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To cite this article: Çağrı Adil, “Russian and Turkish Foreign Policy Think Tanks: Institutional Barriers to Influence over Decision-Making”, *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Advanced Online Publication, 12 September 2023, pp. 1-17, DOI: 10.33458/uidergisi.1357714

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.33458/uidergisi.1357714>

Submitted: 29 March 2022

Last Revision: 1 August 2023

Advanced Online Publication: 12 September 2023

Uluslararası İlişkiler - International Relations
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Russian and Turkish Foreign Policy Think Tanks: Institutional Barriers to Influence over Decision-Making

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the institutional factors that influence the development of think tanks in different political systems, with a focus on Russia and Turkey. It identifies various institutional factors such as the structure of the decision-making process, the type of regime, bureaucratic structure, level of democratization, approach of decision-makers, presence of pluralism, effectiveness of political parties, strength of foundations, legal norms, state of civil society, presence of an open public debate culture, and autonomy of the business world that influence the operation of think tanks. The study examines the similarities and differences between the institutional environment of Russia and Turkey, provides examples of how political and institutional factors in different periods in Turkey and Russia have had a facilitating or complicating effect on the establishment and development of think tanks. This paper contributes to the literature by highlighting the importance of institutional factors in the formation, development, role, and structure of think tanks.

Keywords: think tanks, foreign policy, decision-makers, Russia, Turkey

Research Article | Received: 29 March 2022, Last Revision: 1 August 2023, Accepted: 11 August 2023

Introduction

The focus of this paper is the influence of institutional factors on think tank(TT) development, which has been neglected for many years in the literature.¹ Institutional differences that exist in different political systems play an important role in the formation, development, role and structure of TTs.² In other words, the institutional environment in which TTs operate can influence the relationship of these structures with the executive elite, their participation in the decision-making process, their influence on final decisions, and the internal structure of these centers. As stated in the literature on TTs, the type of regime of states, their bureaucratic structure, their level of democratization, the approach of decision-makers to these centers, the structure of the decision-making process, the presence of pluralism in the political arena, the effectiveness of political parties, the strength of foundations as a source of non-state funding, as well as legal norms, the state of civil society, the presence of an open public debate culture in society, and the autonomy of the business world are stated as important institutional factors,

1 Karthik Nachiappan, "Think Tanks and the Knowledge–Policy Nexus in China", *Policy and Society*, Vol. 32, No 3, 2013, p. 255.

2 Jesper Dahl Kelstrup, *The Politics of Think Tanks in Europe*, London and New York, Routledge, 2016, p.16.

influencing the formation and operation of TTs.³ All of the above variables both promote or hinder the development of TTs in the country, and create opportunities for them to influence the policy-making process.⁴ For example, in countries with more authoritarian regimes, TTs may have less freedom to operate, and may face greater restrictions on their activities. On the other hand, in countries with a more open and democratic political system, they may have more opportunity to participate in policy debates and influence policy decisions.

Political and institutional factors in different periods in Turkey and Russia have had a facilitating or complicating effect on the establishment and development of TTs. In the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) era, TTs emerged as a result of the political leadership's heightened interest in political advice from outside sources, as well as the need for information about the capitalist world during the Cold War. The relative freedom that arose during the Gorbachev period (1985-1991) also contributed to the growth of TTs in the USSR.⁵ In Turkey, the emergence of think tanks was facilitated by the 1961 constitution, which brought freedom of expression and association, and an increase in the need for qualified information about foreign policy after the Ankara agreement with the European Economic Community (EEC/EU).⁶ These factors created the necessary infrastructure for the development of TTs in Turkey.

During the 1990s, the democratization process in Russia and Turkey, the pluralization of decision-making processes, the strengthening of civil society, the emergence of different political power centers and foreign funds contributed to the growth of TTs in both countries. In Russia, many of the them established during this period were non-profit, financially independent from the state, and focused on issues related to civil society. In Turkey, changes in institutional conditions, such as the increase in the effectiveness of civil society and the proliferation of financial resources, enabled the development of the think tank sector.

However, during the strong one-man regimes of the 2000s in both countries, when decision-making was concentrated in the hands of a small group of people, and political parties were relatively weakened, the effectiveness of TTs declined. In Russia, President Vladimir V. Putin's interest in TTs led to their use as a tool for public diplomacy in foreign policy, resulting in an increase in the number of foreign policy think tanks during his first two terms. In Turkey, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had less discernible interest in these organizations, but changes in other institutional conditions enabled their development.

This paper analyzes the institutional factors that either limit or contribute to the formation, development and operation of TTs, using the cases of Russia and Turkey in the last two decades.

3 Diane Stone, "Think Tanks and Policy Advice in Countries in Transition", Toru Hashimoto, Stefan Hell and Sang-Woo Nam (eds.), *Public Policy Research and Training in Vietnam*, Asian Development Bank Institute, Hanoi, Asian Development Bank Institute, 2005, p. 38-109; James G. McGann and Erik C. Johnson, *Comparative Think Tanks, Politics and Public Policy*, Northampton, MA, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2005; Diane Stone et al. (ed.), *Think Tank Traditions: Policy Research and the Politics of Ideas*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2004.

4 Patrick Köllner et al., *Towards a Comparative Analysis of International Affairs Think Tanks*, Imprint, 2014, p. 11.

5 Mark Sandle, "Think Tanks, Post Communism and Democracy in Russia and Central and Eastern Europe", Diana Stone and A. Denham (ed.), *Think Tank Traditions: Policy Research and the Politics of Ideas*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2004, p. 122; V. B. Yakubovsky, *A Short History of Russian Think Tanks*, NIRA Review Winter, 1995.

6 Serhat Güvenç, "Türkiye Dış Politikası ve Düşünce Kuruluşları", Semra Cerit Mazlum ve Erhan Doğan (eds.), *Sivil Toplum ve Dış Politika: Yeni Sorunlar, Yeni Aktörler*, İstanbul, Bağlam Yayınları, 2006, p. 161.

Accordingly, the structure of the foreign policy decision-making process, supply and demand factors, the position of political parties, and the financing of political analysis act as independent variables. In turn, the dependent variable is the formation and development of foreign policy TTs. These variables were chosen because they directly affect the emergence, development as well as role of TTs in the decision-making process. For instance, if political parties are strong and influential, they provide funding and support for think tanks, while a weak party system could hinder their development. Similarly, a strong and active civil society may be able to support think tanks through funding and advocacy, while a weak civil society limits their growth and impact. Another important factor in selecting these variables for analysis is that they are similar to a certain extent in both countries. The closed and centralized nature of the decision-making process in foreign policy in both countries, strong bureaucracies, relatively ineffective political parties in foreign policy, and the increasing restrictions on civil society in both countries in recent times have contributed to the development and influence of the think tank industry in these countries.

The research for this study included the use of English, Turkish, and Russian think tank literature, and interviews with managers and experts of major Russian foreign policy TTs. It was also planned to conduct interviews with influential Turkish think tank managers and experts, but only a few approaches were successful due to the difficulty in reaching them. The main research methods used in this study were case study and comparative analysis, which allowed for the examination of the similarities and differences between the think tanks and the institutional environment of Russia and Turkey, as well as the influence of these institutions on foreign policy.

The Structure of the Foreign Policy Decision-making Process

In Russia, under President Putin's leadership, the foreign policy decision-making process is highly closed, centralized, and personalized, with a strong emphasis on personal relationships between political elites.⁷ The president, as the head of state, has significant control over domestic and foreign policy, and manages the country's foreign policy.⁸ Unlike the Boris Yeltsin period (1991-1999), when external actors and institutions, including TTs, had some degree of participation in political decision-making, during President Putin's tenure, their influence on shaping foreign policy has been severely limited.

The foreign policy decision-making process in Russia is supported by a number of federal agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Presidential Administration (PA), and the Security Council (SC). The ministry plays the role of an executor rather than a participant, while the PA and the SC turn out to be more influential players in this process.⁹ Each of these institutions has a certain level of influence in the process, and the effectiveness of think tanks affiliated with these institutions is determined by the importance and position of the institution to which they are attached.

7 Чернышев, Н. И. "Влияние институционального механизма принятия политических решений в России на формирование курса внешней политики в отношениях с Европейским союзом", Вестник международных организаций: образование, наука, новая экономика, Vol. 9, No 3, 2014, p. 21.

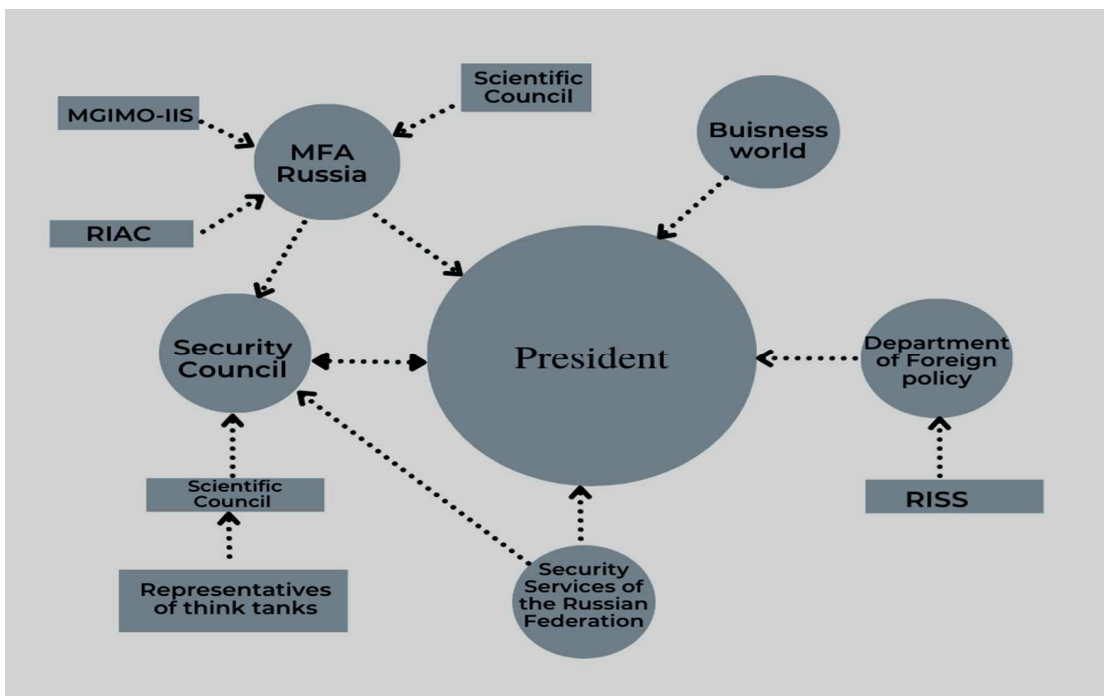
8 Конституция Российской Федерации, <http://www.constitution.ru/10003000/10003000-6.htm> (Accessed 23 April 2020).

9 Аверков, В. В. Принятие внешнеполитических решений в России, Международные процессы, Vol. 10, No 2, 2012, p. 110.

The PA also has a department that deals with foreign policy, which receives instructions from the president on specific topics, and sends requests to various ministries, departments, and academic/analytical institutions. These proposals are then processed by the department and passed on to the president through his assistants on foreign policy. For example, the RIAC, among other TTs, sends analytical materials to the Department of Foreign Policy.¹⁰ This administration acts as a kind of filter, collecting a variety of proposals, processing them, and reporting to the president what it considers necessary.¹¹

The SC is the most important institution for foreign policy decision-making in Russia. It is the highest body in the country, headed directly by the president, and includes the heads of key ministries and intelligence agencies. All important foreign policy topics in Russia are discussed and decided upon by the SC, with the final decision being made by the president. To support the activities of the SC, an academic council was established under the SC, consisting of representatives from the Russian Academy of Sciences, heads of TTs, scientific organizations, and institutions of higher education, as well as individual specialists.¹² Through this council, think tank experts can participate in the foreign policy decision-making process by providing input and analysis. However, the overall influence of TTs on the decision-making process in Russia is limited, due to the highly centralized and closed nature of the process.

Figure 1. Process of Foreign Policy Decision-making in the Russian Federation



10 Personal interview.

11 Personal interview.

12 Совет Безопасности, <http://www.kremlin.ru/structure/security-council> (Accessed 23 April 2020).

The Scientific Council, established under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is another structure that allows TTs to participate in the foreign policy decision-making process in Russia. This council brings together experts, leaders from various TTs, and participants from other research institutions, to discuss and offer solutions to current foreign policy problems.¹³ The chairman of the council is the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia. While the Scientific Council provides a platform for think tank representatives to meet regularly with the minister and present their proposals, their influence on final decisions may depend on the position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the decision-making process.

In Turkey, the civil and military bureaucracy has traditionally played a significant role in foreign policy decision-making.¹⁴ While elected political elites are responsible for the execution of foreign policy according to the 1961 and 1982 constitutions. The prestige of the military in the eyes of the public has often given it a strong influence in shaping foreign policy priorities.¹⁵ The National Security Council (NSC), initially established by the 1961 constitution, served as an institutional mechanism that allowed the military to influence foreign policy decisions until significant reforms were implemented under the EU's influence in 2003.¹⁶ Ultimately, the NSC underwent reorganization through a constitutional amendment in 2017. According to Karaosmanoğlu, the military has influenced the decision-making process indirectly through the NSC since three military coups.¹⁷

However, since the 1980s, with the economic liberalization and globalization policies initiated by Turgut Özal, the growing importance of the economy in foreign policy has increased the influence and role of entrepreneurs and the business world in the foreign policy decision-making process.¹⁸ Units formed by the business world, such as the Turkish Industry and Business Association (TUSIAD), have taken a more active stance in foreign policy, and the role of the military has declined, opening up more space for civilians in the foreign policy decision-making process.¹⁹

In the first half of the 2000s, under the influence of EU reforms, the traditional structure of the foreign policy decision-making process in Turkey weakened to some extent, and the influence of the public over foreign policy increased. During this period, with the further demilitarization of the NSC and the growing effectiveness of civil society, especially with the support of Western funds, it could be argued that a more pluralistic approach began to take hold in the field of foreign policy, as in other areas. Non-governmental organizations were able to create space for themselves alongside traditional actors in the decision-making process, thanks to their influence on decision-makers through large-scale protest demonstrations.

13 Personal interview.

14 Şule Toktaş and Bülent Aras, "National Security Culture in Turkey: A Qualitative Study on Think Tanks", *Bilig*, No 61, 2012, p. 251.

15 Ibid, p. 251.

16 Mustafa Aydın and Sinem Açıkmüşe, "Europeanization through EU Conditionally: Understanding the New Era in Turkish Foreign Policy", *Journal of Southeastern European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 9, No 3, 2007, p. 269.

17 Ali L. Karaosmanoğlu, "The Evolution of the National Security Culture and the Military in Turkey", *Journal of International Affairs*, 2000, p. 214.

18 Ibid, p. 209

19 Toktaş and Aras, "National Security", p. 252.

With the establishment of a presidential system in Turkey, as a result of the 2017 constitutional amendments, new actors and structural changes have occurred in the foreign policy decision-making process. In the new presidential system, the foreign policy decision-making process in Turkey has been divided among several different institutions/units and official or informal advisory structures.²⁰ The Presidential Government System, implemented in 2018, has introduced a new actor to the foreign policy and security bureaucracy. The most significant change in the foreign policy decision-making process under the new system is the establishment of the Security and Foreign Policies Board (SFPB) within the presidency. With this new arrangement, foreign policy is divided into formulation and implementation processes, where the MFA primarily carries out the implementation of decisions, while the SFPB plays a crucial role in preparing policy recommendations for the President. The Board presents its policy proposals on the agenda as reports to the President, actively contributing to the policy-making process. From October 2018 to November 2022, the Board presented a total of 45 policy proposal notes to the President.²¹ In this respect, the new system in many ways resembles the Russian decision-making process. There, too, the foreign policy unit within the presidential apparatus and its affiliated structures perform a similar role to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the decision-making process, and in some cases even surpass it. It is likely that these changes have had an impact on the role and influence of TTs in the foreign policy decision-making process in Turkey. Operating as an advisory body, this Board also serves as an institutional mechanism that allows TTs to be involved in the decision-making process. The Board organizes workshops where representatives from academia, TTs, civil society organizations, media, and the business world participate. Through these workshops, the Board acts as a bridge, facilitating the transfer of ideas and suggestions from civil stakeholders to the decision-making mechanisms. In this context, the Board has organized a total of 12 workshops since its establishment.²²

The newly established institution has provided an opportunity for think tanks' relationships with decision-makers to shift from primarily based on personal connections to a more institutionalized framework, similar to what is seen in Russia. It is also worth noting that the members of this board, including former or current TT executives and experts, allow the institutions they are associated with to be involved in this process through personal relationships. For example, it has been suggested that the think tank SETA has played a role in the foreign policy decision-making process to some extent through the director of SETA, who is also a member of the aforementioned board.

Advisors appointed by the President based on personal trust and loyalty also play important roles in the foreign policy decision-making process in Turkey, more so than in Russia. For instance, before the appointments on June 4, 2023, İbrahim Kalın, Hulusi Akar, and Hakan Fidan came to the fore among Erdoğan's official and unofficial advisors on foreign policy. They had real influence on the execution of policy beyond merely providing advice. For

20 Siri Neset et al., "Turkish Foreign Policy: Structures and Decision-making Processes", *CMI Report*, 2019.3, 2019.

21 *Cumhurbaşkanlığı Politika Kurulları Faaliyetler ve Hedefler*, İstanbul, Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2023, p. 115.

22 *Ibid*, p. 116.

example, İbrahim Kalın, who was also Erdogan’s spokesman, contributed to the realization of the “letter diplomacy” that ended the Russia-Turkey plane crisis,²³ and his relationship with contacts in Kyiv during the current Ukraine crisis also confirms this situation.²⁴

Supply and Demand Factors of Political Analysis

Supply and demand factors in political research can impact the structures, types, and influences of TTs.²⁵ In political systems with strong bureaucratic institutions, the role of TTs as providers of political advice is often limited, as these institutions tend to rely on their own research and analysis. As a result, TTs may develop research programs that cater to the preferences of decision-makers, who are the main customers for the research produced by these centers. This can influence the organizational structure, research areas, and topics of the TTs. For example, after the concept of “pivot to the East” emerged in Russian foreign policy in 2012, think tanks such as the Valdai Club and Centre for Comprehensive European and International Studies (CCEIS) focused their work in that direction. In Turkey, EU studies were an important subject of research for TTs from the mid-1960s to the first decade of the 2000s. Later, under the ideological influence of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) government, interest in the study of the Middle East increased, and more recently, Russian and Eurasian studies have become a priority for these centers. This demonstrates how the preferences and policies of the political leadership can shape the focus and direction of research by TTs.

The demand factor affects not only the research area/topic of TTs, but also their structure. As Diane Stone has pointed out, the expectations of decision-makers can influence the creation of different types of TTs in different national systems.²⁶ In Russia, for example, the preferences of the ruling elite have led to the creation of state-funded analytical centers in the field of foreign policy, such as the Valdai Club and the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), which are focused on international outreach and cooperation with experts from other countries. This demonstrates how the demand for certain types of research and the expectations of decision-makers can shape the structures and focus of TTs in systems where the state is the main customer for their research.

On the supply side, the influence, position, and power of actors who conduct policy research and analysis for decision-makers are important factors. In addition to TTs, other actors such as bureaucratic structures, research centers within universities, individual academics, lobby groups, and international organizations may act as sources of political advice, depending on the political system.²⁷ In strong bureaucratic systems, such as those in Russia and Turkey, these institutions can play a significant role in the development of policy recommendations,

23 The letter was delivered by İbrahim Kalın.

24 Statement by the Presidential Spokesperson (11 December 2014 - 4 June 2023), Ambassador İbrahim Kalın, on His Visit to Kyiv, the Capital of Ukraine, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/cumhurbaskanligi-sozculugunden/1695/136730/cumhurbaskanligi-sozcusu-buyukelci-ibrahim-kalin-in-ukrayna-nin-baskenti-kiev-e-gerceklestirdigi-ziyarete-iliskin-aciklama>, (Accessed 13 June 2022).

25 Köllner, *Towards a Comparative Analysis*, p.11

26 Stone, “Think Tanks and Policy Advice”.

27 Köllner, *Towards a Comparative Analysis*. p. 11-12

reducing the need for TTs. As a result, think tanks may become auxiliary units and public policy tools for political elites, rather than independent actors in policy-making. However, there may be opportunities for TTs to influence decision-makers before important events or visits. For example, before the Antalya diplomacy forum organized by Turkey, think tanks were used when there was a need for academic knowledge to determine the topics to be discussed and session titles.²⁸ Similarly, before Putin's visit to China, TTs working on this region were requested to send their materials for the determination of the summit agenda.²⁹

Position of Political Parties

The cooperation between TTs and political parties can be analyzed in two directions. According to the first one, think tanks can sometimes replace political parties in systems where parties are weak and position themselves as separate political actors.³⁰ However, contrary to what the first point of view claims, the weakness of political parties in Russia has not led to the emergence of TTs as political actors, by replacing them. The main reason is the autocratic, monocentric nature of Russian politics, with limited public participation. Nevertheless, during the period of "tandemocracy"³¹ from 2008 to 2012, when the above conditions were relatively weak, two important TTs, The Institute of Contemporary Development (INSOR) and The Institute of National Projects (INOP), came to the fore, and ideologically positioned themselves on different sides, offering two different alternatives as to the direction of the country's modernization.³²

The existence of strong political parties, which is another point emphasized in the literature, can increase the influence of TTs on the policy-making process. According to J. McGann and E. Johnson, systems with two or more political parties create the necessary political alternatives and opportunities for TTs to operate.³³ For example, in Russia in the 1990s, political parties actively used the services of think tanks and experts, especially in their election campaigns. TTs played a role in the development of party programs and electoral strategies.

In many democratic systems, political parties play a central role in shaping foreign policy, and can exert significant influence on the decision-making process through their representation in the legislature. In parliamentary systems, parties with a strong presence in the legislature may be able to use their leverage to shape the direction of foreign policy, either by supporting or opposing the government's policy initiatives, or by proposing their own.

However, as noted above, the role of political parties in foreign policy decision-making can vary significantly, depending on the specific constitutional and political context. In

28 Personal interview.

29 Personal interview.

30 Stone, "Think Tanks and Policy Advice".

31 "Tandemocracy" (tandemokratiia) — joint rule by Dmitri Medvedev as president, or head of state, and Vladimir Putin as prime minister, or head of government. Henry E. Hale and Timothy J. Colton, "Russians and the Putin-Medvedev 'Tandemocracy'", *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 57, No 2, 2010, p. 3-20

32 Малинова, О. Ю., Экспертно-аналитические организации и идеологическая конкуренция в современной России. Роль экспертно-аналитических сообществ в формировании общественной повестки дня в современной России, 2017, p. 50-70.

33 McGann and Johnson, *Comparative Think Tanks*.

presidential systems, for example, the executive branch may have a more dominant role in foreign policy, with the legislature playing a more limited role in shaping and oversight. In less democratic systems, political parties may have little influence on foreign policy decision-making, as the decisions are typically made by a small elite group or a single leader.

The constitutionally limited role of parliament in foreign policy in Russia is a major barrier to the direct participation in this process of political parties, which are important components of parliament. The Duma contains the Committee on International Affairs, but its main function is inter-parliamentary diplomacy.³⁴ Unlike the United States, where the role of Congress in the formation of foreign policy is central, the constitution in Russia does not provide for such a role. A similar situation applies to Turkey. Especially after the constitutional amendments of 2017, the increased powers of the president in foreign policy, alongside the AK Party majority of deputies in the parliament, caused the fact that the authority of the parliament in the foreign policy decision-making process has been diminished to a certain extent.

It is not uncommon for political parties to prioritize certain issues over others, when campaigning or formulating their policy platforms. In some cases, foreign policy may be seen as a less salient issue for voters, particularly if it does not directly affect their daily lives, or if the party lacks a clear or distinct stance on the issue. As a result, parties may choose to focus their efforts on issues that they believe will be more effective in attracting voter support, such as economic policy or social issues. In the case of Russia, the dominance of the presidential party (United Russia), and the limited opportunities for opposition parties to participate in the policy-making process also contribute to the relative lack of emphasis on foreign policy. Moreover, opposition parties see little benefit in making foreign policy a central part of their platforms, as it is a domain in which the government has a strong hand and is relatively immune to criticism. For example, among the four parties that entered the parliament after the Duma elections in 2021, apart from the presidential one, only the New People party significantly criticized the current foreign policy, while at the same time presenting a new alternative foreign policy.³⁵ While A Just Russia — For Truth does not talk about foreign policy at all, the Communist and Liberal Democratic Parties criticize some instruments, but not the policy itself.³⁶

Similar to Russia, there is no institutional cooperation between foreign policy TTs and political parties in Turkey. Moreover, the parties largely do not benefit from the services of TTs and do not have any think tanks within their own structure. Only the Homeland Party is an exception in this regard. While the National Strategy Center (USMER) was operating within the Workers' Party at first, it now works closely with the Homeland Party. In many parties, the issue of foreign policy is entrusted to retired ambassadors.³⁷ However, after the AK Party came to power, a new relationship model was established between political parties and TTs in Turkey. Undoubtedly, in the 1990s, the Motherland Party cooperated with the Ari movement in the policy development process. However, the AK Party has become the first in Turkey to further deepen its cooperation with a think tank. Although it is not affiliated with

34 Personal interview.

35 Программа Партии [Party Program], https://newpeople.ru/program_newpeople (Accessed 12 May 2022).

36 Предвыборная Программа [Pre-election Program], https://spravedlivo.ru/1_82.html (Accessed 12 May 2022).

37 For example, CHP- Ünal Çeviköz, Good Party- Ahmet Erozan, Future Party- Ümit Yardım.

the party institutionally, by creating SETA, the AK Party indirectly financed it and benefited from it both in terms of public diplomacy and personnel resources.³⁸ This conclusion could be based on three facts: the majority of SETA's financing comes from business circles close to the political elite, the materials they produce are similar in many points to the foreign policy of the government, and there are current or former SETA experts taking part in important public positions.

In Turkey, it appears that the parliament's role in foreign policy has been somewhat limited in recent years, particularly after the constitutional amendments that have consolidated power in the executive branch. The parliament's main mandate in foreign policy has been to approve or reject resolutions on military operations abroad, and it has been difficult for opposition parties to challenge the government's decisions in this area. While foreign policy is an important issue for political parties in Turkey, it seems that the main focus of political struggle is often centered on socio-economic issues, human rights, and democracy. The information needed on foreign policy is currently obtained from retired ambassadors and military bureaucrats within the parties or ad hoc-based experts. As a result, it can be argued that an institutional relationship model with foreign policy TTs has not developed enough. On the other hand, in Turkey, where party closures are very frequent, the poor institutional structure of political parties and their poor funding are major obstacles to affiliation with a think tank or developing institutional cooperation.³⁹

Financing of political research

It is important for TTs to diversify their sources of funding, in order to maintain their independence and avoid being instrumentalized by any one particular group or entity. This can help ensure that their research and analysis is objective and unbiased. Depending on the political systems in which they operate, these centers obtain their financial needs from the state budget, the business community, political parties, public or foreign funds.

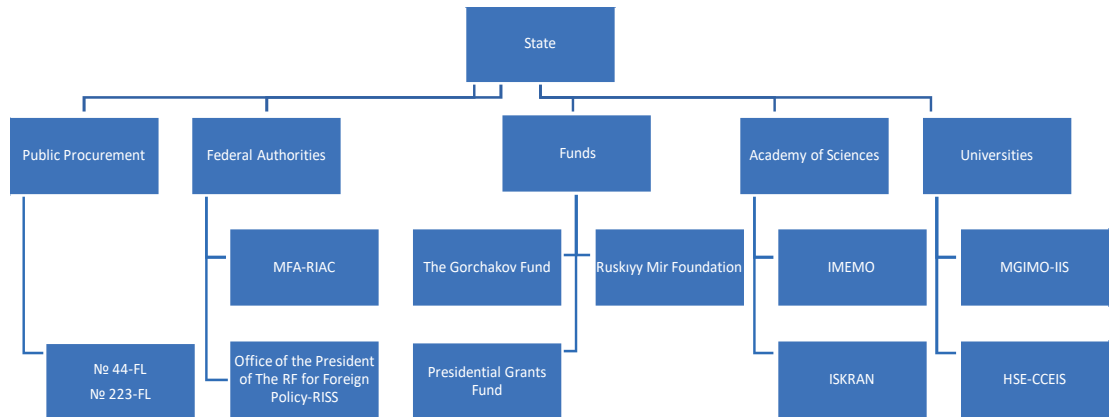
In Russia, TTs receive funding directly from the state budget, through federal institutions, universities, or various foundations. Federal Law No. 44-FZ of May 4, 2013 and Federal Law No. 223-FZ of July 18, 2011 provide the legal framework for the procurement of goods, works, and services by the Russian government and municipalities. These laws allow government institutions to use the services of TTs and other research organizations, by placing orders on the market for research work, and then allowing scientific, analytical, and university centers to compete for these contracts. According to Russian expert, 90% of Russian scientists are included in this system, and this creates Russian uniqueness.⁴⁰ For example, RIAC under Law No. 44-FZ entered into a contract for the amount of 550,000 rubles, and under Law No. 223-FZ for the amount of 250 000 rubles as a supplier.⁴¹

38 Personal interview.

39 Personal interview.

40 Personal interview.

41 Информация по субсидиям [Information on subsidies], https://spending.gov.ru/subsidies/subsidies_list/ (Accessed 15 June 2022).

Figure 1. Government funding for foreign policy think tanks in Russia

On the other hand, in Russia, TTs receive funding from the government as subsidies. RIAC receives most of its funding through the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Russian government provides support to TTs and other research organizations through a variety of instruments, including direct funding through federal bodies, and project-based funding through foundations such as the Gorchakov Fund, Ruskiyy Mir Foundation, and Presidential Grants Foundation. These foundations are funded by the state and legally have the status of non-governmental organizations. The Presidential Grants Foundation is particularly important as a source of funding for foreign policy TTs in Russia, such as the PIR Center. This foundation provides grants to support projects that contribute to the development of Russian science, culture, education, and other areas of public interest. The PIR Center has applied for and received several grants from the Presidential Grants Foundation in recent years, which have helped to support its research and policy recommendations⁴².

In Russia, the business sector is a significant source of funding for foreign policy TTs, particularly for those that work closely with the government. After the “Khodorkovsky syndrome⁴³”, the business world in Russia has put a distance between itself and politics, as a result of which it does not support independent TTs conducting political research. The exception to this is the creation of TTs that are close to the political elite. The budget for the Valdai Club and RIAC can provide significant insights into the relationship between the business community and TTs in Russia. The RIAC receives funding from corporate members who pay annual fees. These corporate members each pay around a million rubles per year, and this amounts to approximately 8-10% of the RIAC’s annual budget.⁴⁴ In addition to these annual fees, the RIAC may also ask these corporate members to provide

42 For example, this center applied for six different projects between 2017 and 2021, three of them won the competition and received a fund of 3,383,588 roubles. Проекты Фонда президентских грантов [Projects of the Presidential Grants Fund], <https://xn--80afcdbalict6afooklqi5o.xn--p1ai/public/application/item?id=ea17b86f-799b-4635-8155-0a1c56f911bc>, (Accessed 15 June 2022).

43 The incident with M. Khodorkovsky led to the indifference of the business world in that it wants to distance itself from politics.

44 Personal interview.

additional funding for specific events and activities, such as conferences, and transportation expenses for participants.⁴⁵

Foreign foundations and governments were once a significant source of funding for TTs in Russia, but the implementation of laws such as the “law on foreign agents” and the “law on undesirable organizations” has led to a reduction in foreign funding for many TTs.⁴⁶ As a result of these laws, many international private and public foundations that contributed to the development of independent TTs in Russia have stopped operating, and the state has become the main source of funding for think tanks in the country. This has had a negative impact on the independent think tank sector in Russia, and may have limited the diversity of viewpoints and research being conducted in the country.

In Turkey, TTs and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) receive funding from a variety of sources, including members’ dues and donations, government support, national and foreign funds, and the private sector. They may also generate income from economic activities, such as consulting or research services. It appears that the role of the state in financing this sector is relatively limited compared to Russia, where the government is a significant source of funding for TTs.⁴⁷ In Turkey, the state provides financial support to TTs both directly through institutions and ministries, and indirectly through organizations such as TUBITAK and TUBA, which provide funding on a project basis. Some TTs, such as the Center for Strategic Research (SAM) and the Foreign Policy Institute, receive funding directly from government agencies. The activities of the SAM, which operates under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Turkey, are directly funded by this ministry. Similarly, the Foreign Policy Institute in Turkey receives orders and funds from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its Chief of Staff. However, there are no specific figures available on the extent of this cooperation or the amount of funding that the institute receives from these sources.⁴⁸ Public institutions in Turkey do not rely as heavily on the services of TTs as they do in Russia.⁴⁹ This may lead to competition among think tanks for a smaller pool of resources.⁵⁰

The distribution of public resources for TTs and other research organizations in Turkey is not as transparent, fair, and effective, as it is in Russia. In Russia, it is more common for state

45 Ibid.

46 The recognition of an organization as an “undesirable organization” can prevent the organization from functioning, effectively shutting it down. Today in Russia there are 99 foreign and international non-governmental organizations whose activities are recognized as undesirable. Перечень иностранных и международных неправительственных организаций, деятельность которых признана нежелательной на территории Российской Федерации [List of foreign and international non-governmental organizations, whose activities are recognized as undesirable on the territory of the Russian Federation], <https://minjust.gov.ru/ru/documents/7756/>, (Accessed 15 June 2022).

47 Prior to the 2017 constitutional amendment, the prime ministerial promotion fund was transferring project-based resources to think tanks. However, after the amendment, the duties and powers of this institution were transferred to The Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications. Today, this Directorate supports think tanks with various activities. However, we do not have data on how much this support is.

48 Bülent Aras, Şule Toktaş and Ümit Kurt, *Araştırma Merkezlerinin Yükselişi, Türkiye’de Dış Politika ve Ulusal Güvenlik Kültürü*, Ankara, Siyaset Ekonomi ve Toplum Araştırmaları Vakfı (SETA), 2010, p. 85.

49 Hüseyin Bağcı and Aziz Aydın, “Dünyada ve Türkiye’de Düşünce Kuruluşu Kültürü”, Hasan Kanbolat ve Hasan Ali Karasar (eds.), *Türkiye’de Düşünce Merkezi Kültürünün Oluşum Süreci: Türkiye’de Dış Politika ve Güvenlik Alanındaki Düşünce Merkezleri*, Ankara, Nobel Yayınları, 2009, p. 83.

50 Aras, Toktaş and Kurt, *Araştırma Merkezlerinin Yükselişi*, p. 170.

foundations to openly publish financial support for TTs, and for the state to hold tenders for the purchase of research and other services from these organizations. In Turkey, these practices are not as prevalent, which may lead to the idea that public resources are being channeled to institutions that take positions that are close to the political elite. According to some experts, it may be difficult for fully independent think tanks to secure funding in Turkey if they do not share the same opinions as the government.⁵¹

In Turkey, the main sources of funding for TTs and other research organizations are the business community and foreign funds. However, the business community is not as active in supporting these organizations as it could be, due to a lack of tax exemptions, and fears of conflicts with the political elites.⁵² However, there are some notable exceptions, with business representatives such as TUSIAD, the Sabancı Group, and Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) providing more significant levels of support for TTs. For example, the TEPAV and Istanbul Policy Center have received fixed financial support from these business circles. Donations made by the business community to foundations and associations with public benefit status in Turkey are eligible for tax exemptions. This provides an advantage to TTs and other organizations with this status, which receive more donations as a result.⁵³ However, the definition of public interest status, and its granting by the president, could create a disadvantage for institutions that are perceived as oppositional by decision-makers.

The lack of domestic financing for TTs in Turkey has led many of these organizations to seek funding from foreign sources. There are several foreign foundations, institutes, and organizations that provide funding for TTs in Turkey, including the Open Society Institute, the Heinrich Böll Foundation, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, the National Endowment for Democracy, the Center for International Private Enterprise, and the International Republican Institute.⁵⁴ Some consulates and embassies of various countries may also provide funding for think tanks in Turkey. TTs such as TESEV, TEPAV, and EDAM have reportedly benefited significantly from grants and projects provided by EU institutions, consulates, and foundations based in Germany and the United States.⁵⁵ In Turkey, EU funds for TTs and other research organizations are largely distributed on a project by project basis through the central government.

Unlike in Russia, there are no legal barriers to receiving financial support from foreign funds. However, excessive reliance on foreign financing or a lack of diversification in funding sources could damage the reputation of these centers in the eyes of the public. Rising nationalism in society can also be a challenge for non-governmental organizations seeking foreign funding, as these organizations may be perceived as “traitors” or “foreign agents” by some members of the public. This can raise questions about the reliability of these organizations and their ability to influence decision-makers, and to deliver their research and analysis to the public.

51 Personal interview.

52 Suat Kınıklıoğlu, “Türkiye’nin Düşünce Kuruluşları Meselesi”, Hasan Kanbolat ve Hasan Ali Karasar (eds.), *Türkiye’de Düşünce Merkezi Kültürünün Oluşum Süreci: Türkiye’de Dış Politika ve Güvenlik Alanındaki Düşünce Merkezleri*, Ankara, Nobel Yayınları, 2009, p. 374

53 For example, the Economic Development Foundation, TESEV, and SETA have this status.

54 Aras, Toktaş and Kurt, *Araştırma Merkezlerinin Yükselişi*, p. 54.

55 Umur Bedir, “Türkiye’de Düşünce Kuruluşlarının Dış Politika Bağlamında Kamu Diplomasisi İşlevleri”, *Galatasaray Üniversitesi İletişim Dergisi*, No 6, 2021, p. 7-35.

In Russia, TTs that have received the status of “foreign agents” are not allowed to participate in certain activities, and a similar situation may be developing in Turkey. In recent years, there has been a growing perception in Turkey that NGOs that receive funding from foreign sources are considered “foreign agents.” This perception has been fueled in part by the characterization of these organizations as “enemies of the state” in media outlets close to the government, as well as the investigation of the Open Society Foundation for espionage activities.⁵⁶ As a result, some think tanks in Turkey have stopped using these resources, and foreign funds have reduced their activities in the country. The field of action for international donors who provide financial support to civil society organizations in Turkey, including TTs, has narrowed since the Gezi Park court cases in 2020, according to the EU Commission’s Turkey report.⁵⁷

Conclusion

Institutional factors, such as the structure of the decision-making process, the effectiveness of civil society and political parties, the approach of decision-makers, and the availability of funds to finance the activities of TTs, can all play a role in determining the emergence, activities, and impact of TTs on the decision-making process in a given political culture. In Russia and Turkey, these institutional factors, which show similarities in many ways, have contributed to the development of similar think tank industries in both countries, but have also hindered the ability of these organizations to be significant actors in the decision-making process on foreign policy.

In Russia and Turkey, foreign policy decision-making processes are closed and concentrated in the hands of a few individuals, the need for political consultation is further reduced, and the existing need is met by strong bureaucratic institutions and TTs loyal to the political elite. This situation forces the country to use only a certain part of its intellectual wealth; it also inhibits the development of TTs as a result of a decrease in demand for political research.

The approach of decision-makers towards TTs and their expectations of these organizations can have a significant impact on the development of the think tank sector. In Russia, the desire of decision-makers to use TTs for public diplomacy purposes in foreign policy has led to the establishment of many state-sponsored think tanks in the country. In Turkey, the long-term lack of interest of decision-makers in these institutions, and the presence of a strong and diverse civil society, has facilitated the emergence of a civil society-oriented think tank sector. However, in recent years, think tanks in Turkey have begun to be used as a political communication tool in domestic and foreign policy, although not as systematically as in Russia.

⁵⁶ Ülker Sözen, “Civil Society under Siege in Turkey: Authoritarianism, Polarisation and Counterstrategies”, 16 August 2022, <https://www.alternatives-humanitaires.org/en/2022/08/16/civil-society-under-siege-in-turkey-authoritarianism-polarisation-and-counterstrategies/> (Accessed 15 October 2022).

⁵⁷ Avrupa Komisyonu 2020 Türkiye Raporu, https://www.ab.gov.tr/siteimages/trkiye_raporustrateji_belgesi_2020/turkey_report_30.10.2020.pdf (Accessed 25 July 2023).

The relationship between political parties and foreign policy TTs in Russia and Turkey is not be as strong as in other countries. The institutional and financial weakness of political parties and the reduced role of parliament in foreign policy decision-making in these countries have hindered the development of cooperation between political parties and foreign TTs. Additionally, foreign policy is often considered successful by many people in Russia and Turkey, which means that political parties prioritize addressing socio-economic issues that have a more direct impact on people's lives rather than engaging with foreign policy TTs. To improve the relationship between political parties and foreign policy TTs, it is necessary to increase the influence of political parties on foreign policy decision-making mechanisms through the parliament, and to make the foreign policy decision-making process more pluralistic.

It is important for TTs to have a diverse range of financial resources in order to maintain their intellectual independence, and avoid being influenced by any one group. In Russia, the lack of business interest in TTs, the inefficiency of charitable foundations, and legal restrictions on foreign foundations make these institutions more reliant on government funding. This can potentially compromise their independence, as they feel pressure to align with the views and priorities of the government in order to secure funding. In contrast, in Turkey, the state plays a relatively small role in financing the think tank sector, and TTs are more likely to rely on domestic and foreign funds to meet their financial needs. This diversity of funding sources can help to preserve their independence. However, in the aftermath of the Gezi Park protests, there has been an increase in public control over civil society organizations in Turkey, including foreign funding. This trend may be similar to what has been observed in Russia, where foreign foundations have faced legal restrictions as a source of funding for TTs and other civil society organizations.

In Russia and Turkey the institutional conditions under which TTs operate have created a similar framework, although there are some differences. Given this, it is possible that a similar think tank sector may emerge in other countries with similar political cultures. Under these conditions, a think tank sector may develop that operates under the control of the state through various legal and financial restrictions, is used to some extent in the decision-making process of the state, but is mainly used for public diplomacy activities in both internal and external politics, and is the sole customer for the state's materials produced by these institutions.

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