines the knowledge-power interface termed two level 'embedded autonomy'.

### **Think tanks in Nepal**

Nepal is a landlocked country. Think tank's

role is very crucial and important to public policy but it isn't flourished in our domestic ground. Hence think tank has been initiated in Nepal which isn't friendly with the notion and universal practices while its work is substantial towards national development. After restoration of democracy in 1990, these institutions as well as other public institutions were either highly politicized or privatized on the name of neoliberal policy without any study and thus were paralyzed. Later intellectuals, academicians and politicians realized their mistakes and benefits of think tanks to develop prosperous nation.

### ***Government efforts towards think tank***

TU is one of the most important autonomous institutions in Nepal which produces high level human resources for nation building. TU established research centers like CEDA, CERID, CNAS, and RECAST which work like think tanks in Nepal. It is first official activity which is slightly linked into the notion of think tank. CEDA was established as policy research center contributing towards the national development policies and strategies. CERID has also been working for the development of education in Nepal. CERID's activities are directed towards undertaking educational innovation, issue-based research and need-based training programs. CERID is involving in cross-cutting issues on education to promote quality of education in Nepal. CNAS is a statutory research centre under TU to conduct independent research and deliberation on issues and studies in social sciences. CNAS is a multidisciplinary research centre with a researcher team. The main objectives of the centre are to study political, social, economic, humanitarian and other challenges of national integration from diverse disciplinary perspectives; to promote and undertake studies on current development issues, ethnic diversities, gender, migration, sociolinguistic and cultural studies of Nepal and other Asian countries (TU, 2010).

The Research Centre for Applied Science and Technology (RECAST) was established with the objective is; to undertake research for the identification, development, conservation, utilization and dissemination of indigenous technology; to search and identify foreign technologies appropriate to Nepal and explore their prospects for technology transfer and adaptation; and to conduct research in basic and applied sciences (TU, 2010).

### ***Non-Government efforts***

After restoration of democracy some sectors like NGOs and private sectors are growing faster. In his latest biography, Chaudhary (2013) has stated that monarchy is more dangerous for development of capitalism which got ground for grooming. NGOs like CSAS, SASON, SAP Nepal, Martin Chautary, Socail Science Baha were opened and worked focusing academic work for pro-poor, human right activities and right based activities.

Nepalese Economic Review is explorative about various sectors of finance, economics, and development. It acts as a bridge between knowledge and information on tropical economic, business and development issues between the thinkers, users and the practioners in Nepal (NER, 2013).

The Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry ( FNCCI ) is planning to set up a think-tank comprising private sectors of three countries-Nepal, India and China. Vaidya (2013) in his statement emphasized that we will now begin pressuring the parties to execute what they had signed, adding that the FNCCI expects to see the party's commitment in their respective political manifesto.

The Centre for South Asian Studies (CSAS) is involved in research, dissemination and deliberation on Nepal's current peace process and constitution drafting with several programs on federalism and integration. Some international organization like UNICEF, UNDP, WB, IMF, WHO and UN and its

agencies are more powerful and dominating in policy formulation of world but more in developing countries than developed.

### Conclusion

The ongoing challenge for think tanks is to produce timely and accessible policy-oriented research that effectively engages policymakers, the press and the public on the critical issues facing a country. We are killing more decades so now need to grow it; when a think tank could operate with the motto “research it, write it and they will find it.” Today, think tanks must be learnt means for policy machines. The Economist described “good think tanks” as those organizations that are able to combine “intellectual depth, political influence, and flair for publicity, comfortable surroundings, and a streak of eccentricity.” Many think tanks have already successfully met this challenge and are now playing a critical role in bridging the divide between the academic and policy communities and policymakers and the public. Over the last 10-15 years, governments and civil society have come to rely on think tanks for ideas and advice, and this trend will continue to input better future of Nepal.

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