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**THINK-TANKS AND THEIR ROLE IN THE NEW EU  
MEMBER STATES: CZECH AND SLOVAK EXPERIENCE**

Vypracovala:

Bc. Livia Pitoňáková, M. A.

Vedoucí diplomové práce:

prof. PhDr. Vladimíra Dvořáková, CSc.

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Prohlašuji, že diplomovou práci na téma “Think-tanks and Their Role in the New EU Member States: Czech and Slovak Experience“ jsem vypracovala samostatně. Použitou literaturu a podkladové materiály uvádím v příloženém seznamu literatury.

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Lívia Pitoňáková

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## Introduction

Public policy research institutes, often times referred to as think-tanks, have experienced a tremendous growth worldwide in the past decades. The term ‘think-tank’, however, remains vague and happens to encompass a very divergent family of institutes, ranging from purely independent academic research centers to partisan or advocacy-oriented institutes whose independence is thus challenged.

The objective of this paper is to trace the roots, development and current role of think-tanks in the two new EU member states – Czech Republic and Slovakia. To pursue this task, however, one has to search beyond Czech and Slovak think-tanks *per se* and examine their “Founding Fathers”, i.e. the US forerunners, to fully understand how they have been shaped up to now. In US, numerous studies have been devoted to the subject and while it is generally ‘US models’ that are applied to a think-tank analysis, this paper employs a somewhat different approach. It does not attempt to simply transfer the US model to Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)<sup>1</sup> but rather investigates whether one can speak about the ‘CEE model’ of think-tanks emerging and what its characteristics are. The two models (i.e. the US and CEE) are thus taken as complementary and what they have in common rather than what divides them is assessed.

The paper employs three hypotheses which it attempts to prove. First, the current generation of think-tanks in the Czech Republic and Slovakia has already become too diverse to follow the same route, as far as the dependence on public sources and other vested interests is concerned. Although there are a few which strive to retain their independence and develop a diverse base of donors to achieve this, the majority of think-tanks turns to public and EU funds as the main sources of funding. This may be in part due to the withdrawal of foreign funds directed at Czech and Slovak think-tanks as these countries no longer represent ‘difficult’<sup>2</sup> regimes nor are labeled ‘transition economies’. The major US funding is therefore channeled to new ‘targets’ now. Second, it is assumed that the US model of think-tanks does not travel well into Central and Eastern Europe and although some aspects might be applicable and desired, the political

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<sup>1</sup> For purposes of this paper, Central and Eastern European countries include the following: Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, all of which are current EU member states.

<sup>2</sup> By ‘difficult’, a reference is made to countries where the political climate is hostile to the free emergence and operation of independent institutes such as think-tanks.

and civic culture and tradition in US is far too different to allow for a complete model transfer. And third, there has been an upsurge of interest in building regional and global networks of think-tanks, primarily because they offer unique opportunities to share expertise, success stories and last but not least, increase the think-tanks' prestige via global partnerships.

The paper is structured as follows. Chapter 1 introduces different connotations that think-tanks have and distinguishes them from other specific groups, though the boundary tends to remain blurry or almost non-existent. A special focus is given to the historical overview of how and when think-tanks emerged, what was lying behind their gradual proliferation and what were the waves of think-tanks prevailing in different time periods in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is important to emphasize here that two regions<sup>3</sup> primarily are studied throughout the paper – the US and CEE, with Czech Republic and Slovakia as the main case studies of the survey.

Chapter 2 applies the theory of networking onto the think-tank community and assesses their ever-growing networks and coalitions worldwide. It then takes the perspective of the American interest in CEE and vice-versa. In addition, the theory of policy transfer and under what conditions it might lead to failure is briefly examined.

In Chapter 3, a questionnaire survey entitled “Think-Tanks and Their Role in the Civil Society: Unification or Diversity?” is conducted for a selected number of both US and Czech and Slovak think-tanks. Its focus is restrained to three main areas: general assessment of the think-tank industry, such as the core research areas, staff and funding decomposition, position of think-tank representatives on the direction the US and CEE models of think-tanks are currently taking and to what extent the two are interrelated, and finally the networking aspects. It is questioned whether the proliferation of think-tank networks shapes the industry in that it calls for uniformity rather than diversity and convergence rather than divergence of the way think-tanks carry out their ‘mission’ and are funded.

Chapter 4 attempts to look on what lies ahead, what challenges are there to be met, and what risks the current state-of-the affairs implies. The final chapter summarizes the

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<sup>3</sup> According to Wikipedia, a region in Europe is the layer of government directly below the national level. The term is especially used in relation to those regions which have some historical claim to uniqueness or independence, or differ significantly from the rest of the country. The broader connotation applied in the paper, however, corresponds more to the US understanding of a region, which is a geographical area such as the US or Europe.

main points, relates the initial hypotheses to the results of the questionnaire and draws conclusions.

The motivation to undertake this survey has been twofold. First, there is a lack of literature on the subject both in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Besides a few studies, the most distinguished of which are Schneider's assessment of think-tanks in Visegrad countries<sup>4</sup> and the publication of the American Information Center in Prague<sup>5</sup>, there remains a deficit and ambiguity in what think-tanks actually are, in what their role is and should be. The paper thus attempts to remedy this. A key reference, among others, is made to the renowned analysts of think-tanks worldwide, such as McGann, Weaver and Abelson, who evaluate primarily the origin of think-tanks and how they operate, and Stone, who highlights the role think-tanks play and influence they exert in the network framework and questions how, and if at all, can the 'US model' be transferred to the CEE policy environment. A special attention is given to the European Union (EU), both in how relevant the EU-policy agenda is to think-tanks, and the opposite viewpoint, i.e. how much credit the EU gives to think-tanks. Here, Boucher's<sup>6</sup> thorough contribution significantly expands the picture.

Second, and here comes my personal incentive, is to examine to what extent do think-tanks have their say in the countries I am a student and citizen of, how this has evolved since the fall of communism and what might be the risks for these institutes to survive in the "post-transition" period. Hence I am convinced the subject is worthy of sustained study and further research.

The study is restricted to think-tanks operating in the Czech Republic and Slovakia and the historical and current linkages that exist with their US "counterparts". Those think-tanks that do not meet the selection criteria or are located outside the regions of focus are thus neglected.

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<sup>4</sup> Schneider, J. Think-tanks in Visegrad Countries: From Policy Research to Advocacy, Center for Policy Studies, Central European University, Budapest, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Think tanky a jejich společenský vliv, Sborník textů, Americké informační centrum při Velvyslanectví USA v Praze, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Boucher, S. Europe and Its Think-tanks: A Promise to be Fulfilled, Studies and Research No 35, Notre Europe, October 2004.

## 1. “Market of Ideas”: The Actors and How They Interact

*“We live in turbulent times where the only constant is change, where the unthinkable has become a dark reality and where the line between domestic and international politics is increasingly blurred. The promise and peril of globalization has transformed how we view international relations and opened the policy-making process to a new set of actors, agendas, and outcomes.”<sup>7</sup>*

JAMES MCGANN, Foreign Policy Research Institute

Behind every transformation process or reform proposal there is an idea. But not until this idea reaches the audience which can translate it into action does it have consequences. The two crucial prerequisites for such a translation to occur are the political climate that allows for a competition of those supplying ideas on one hand, and the demand of the policy-makers for these ideas on the other.

Hence the ‘market of ideas’ functions in a similar way to any other market, i.e. ideas are simultaneously supplied and demanded. Moreover, it is a globalized market and policy transfer has become a common practice worldwide. The dynamics with which ideas develop and spread, coupled with political changes significantly shape conventional wisdom.

The ‘actors’ this chapter attempts to draw distinctions among are think-tanks, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), lobbyists and interest-groups. Once the distinctions are made, it is exclusively think-tanks that are assessed throughout the remainder of the paper.

### 1.1 Think-tanks Label: Definitions and distinctions

According to Sourcewatch<sup>8</sup>, a think-tank is an organization that claims to serve as a center for research and/or analysis of important public issues. When assessing what claims to be a think-tank community, however, one finds a very broad family of institutes, ranging from academic centers affiliated with universities to advocacy-oriented ones with aggressive marketing techniques. That said, the boundary between think-tanks, NGOs, lobbyists and interest groups tends to get blurry and one seems to be perplexed about what the term ‘think-tank’ actually accounts for. Stone (1996) asserts that this difficulty to define think-tanks has deterred scholars from accounting for the

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<sup>7</sup> McGann, J. Think-tanks and the Transnationalization of Foreign Policy in U.S. Foreign Policy Agenda (2002).

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Think\\_tanks](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Think_tanks)



role of think-tanks in politics. She further argues that part of why their role in politics has for long been overlooked might be the myth that think-tanks are objective and non-partisan research institutes.<sup>9</sup>

Boucher (2004) employs nine criteria to identify think-tanks<sup>10</sup>, grounded on previous academic work in the field. According to these, think-tanks:

- are permanent organizations
- specialize in the production of public policy solutions
- have in-house staff dedicated to research
- produce ideas, analysis, and advice
- put emphasis on communicating their research to policy-makers and public (and therefore have a website)
- are not responsible for government activities
- aim to maintain their research freedom and not to be beholden to any specific interest
- are not degree-granting and training is not their primary activity
- seek, explicitly or implicitly, to act in the public interest

Ideally, a true think-tank is in the business of providing a range of alternatives to policy-makers, of challenging the prevailing policy framework and most of all, to offer an independent analysis of the existing policies that is long-term and forward-looking. Funding has a substantial role to play here and can push think-tanks' activities more towards a 'production of innovative ideas' than mere 'compilation business'<sup>11</sup>, which also should not be underestimated. In addition, a key element of think-tanks' activities is to bring together people from different horizons and to stimulate discussion via seminars, conferences, workshops, public events and the like.

Think-tanks should be distinguished from professional lobbyists and interest groups although their activities often overlap. *The Handbook of International Affairs* (2005)<sup>12</sup> defines the terms as follows:

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<sup>9</sup> Stone, D. *Capturing the Political Imagination: Think Tanks and the Policy Process*, London: Frank Cass, 1996 in Boucher, S. *Europe and Its Think-tanks: A Promise to be Fulfilled*, 2004, pp. 7-8.

<sup>10</sup> Boucher, S. *Europe and Its Think-tanks: A Promise to be Fulfilled*, 2004, pp. 2-3.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 32.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas, C. *Lobbying in the United States: An Overview for Students, Scholars and Practitioners* in Harris, P., Fleisher, C. *Handbook of Public Affairs*, London: Sage Publications, 2005, pp. 282-283.

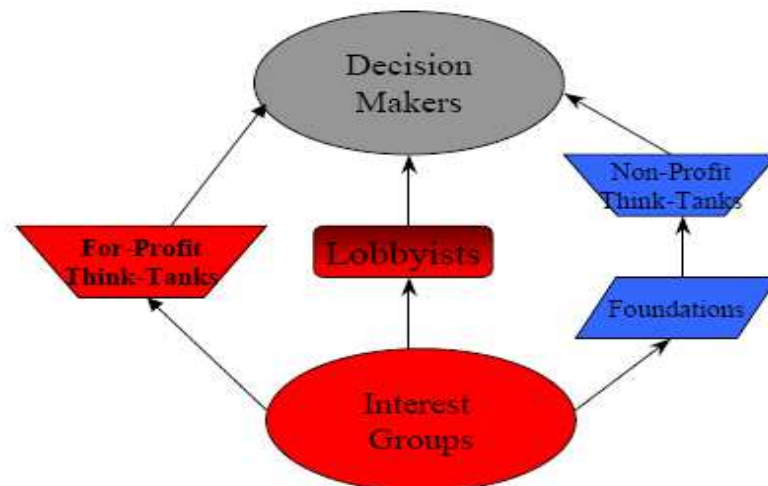
**Interest group** is an association of individuals or organizations or public or private institution which, on the basis of one or more shared concerns, attempts to influence government policy in its favor.

**Lobbyist** is a person designated by an interest group to facilitate influencing public policy in that interest group's interest.

Lobbyists either work for a business or organization and lobby for their causes or are hired on a contract *ad hoc* and lobby for various clients. They thus represent a third-party and not necessarily stances they personally identify with. On the other hand, people join interest groups partly out of a sense of loyalty or idealism.<sup>13</sup> They 'lobby' (or employ lobbyists to do so for them) for issue(s) that they represent and compete for political power and prestige. Think-tanks represent a special category different from the two actors described above and even if perceived as lobbyists, what they lobby for are ideas rather than specific interests.

The interactions among think-tanks, interest groups and lobbyists as viewed by Schneider (2003) are presented below (see Graph 1). Whereas lobbying in US has evolved into an established and respected activity, it has a rather negative connotation in Europe.

**Graph 1: The Relationship between Think-tanks, Lobbyists and Interest Groups**



Source: <http://www.policy.hu/schneider/FRP.html>

<sup>13</sup> Olson, M. The Logic of Collective Action, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1965 in Wilson, G. Interest Groups in the United States', Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1981, pp. 85.

Most of US think-tanks are 501(c) 3 tax-exempt organizations as defined by the Internal Revenue Code (IRC). This status allows them to spend roughly 10 per cent or less<sup>14</sup> on lobbying and other advocacy expenditures. Some think-tanks, especially those that crossed the 10 per cent threshold, have affiliated 501(c) 4 organizations that actively engage in lobbying or have taken the so called ‘Section H election’, according to which “a substantial part of their activities consists of carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation”. 501(h) allows think-tanks to devote up to 20 per cent of their annual budget to lobbying. However, think-tanks engaged in direct political action risk violating their nonpartisan and independent reputation. Bast, the president of the Heartland Institute in US, asserts that “while taking the Section H doesn’t require that you lobby, it creates the appearance that you are or soon will start to lobby.”<sup>15</sup> This is but a proof that think-tanks and lobbying organizations often overlap.

Non-governmental organizations are perceived by some as a special kind of interest group although they tend to be labeled as ‘public’ interest groups, which should imply their pursuit of ‘public interest’. According to the World Bank and Duke University in NC, USA<sup>16</sup>,

**Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)** are private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development. In wider usage, the term NGO can be applied to any non-profit organization which is independent from government. NGOs are typically value-based organizations which depend, in whole or in part, on charitable donations and voluntary service. Although the NGO sector has become increasingly professionalized over the last two decades, principles of altruism and voluntarism remain key defining characteristics.

The Czech president Václav Klaus warns against “NGO-ism” as a political behavior, “an ideology that offers an alternative mechanism of decision-making about public

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<sup>14</sup> Organizations with 501(c) 3 status may lobby only if their lobbying activities do not make up a “substantial part” of their activities. As nobody knows precisely what “substantial” means, 10 per cent or less is just a rough estimate that is often applied.

<sup>15</sup> Bast, J. Think Tanks, Lobbying, and Section H: Which Way to Turn? State Policy Network News, Vol. 7, Issue 4, August/September 2006.

<sup>16</sup> <http://docs.lib.duke.edu/igo/guides/ngo/define.htm>

matters to the standard mechanism of parliamentary democracy<sup>17</sup>”. As human liberty has for long been threatened by a variety of collectivist ‘isms’, ‘NGO-ism’ might well be one contemporary ‘ism’. NGOs seek to enforce their own interests but present them as ‘public’ instead. Klaus is not criticizing NGO activities *per se* but rather their ideologies and activist involvement in the policy-making with no political mandate. Titley, on the other hand, points out to the emergence of a “blame culture” where the citizens are risk-averse and obsessed with safety. Hence the “precautionary principle” frequently applied to the decisions of the politicians and to the positions of NGOs serves as a justification for their causes.<sup>18</sup>

NGOs make up a civil society which is also a vague term viewed differently by different people. For the purposes of this paper, the following World Bank definition is employed:

**Civil society** refers to the wide array of non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) therefore refer to a wide of array of organizations: community groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), labor unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and foundations.<sup>19</sup>

The civil society acts as a counterweight to government and according to Joch has in its broadest sense become a synonym for the society, which respects and guarantees political, economic and individual freedoms of its citizens. He further warns against the alternative meaning of the term that has been advanced by the liberal-Left. This concept focuses on non-governmental organizations as partners with political representations and authorities and encourages to more intense political involvement of the citizens. In other words, the liberal-Left perception raises the political aspect of the society above social, cultural, moral, religious and economic aspects.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Klaus, V. NGO-ismus, nikoli jednotlivé nevládní organizace považují za nebezpečí pro naši svobodu, November 3, 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Titley, S. The Rise of the NGOs in the EU in Harris, P., Fleisher, C. Handbook of Public Affairs, London: Sage Publications, 2005, pp. 219.

<sup>19</sup><http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/CSO/0,,contentMDK:20101499~menuPK:244752~pagePK:220503~piPK:220476~theSitePK:228717,00.html> [last assessed 27. 3. 2007]

<sup>20</sup> Joch, R. The Truth about Civil Society, presented at a seminar “Political Parties versus Civil Society”, November 2001, Prague, Czech Republic.

Think-tanks also constitute the civil society. Boucher, among others, perceives the name 'think-tank' not to be reflective enough of think-tanks' nature. Their dual mission of both producing and disseminating policy ideas and policy recommendations might be encompassed more aptly in identifying them as 'think-and-action-tanks' or 'think-and-do-tanks'. The 'do' or 'action' part, besides reaching out to audiences that have the power to further implement ideas produced by think-tanks, also encompasses training and education.

The question how think-tanks will reconcile scientific rigor with communication requirements is still alive.<sup>21</sup> It should not be an 'either-or' dilemma but rather a decision upon the weight placed on short and topical policy briefings aimed at general public, media and policy-makers on one hand, and on an in-depth policy research directed at experts in the field on the other. The more digestible or 'reader-friendly' policy briefs, however, risk underestimating or omitting a number of important aspects as quantity is placed over quality of an in-depth analysis.

Hayek emphasized that the society's course will be changed only by a change in ideas. For such a change to happen, it is crucial to first reach out to the so call first-hand dealers in ideas, i.e. scholars, and second-hand dealers in ideas, i.e. intellectuals and journalists. It is them who can do the most important work and once they succeed, the politicians will follow.<sup>22</sup> The current populist nature of politics coupled with the "transformation of the self" implies that politicians follow rather than lead public opinion. The social change that Titley, among other, detects in Western societies is that as a result of increased affluence and education, people are "pursuing more individualistic and consumerist goals" and "seeing their lives in terms of self-actualization".<sup>23</sup> Politicians thus adhere to the prevailing public opinion and find little incentive to deviate from it and risk a decline in popular support.

Wallace (1998) perceives think-tanks' relevance in 'soft power' which, in comparison with hard political bargaining, is subtle and harder to trace but sets the terms within

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, Foreword by Jacques Delors.

<sup>22</sup> Blundell, J. *Waging the War of Ideas*, Second edition, 2003, pp. 21, 31 and 41.

<sup>23</sup> Titley, S. *The Rise of the NGOs in the EU* in Harris, P., Fleisher, C. *Handbook of Public Affairs*, London: Sage Publications, 2005, pp. 219.

which political bargaining is conducted in modern political systems.<sup>24</sup> The role think-tanks have to play in the policy-making process is also emphasized by McGann (2000), who refers to think-tanks as elite institutions who claim a voice in the policy-making process because they have expertise rather than decision-making power.<sup>25</sup>

McGann, Weaver & Weiss<sup>26</sup> distinguish four different categories or models of think-tanks, which are applied at different places in this paper.

#### **Academic think tanks/universities without students**

This model is characterized by close ties or affiliations with universities and thus heavy reliance on academics as researchers. Private funds are the principal funding source and book-length studies the principal research product. Think-tanks in this category seek to preserve their non-partisanship and independence and put a premium on high standards of academic research in their staff and production. They examine the entire body of evidence available, not simply what is consistent with favored policy conclusions. In addition, they handle their evidence systematically, applying methods consistently.

#### **Contract researchers**

They are similar to academic think-tanks, but differ primarily in their sources of funding, which comes essentially from contracts with government agencies that also set the research agenda.

#### **Advocacy tanks**

They produce ideas and recommendations that consistently adhere to a particular set of core beliefs or values and tend to view their role in the policy-making process as winning the war of ideas rather than as a disinterested search for the best policies. They combine the ideological bent with aggressive marketing techniques and an effort to influence current policy debates.

#### **Political party think-tanks**

They are organized around the issues and platform of a political party and are often staffed by current or former party officials, politicians and party members. The

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<sup>24</sup> Stone, D., Denham, A., Garnett, M. (eds.) *Think Tanks Across Nations. A Comparative Approach*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998 in Boucher, S. *Europe and Its Think-tanks: A Promise to be Fulfilled*, 2004, pp. 12.

<sup>25</sup> McGann, J. *How Think Tanks Are Coping with the Future*, *The Futurist*, 2000, pp. 17.

<sup>26</sup> McGann, J., Weaver, K. *Think Tanks and Civil Societies, Catalysts for Ideas and Action*: New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2000 and Weiss, C. *Helping Government Think in Organizations for Policy Analysis: Helping Government Think*, ed. Carol Weiss, Newbury Park: Sage, 1992 in Boucher, S. *Europe and Its Think-tanks: A Promise to be Fulfilled*, 2004, pp. 4.

agenda is frequently heavily influenced by the needs of the party. The partisan-type think-tanks are more spread in Europe than in US, where they attempt to keep apart from the party influence.

However, very few think-tanks fit neatly into just one of the McGann, Weaver & Weiss categories and more frequently display characteristics of more than one category.

## **1.2 United States and Central and Eastern Europe: Two Different Stories**

According to Stone (2004), the analysis of think-tanks has fallen into two broad schools. The first school focuses on explaining why and how think-tanks have emerged, what their organizational forms are and what distinguishes them from other actors in the ‘market of ideas’<sup>27</sup>. The second school views think-tanks as a vehicle for broader questions about the policy process and for the role of ideas and expertise in decision-making. Here, network approaches are employed to address the policy influence and political impact think-tanks have (see Chapter 2).

This paper applies both approaches to a general assessment of think-tanks operating in Central and Eastern Europe and links them to their US counterparts where the origin of think-tanks can be traced to. A special attention is given to Czech and Slovak think-tanks which are assessed in even greater detail and are the main case-studies of the whole survey.

### **1.2.1 United States: The Origin of Think-Tanks**

Think-tanks in the United States were first recognized in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and proliferated gradually worldwide. The first reference to the term “think-tank” dates back to World War II and describes “a secure room or environment where defense scientists and military planners could meet to discuss strategy<sup>28</sup>”. According to Abelson’s<sup>29</sup> historical classification of generations of think-tanks, four of them are to be recognized.

The first generation can be traced to the early 1900s and encompassed institutes committed to producing academic policy research of emerging public-policy issues.

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<sup>27</sup> Weaver (1989), McGann and Weaver (2000) and Smith (1991) in Stone (2004).

<sup>28</sup> Abelson, D. Think-tanks and U.S. Foreign Policy: A Historical Perspective in *The Role of Think-tanks in U.S. Foreign Policy, U.S. Foreign Policy Agenda*, the U.S. Department of State, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2002, pp. 10.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 9-11.

There was almost no political or advocacy tilt in their activities and the preservation of their intellectual and institutional independence was assigned a high priority. The primary audience was thus intellectuals and journalists, whom Hayek had once dubbed 'second-hand dealers in ideas', and the public. This first wave of think-tanks gave rise to institutes such as the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (1910), the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace (1919), the Council on Foreign Relations (1921), the Brookings Institution (1927) and others that followed the suit.

The second generation, set into the period after World War II, responded to the demand of the Washington policy-makers to fill the void in the area of the national security policy. The establishment of the RAND Corporation in 1948 confirmed a new role some of the think-tanks were prepared to take up: they became government contractors and their previous detachment from the political process was something they were willing to sacrifice.

The third generation went even further and employed strategies to directly influence the policy-makers. The so called advocacy think-tanks shared a lot with interest-groups and lobbyists and by far crossed the academic research mission that attributed to the first-generation think-tanks. This transformation made the think-tank industry more competitive in that more emphasis was given both to the quality of the research and marketing techniques in order to win the attention of the media and the policy-makers. This group included, among others, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (1962), the Heritage Foundation (1973), and the CATO Institute (1977).

The fourth and the most recent generation of think-tanks Abelson defined gathered scholars around former presidents to leave a lasting legacy on the current policies. These vanity<sup>30</sup> or legacy-based institutes involve the Carter Center in Atlanta (1982) or the Nixon Center for Peace and Freedom in Washington D.C. (1994).

McGann (1992) also identified four generations of think-tanks, based on major events – wars of one kind or another – and a think-tank reflective of each period (see Table 1). Besides the two World Wars and the related public policy research- and military and defense-type think-tanks, which closely follow Abelson's categorization, McGann recognizes two additional events which triggered think-tanks growth and complement

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<sup>30</sup> Abelson., D., Carberry, Ch. Following Suit or Falling Behind? A Comparative Analysis of Think Tanks in Canada and the United States, pp. 539.



and further expand Abelson’s findings. The “War on Poverty” in the 1960s and early 1970s gave rise to domestic policy research think-tanks addressing social and economic problems. This affected also military-type think-tanks of the previous generation, which witnessed a shift in their research emphasis towards domestic matters. The ongoing “War of Ideas”, which can be traced to the late 1970s, has been marked by an increased competition of think-tanks, bigger specialization and the breakup of the liberal consensus (see the following chapter on the “war of ideas”). As McGann put it, “public policy think-tanks not only specialize by policy issue or programs; they now specialize by ideology and political orientation.”<sup>31</sup> This fourth generation corresponds to Abelson’s category of advocacy think-tanks.

**Table 1: Major Events in US Proliferation of Think-tanks**

Period	Major event	Think-tank	Date Founded
1900-1929	World War I	The Brookings Institution	1927 <sup>a</sup>
1930-1959	World War II	The Rand Corporation	1948
1960-1975	The War on Poverty	The Urban Institute	1968
1976-present	The War of Ideas	The Heritage Foundation	1973

<sup>a</sup>The Institute for Government Research was founded in 1916 and is often given as the date Brookings was founded.

*Source: McGann, J. Academics to Ideologues: A Brief History of the Public Policy Research Industry, Political Science and Politics, Vol. 25, No. 4, 1992, pp. 733-734.*

This four-generation evolution demonstrates that over time, US think-tanks<sup>32</sup> have grown in number and have transformed from academic research centers into entities influencing the Washington’s political agenda and profiling themselves ideologically. Part of what made such a massive proliferation possible is the highly decentralized nature of the American political system, coupled with a separation of powers between the executive, legislative and judicial branches, weak party discipline<sup>33</sup> and the strong philanthropy sector with an incentive tax system encouraging foundations to grant

<sup>31</sup> McGann, J. Academics to Ideologues: A Brief History of the Public Policy Research Industry, Political Science and Politics, Vol. 25, No. 4, 1992, pp. 737.

<sup>32</sup> Apart from the major US think-tanks addressed throughout the paper, state-based think-tanks also grew in number. These are located in US state capitals and focus primarily on state and local issues. McGann, J. Academics to Ideologues: A Brief History of the Public Policy Research Industry, Political Science and Politics, Vol. 25, No. 4, 1992, pp. 737.

<sup>33</sup> In US, decision-makers are not bound by any defined set of party principles, unlike their European counterparts. In addition, US political parties have not established their own policy research arms and therefore think-tanks are filling this void.

support as well as private and individual charities. Paradoxically, even when the number of professional staffers in the executive and legislative branches of government as well as government think-tanks increased in the 1970s was the demand for independent public policy research not weakened but continued to grow further.<sup>34</sup> Overall, the US policy environment is recognized for its support of the external policy research community in general and think-tanks in particular.

It has become a common practice for experts at think-tanks to accept positions in the federal government and for the departing policy-makers to take up a residence at a think-tank following their government service. This “revolving door” process reflects another specific feature of the US political system: there is no strict division between career government officials and outside analysts<sup>35</sup> and the link between the two is thus very strong. In addition, think-tank experts serve as advisors during presidential elections, on presidential and congressional advisory boards – in short, policy-makers turn to them for policy advice. It is primarily this active participation in the policy-making process and the political environment *per se* that give US think-tanks a unique role not yet observed in other parts of the world. As Haass<sup>36</sup> put it, they fill a critical void between the academic world, on one hand, and the realm of government, on the other.

Although it is hard to determine how many think-tanks there are in US, Abelson’s estimates talk about approximately 2000 of them.

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<sup>34</sup> McGann, J. Academics to Ideologues: A Brief History of the Public Policy Research Industry, *Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 25, No. 4, 1992, pp. 736.

<sup>35</sup> Haass, R. Think Tanks and U.S. Foreign Policy: A Policy-Maker’s Perspective in *U.S. Foreign Policy, U.S. Foreign Policy Agenda*, the U.S. Department of State, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2002, pp. 7.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 5

## 1.2.2 War of Ideas: Now and Then

When uncovering the ideological lean of US think-tanks, it is not left without notice that there has been a huge gap between the number of conservative and liberal think-tanks in the course of its major proliferation in the last three decades. The conservative think-tanks outnumbered the liberal ones significantly and it was also claimed to be one of the reasons why the Democrats lost in the presidential elections of 2004. To remedy for this discrepancy, the Democrats sought to bolster funding for liberal think-tanks in the wake of the George W. Bush re-election in 2004. The Democracy Alliance, an umbrella group of donors who seek to coordinate their giving, was founded as a result of this initiative in 2005 to help fund a network of think-tanks and advocacy groups that aimed at counter-balancing the political Right. This ‘new’ approach will inevitably come in part at the expense of the more traditional groups such as the pro-Democratic “527” groups<sup>37</sup>. According to the Alliance’s founder, Rob Stein, liberal groups have been disproportionately dependent on one-year foundation grants for specific projects, while their conservative counterparts have focused on their donors’ long-term commitment and frequent involvement in the boards of think-tanks they supported. The Alliance is thus a long-term campaign to revitalize the ‘center-left’ movement and support the Democratic causes. Is the liberals “mimicing their foes” not but a proof of think-tanks gaining on credibility, reliability and influence across the political spectrum?

Rich (2005)<sup>38</sup> talks about the “war of ideas” as a battle between liberals and conservatives, progressives and libertarians, over the appropriate role of government. In the related research, he highlights the fact that the higher effectiveness that attributes to conservative funders – especially foundations<sup>39</sup> - and think-tanks they support does not lie in the quantity of money spent but more in how this money is spent. Three distinguishing aspects arise.

First, whereas liberal and mainstream foundations back primarily policy research relevant to liberals and do relatively little to market their ideas to non-liberal circles as well, the conservative ones emphasize the latter aspect of promoting their ideas to

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<sup>37</sup> For an overview of types of advocacy groups in US, see Appendix 1.

<sup>38</sup> Rich, A. War of Ideas: Why Mainstream and Liberal Foundations and the Think tanks They Support are Losing in the War of Ideas in American Politics, 2005.

<sup>39</sup> The US tax laws prohibit foundations from lobbying elected officials about legislation or from engaging in partisan political activity. Hence they funnel a growing portion of their spending to policy institutes that can make an impact instead.

broader audiences. This emphasis the conservatives place on ideas rather than mere research is further visible in what criteria they find important when hiring staff. The conservatives hire primarily people with conservative ideological and political predilections who are prepared to make a contribution to the “war of ideas”. The liberals, on the other hand, are more concerned with issue expertise and academic credentials and relatively less with the ideological orientation.<sup>40</sup>

Second, liberal and mainstream foundations and think-tanks on the left tend to be more narrowly focused, i.e. organized by issue area, than their conservative counterparts.

And third, liberal and mainstream foundations support specific, well-defined projects at the expense of the general organizational operating support<sup>41</sup>, unlike the conservative ones, which support more think-tanks *per se* than specific projects they undertake. According to the data from 2002, conservative foundations consistently make funding policy institutes one of their top three priorities, which is not the case for the liberal and mainstream foundations<sup>42</sup>. Thus the broader, multi-issue focus, coupled with more general operating support from foundations and aggressive marketing techniques of conservative think-tanks adds to their comparative advantage in the ongoing “war of ideas”.

What comes as surprising in Rich’s research and was further confirmed by James Piereson, the executive director of the conservative John M. Olin Foundation<sup>43</sup>, is the different perception of neutral and unbiased research that conservative and liberal foundations follow. The idea of a ‘disinterested expert’<sup>44</sup>, i.e. the one capable of a neutral and rigorous research without any ideological lean, has roots in the Progressive Era and is central to most liberal foundations. It was grounded on a firm belief that scientific methods, if properly applied, could solve social problems and improve the efficiency of government<sup>45</sup>. Therefore, ‘think-tanks of no identifiable ideology’ significantly outnumbered the liberal ones in receiving the liberal foundations’ support.

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<sup>40</sup> Rich, A. The War of Ideas, Part II, Working Paper, 2005, pp. 3-5.

<sup>41</sup> Grants are designated as either general operating support or project-specific support depending upon how all, or the bulk, of the foundation support was designated. Ibid, pp. 25, footnote 9.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, pp. 20.

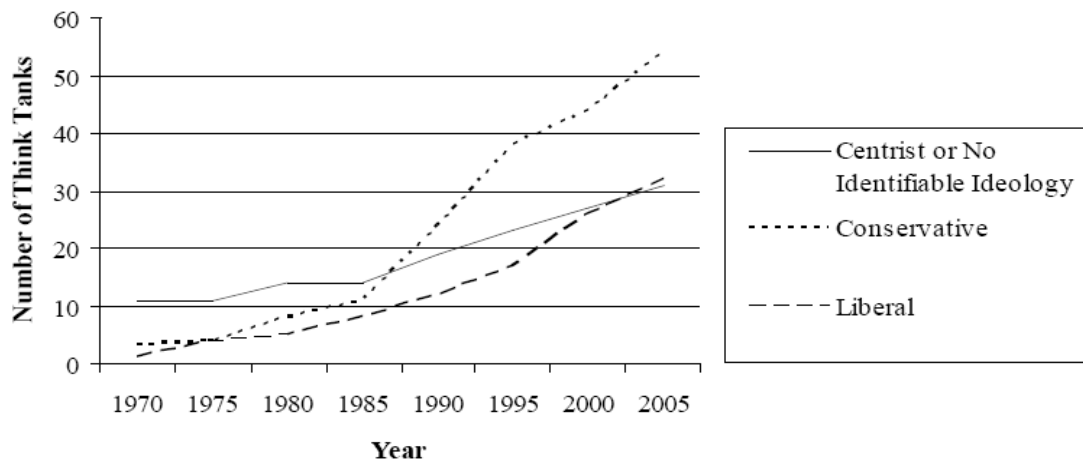
<sup>43</sup> Ibid, pp. 22, an excerpt from an interview Rich made with Piereson in 1999.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, pp. 23.

<sup>45</sup> McGann, J. Academics to Ideologues: A Brief History of the Public Policy Research Industry, Political Science and Politics, Vol. 25, No. 4, 1992, pp. 734.

Conservative foundations, on the other hand, acknowledge being ‘conservative’ and attempting to affect the ideological lean of the nation, which relates to what was said earlier about how ideas are promoted on the two ideological fronts.

**Graph 2: Emergence of State Think-tanks by Ideology, 1970 - 2005**



*Source: Rich, A. The War of Ideas, Part II, Working Paper, 2005, pp. 2.*

The Graph 2 above demonstrates the pattern by which state-focused US think-tanks evolved, based on their ideological lean. It confirms the massive upsurge of US think-tanks in general and conservative ones in particular. In the course of 35 years, conservative think-tanks grew fivefold, whereas their liberal and centrist ones or those with no identifiable ideology more then tripled. The late 1980s marked a rapid growth of conservative institutes which by then lagged behind in number. This catching-up coincided with Reagan leaving his presidential office after his second term, succeeded by another Republican – George H. W. Bush.

In the first decade of the new millennium, conservative think-tanks are in charge in US, both in their quantity and influence. It may be time for their liberal and centrist counterparts to reconsider their mission and strategy.

### 1.2.3 Central and Eastern Europe: Post-Transition Phase?

The emergence of think-tanks in Central and Eastern Europe was marked by a watershed event – the fall of communism. Before assessing the post-communist think-tank community, one should briefly describe major types of expert setting that preceded it. Krastev (2000)<sup>46</sup> defines three such types, based on a degree of intellectual and political freedom that was granted to them: the academia, the ministerial world and the institutions affiliated to the Communist Party.

- **Academies of science and universities** were producers of theoretical knowledge. Although distant from the government and having a certain but limited space for intellectual freedom, their role in practice was “to legitimize particular decisions through theoretical reasoning and to safeguard the hegemony of the Marxist paradigm”.
- **Social science institutes or research units affiliated to the ministries** had neither intellectual freedom nor political influence. Although ‘officially’ information suppliers, they merely acted as bureaucratic ministerial departments in practice.
- **Institutes in the political academy of the Communist Party** were in the first place loyal to the Party and thus guaranteed political influence in exchange. Their work related primarily to broader ideological and political questions.

Under these circumstances, “the ideological claim that socialist society was the only ‘scientific’ society legitimized academic discourse as a power discourse”<sup>47</sup>. The existence of independent policy institutes was thus unthinkable given the nature of the expert institutes outlined above and the omnipresence and dominance of the communist ideology. The notion of a ‘social scientist’ perceived as “a neutral figure who provides arguments for the policy-making process, but is not a player in the power game”<sup>48</sup>, evokes similarities to US ‘value-free’ science of the Progressive Era. As Krastev (2000) expressed it, “the role which the social sciences played under the old regime ultimately resulted in the poor quality of their empirical studies, artificially difficult scientific language, and a lack of critical reflection on reality”.<sup>49</sup> The emerging post-communist

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<sup>46</sup> Krastev, I. *The Liberal Estate: Reflections on the Politics of Think Tanks in Central and Eastern Europe*, 2000, pp. 5.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 5.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 4.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 5.

think-tanks had a long and difficult journey ahead to make up for the dubious legacy that communism left on research.

Getting engaged in the business of independent research and analysis in the post-communist era was, however, a risky business: financial constraints and the uncertainty to get the target audience hear and further implement the proposed reform changes were both factors that made the proliferation of think-tanks difficult and gradual. It was also necessary to build credit and recognition for their ability to provide an unbiased and high quality expertise, which does not happen overnight. As Schneider<sup>50</sup> aptly put it, after decades of a systematic propaganda that ‘real socialism’ is a result of a ‘scientific approach of the Marxism-Leninism’, there is still a growing cautiousness towards applying ‘science in politics’.

Whereas until the 1970s, most think-tanks rarely focused on issues beyond their national borders, the trend reversed from 1970s onwards and European think-tanks have become increasingly ‘transnationalized’. Boucher (2004) accounts for two factors which might account for this development: first, the growing importance of international policy-making fora and second, the growth of EU power and competences.<sup>51</sup> As the international fora, such as the WTO, UN, G8 or the EU, grew in importance and started to shape national policies in many ways, it is logical that it was where think-tanks directed part of their activities. This growing global interconnectedness, however, encompassed not only think-tanks but a rapid growth of NGOs, interest and lobbying groups operating on the international scene could be perceived. The latter factor, marked by the deepening of the European integration and the EU supranational powers that gradually got centralized into Brussels, was another decisive incentive for think-tanks to leave the merely national locus of activities behind. What both of these factors have in common is the fact that they prove the direction towards centers of decision-making power that think-tanks have taken in the last few decades.

An in-depth study of examining specifically think-tanks that specialize in European matters within the enlarged EU<sup>52</sup> is a pioneering assessment of a not yet fully uncharted area. Directed by Boucher (2004), it defines three major factors of think-tanks rapid

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<sup>50</sup> Think tanky a jejich společenský vliv, Sborník textů, Americké informační centrum při Velvyslanectví USA v Praze, 2006, pp. 11.

<sup>51</sup> Boucher, S. Europe and Its Think-tanks: A Promise to be Fulfilled, 2004, pp. 9.

<sup>52</sup> The study addresses think-tanks operating in 25 EU member states after its enlargement in 2004.

growth in the post-war period as well as since the regime changes in CEE in 1989. First, it was the emergence of stable democratic governments, which is a prerequisite for think-tanks to function as they need to express their views freely. Second, the process of ‘contracting-out’ of many state functions during the 1980s and 1990s was a natural consequence of a need for specialist policy knowledge to balance the state growth. And third, there has been a growing openness of government recently, coupled with its engagement with civil society groups, such as think-tanks, NGOs and the like.<sup>53</sup>

The study further identified 149 think-tanks dealing with European issues in the EU-25<sup>54</sup> member states. Out of these, 36 were labeled ‘Euro-specific’, i.e. focusing primarily on European matters. For the remaining 113, so called ‘Euro-oriented’ think-tanks, Europe was a significant area among other issues. When McGann, Weaver & Weiss four-group categorization was applied (see Chapter 1.1), academic-type think-tanks seemed to dominate. The authors concluded, however, that it may well be the case that the traditional model in continental Europe is yet to follow the path the Anglo-American model did: from academic-type research institutes to more advocacy-oriented ones. It is nonetheless too early for such judgments to be made although the overall figures indicated that such trend might be on rise.

When the EU-25 member base as of 2004 was decomposed into the ‘old’ EU-15 and the ‘new’ EU-10 group (see Graph 3 and 4 below) and the stated mission was compared between the two, important similarities stick out. There are no major differences one might expect. Closer examination, however, reveals what was already observed earlier – that think-tanks in the ‘old’ EU-15 member states with longer tradition tend to link their mission more directly towards policy-making, either to promote better policy-making or provide support specifically for policy-makers. It comes as no surprise that think-tanks in the ‘new’ EU-10 member states claim their mission to be primarily the involvement of the citizens and more generally fostering a dialogue in an open political environment. It is important to note here that these figures only compare the declared intentions of think-tanks; the actual research production might provide even more interesting insights.

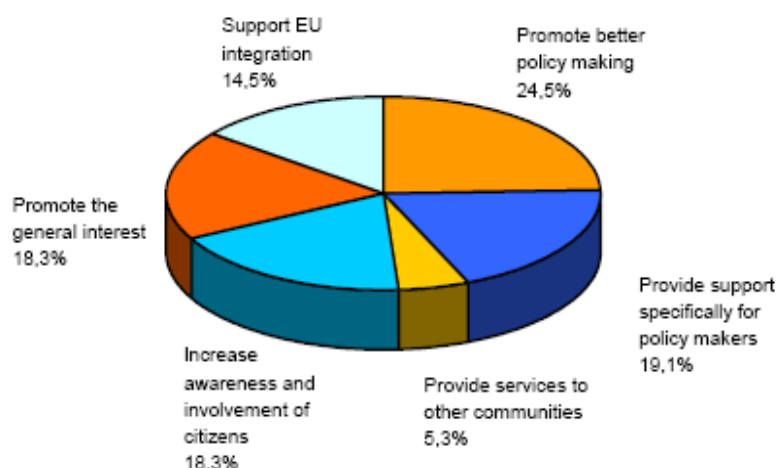
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<sup>53</sup> Boucher, S. *Europe and Its Think-tanks: A Promise to be Fulfilled*, 2004, pp. 8-9.

<sup>54</sup> At the time the article was written, the EU decomposition did not include the current 27 EU member states, i.e. excluded the current two additional member states - Romania and Bulgaria.

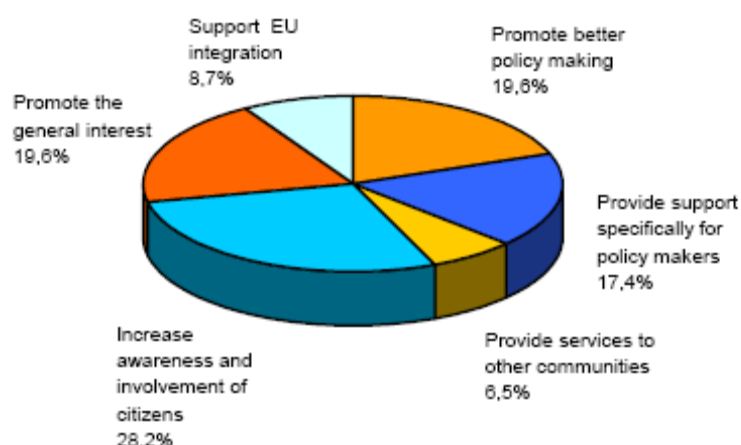


**Graph 3: Think-tanks stated mission: Former EU-15**



Source: Boucher, S. *Europe and Its Think-tanks: A Promise to be Fulfilled*, 2004, pp. 23.

**Graph 4: Think-tanks stated mission: New Member States**



Source: Boucher, S. *Europe and Its Think-tanks: A Promise to be Fulfilled*, 2004, pp. 23.

Another relevant observation in the study reveals a feature almost all of the participating think-tanks have in common: they tend to interact with national executives rather than national parliaments. That said, there is a clear lean towards the intervention in the policy-making ‘upstream’ or at the policy initiation stage and much less activity is directed at the scrutiny of existing policies. This shortage of formal involvement in Parliamentary Committee hearings is compensated by informal channels such as policy meetings with individual MPs, dinners or via the briefing material and updates they send to politicians.<sup>55</sup> In US, on the contrary, think-tanks participation in the Congressional hearings is a common practice. The implications, however, are not

<sup>55</sup> Boucher, S. *Europe and Its Think-tanks: A Promise to be Fulfilled*, 2004, pp. 28 and 31.

straightforward due to the differences in political culture of the two regions and the short-lived think-tank tradition even in the 'old' EU-15 member states in comparison to their US counterparts.

In addition, one further distinction between the 'old' and 'new' EU member states can be made with regard to the areas of their research concentration. The three prevailing research areas in the 'old' group are: economic, financial and monetary policy, external relations and constitutional affairs, whereas the top three in the 'new' group include enlargement, national role/interest and economic, financial and monetary policy. Again, it is assumed that as full EU members, the 'new' member think-tanks will transform into multi-issue institutes although the national interest-dimension will most likely remain strong, given the historical context where the individual freedoms were for long suppressed. It is important to stress here that the study and its conclusions only refer to think-tanks predominantly or exclusively dealing with European issues. The survey in Chapter 3 significantly expands the set of the selection criteria for think-tanks.

Think-tanks have nonetheless played a major role as reform catalysts and were the 'idea brokers' for many economic and social reforms in the post-communist countries, even though they were small in size and staff. Having gained this 'transformational knowledge', they possess an asset that can, and should, be shared. Hence a few direct a portion of their activities at cooperation on democratization projects abroad.

At the dawn of the new millennium, think-tanks are not even close to reach the position they can enjoy in US. There is still a low demand for an independent analysis from the policy-makers. Moreover, the attention think-tanks are given may change whenever there is a new government in place, along with a shift in political priorities. The degree of the resulting mismatch between the supply and demand sides of the market explains why windows of opportunity open or close for think-tanks.

### ***1.2.3.1 Focus: Czech Republic and Slovakia***

The experience of Czech and Slovak think-tanks is too short to talk about waves of think-tanks or to categorize them in a way US think-tanks are. As limited in number, size and staff as they are, it is only appropriate to treat the current think-tank community as one, like a tree trunk with branches yet to grow. The geographic, as well as cultural and linguistic proximity by which Czech and Slovak think-tanks are bound naturally leads to similar conclusions as far as the conditions under which think-tanks operate are

concerned. In recent years, new think-tanks emerged, responding to a demand for independent research in areas not yet covered (Institute of Economic and Social Studies – INESS, ASA Institute, etc.). On the other hand, a few limited their activities (the Center for Economic Development - CPHR) or stopped them completely (Center for Democracy and Free Enterprise - CDFE). The latter argued that its mission in the fields of democracy and free enterprise has been completed by now and a solid basis for democracy and free enterprise has already been built in the country [Czech Republic].<sup>56</sup>

Over time, however, the established think-tanks have expanded their activities tremendously, crossed the sheer scholarly research agenda and directed their expertise more towards addressing political, economic and social issues. Hereby they reached out to policy-makers and started to get engaged in the domestic and international policy debates. Such was a major contribution of CEP<sup>57</sup> to the debate on the introduction of the flat tax, of F. A. Hayek Foundation<sup>58</sup> on the social security reform or of EUROPEUM<sup>59</sup> to the Czech stance during the European Convention<sup>60</sup> as well as to a myriad of EU-related issues both before and after the Czech Republic became a member.

A specific way of and rationale behind setting up think-tanks is to create a platform for a political party and promote its values and ideas. Such was the case of CEP, which was initiated by the current Czech president Václav Klaus when he resigned as a Prime

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<sup>56</sup> [http://www.cdfc.cz/cesky/cdfc\\_info.html](http://www.cdfc.cz/cesky/cdfc_info.html)

<sup>57</sup> The Center for Economics and Politics - CEP - is a Czech think-tank close to The Civic Democratic Party (ODS). It was founded by its former leader and the current Czech President Václav Klaus.  
URL: <<http://cepin.cz/cze/stranka.php?sekce=50>>

<sup>58</sup> F. A. Hayek Foundation is a Slovak liberal think-tank that seeks to enforce economic and social reforms consistent with the classical liberalism.  
URL: <<http://www.hayek.sk/>>

<sup>59</sup> EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy is a think-tank that undertakes programme, project, publishing and training activities related to the European integration process.  
URL: <<http://www.europeum.org/index.php?&lang=en>>

<sup>60</sup> The European Convention, also referred to as the Convention on the Future of Europe, was created by the European Council in December 2001 as result of the “Laeken Declaration”. Its inaugural meeting was held in February 2002 and its work was concluded in July 2003 after reaching agreement on a proposed Constitutional Treaty.

Minister in 1998. The Liberal-Conservative Academy (CEVRO<sup>61</sup>) also represents a political party think-tank in that it provides training for right-wing minded citizens.<sup>62</sup>

The creation of the Institute of Public Affairs (IVO) in Slovakia was motivated by the upcoming parliamentary elections of 1998 and sought to counterweight the authoritative government of Vladimír Mečiar, who was in office since 1994. The implication of his regime was that Slovakia deviated from the pro-democratic trajectory which the remaining three Visegrad<sup>63</sup> countries have taken. Established as an independent public policy analytical center, IVO won recognition as a platform for frequent sociological opinion polls and policy analysis. Its massive and influential mobilization campaign to get the citizens to the polls ended up with 84 per cent election turnout and the victory of the pro-democratic political representation.<sup>64</sup> These are only a few examples of a rising role of think-tanks, the more so in periods of critical transition. Many more followed the suit.

Greger, the Director of the Europlatform<sup>65</sup>, views the integration of the Czech Republic into NATO and the EU<sup>66</sup> as sufficient incentives for further involvement of think-tanks. To his judgement, however, their impact on the Czech foreign policy has so far been marginal and it was primarily the political parties that have taken up this role. Although the media coverage of think-tanks commenting on domestic and foreign issues has grown rapidly in recent years, Greger observes a big deficit in the underdevelopment and almost non-existence of regular debates engaging politicians, the academic sector/think-tanks and the journalist experts, a practice well-developed in the Western

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<sup>61</sup> The Liberal-Conservative Academy (CEVRO) is a Czech think-tank founded in 1999 to enhance lifelong learning and popularize right-wing thinking via training and education. It is a political party think-tank as it openly claims its affiliation with the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) and has a cooperation agreement with it.

URL:< <http://www.cevro.cz/cs/>>

<sup>62</sup> Král, D., Špok, R., Bartovic, V. Public Policy Centres in the Czech Republic, EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, 2006, pp. 5.

<sup>63</sup> The Visegrad Group or Visegrad Four was established in 1991 to strengthen mutual cooperation among four Central European states: Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia (till 1993 Czechoslovakia).

<sup>64</sup> Think tanky a jejich společenský vliv, Sborník textů, Americké informační centrum při Velvyslanectví USA v Praze, 2006, pp. 79-86.

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.europlatform.cz/>

<sup>66</sup> The Czech Republic became the NATO member in 1999 and joined the EU in 2004. Slovakia joined them both in 2004.

Europe and the United States. He concludes that the Czech Republic still has a lot to catch up in terms of the openness and transparency of the society.<sup>67</sup>

In his country reports, Boucher (2004) titled the Czech think-tanks as “a young, growing and militant community”, with their Slovak counterparts referred to as “a nascent but determined group of contributors”. These brief characteristics imply that the prevailing model in McGann, Weaver & Weiss categorization is ‘advocacy’ think-tanks. In addition, Slovak think-tanks were related to as “by far the most politicized in Central Europe”<sup>68</sup>

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) released the 2005 NGO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, an annual study of the strength and viability of the NGO sector in 27 countries (plus Montenegro and Kosovo) in the region. The study is found to be relevant also to the think-tank community as think-tanks predominantly emerge from and operate within the not-for-profit and non-governmental sector<sup>69</sup>. The Index measures seven dimensions – legal environment, organizational capacity, financial viability, advocacy, service provision, infrastructure and public image – and uses a seven-point scale, with 7 indicating a low or poor level of development and 1 indicating a very advanced NGO sector (see Appendix 1). The scale is further divided into 3 phases: consolidation (1-3), mid-transition (3-5) and early transition (5-7) phase.

To elaborate on the distinctions and/or similarities that Czech and Slovak NGO sectors share, their country reports were taken from the Index and a comparative analysis undertaken. Overall, the NGO sustainability for the Czech Republic and Slovakia is similar and converging (with 2.7 and 2.6 points, respectively) although both have experienced its deterioration in the past five years. Whereas the Czech Republic lagged behind in legal environment, organizational capacity and infrastructure, it scored better than Slovakia in the financial viability dimension. The remaining three dimensions did not reflect on any major differences between the two countries. For purposes of this

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<sup>67</sup> Think tanky a jejich společenský vliv, Sborník textů, Americké informační centrum při Velvyslanectví USA v Praze, 2006, pp. 20-22.

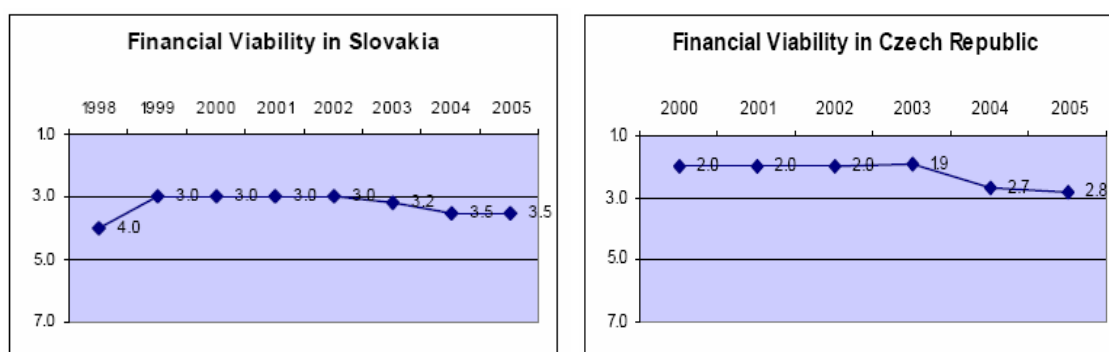
<sup>68</sup> Boucher, S. Europe and Its Think-tanks: A Promise to be Fulfilled, 2004, pp. 51-52 and 68-69.

<sup>69</sup> See the notion of the ‘NGO paradigm’ in Krastev, I. Think Tanks: Making and Faking Influence. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, May 2001, pp. 19-20.

paper, three dimensions in particular were looked at: financial viability, advocacy and public image.

First, the Czech Republic leads in the financial viability dimension (with 2.8 points relative to 3.5 for Slovakia). As specified in the Index, factors that have an impact on the financial viability of the NGO sector include “the state of the economy, the extent to which philanthropy and volunteerism are being nurtured in the local culture, sophistication and prevalence of fundraising and strong financial management skills, as well as the extent to which government procurement and commercial revenue raising opportunities are being developed.” The study reports that foreign funding has decreased in both countries of focus and that “the dependence on local funding has led to a decrease in staff and programs, as well as greater work loads for employees, [...] and NGOs have increased their levels of professionalism in response to demands from the business sector and the struggle for financial viability”. In addition, corporate as well as individual philanthropy remains underdeveloped and foundations are not a significant source of funding either because their assets generally are too small to have an impact. As Graph 5 below demonstrates, in the period of 2000-2003, financial sustainability in both countries was kept relatively unchanged; the course changed significantly with its major deterioration in 2004.

**Graph 5: Financial viability of the NGO sector in the Czech Republic and Slovakia**

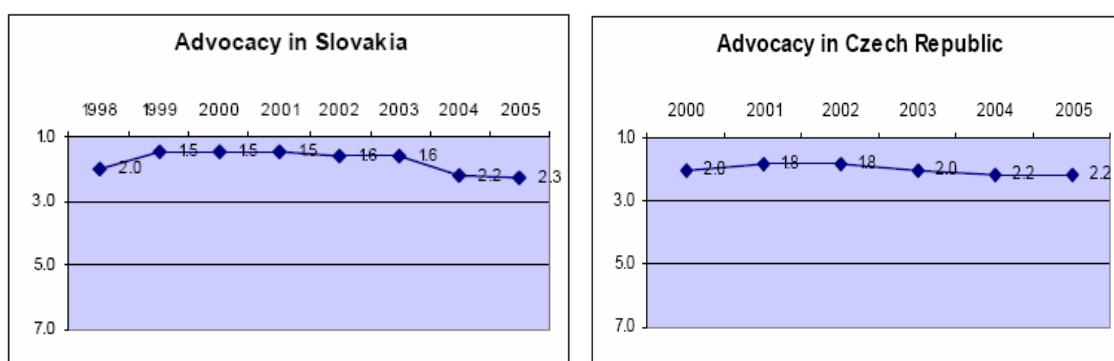


*Source: The 2005 NGO Sustainability Index for Central and Easter Europe and Eurasia, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Ninth Edition, May 2006.*

Second, the advocacy dimension reflects on “NGOs’ record in influencing public policy” in general and “the prevalence of advocacy in different sectors, at different levels of government, as well as with the private sector” in particular. “The extent to which coalitions of NGOs have been formed around issues” is also considered, which

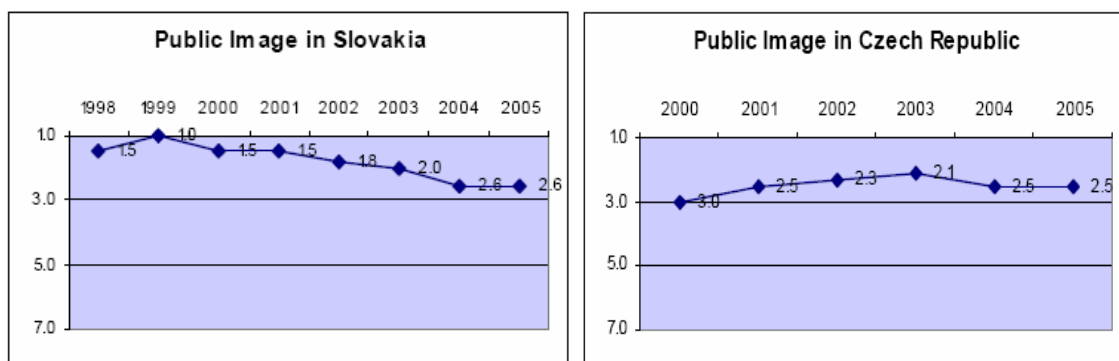
implies that networks and coalitions are an important factor in strengthening the advocacy efforts. It is important to note that the level of NGOs' engagement with political parties is not measured. The report states that "NGOs do not give lobbying activities high priority, though they do realize that such activities are necessary at times". The Graph 6 proves the fact that the advocacy dimension is very similar for both countries in focus (with scores of 2.3 for Slovakia and 2.2 for the Czech Republic) and except for a slight deterioration in 2004 has remained at roughly the same levels in the past five years.

**Graph 6: Advocacy of the NGO sector in the Czech Republic and Slovakia**



*Source: The 2005 NGO Sustainability Index for Central and Easter Europe and Eurasia, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Ninth Edition, May 2006.*

And third, the public image dimension assesses "the extent and nature of the media's coverage of NGOs, the awareness and willingness of government officials to engage NGOs, as well as the general public's knowledge and the perception of the sector as a whole". As was the case of the advocacy dimension, both countries reached very similar public image scores (with 2.5 for the Czech Republic and 2.6 for Slovakia). However, when the time span of the past five years is traced (see Graph 7), one observes steady levels (except for a slight worsening in 2004) in the Czech Republic on one hand, and a gradual deterioration in Slovakia on the other. Overall, the media provides good coverage of NGO activities but the general public apathy towards the sector persists.

**Graph 7: Public Image of NGO sector in the Czech Republic and Slovakia**

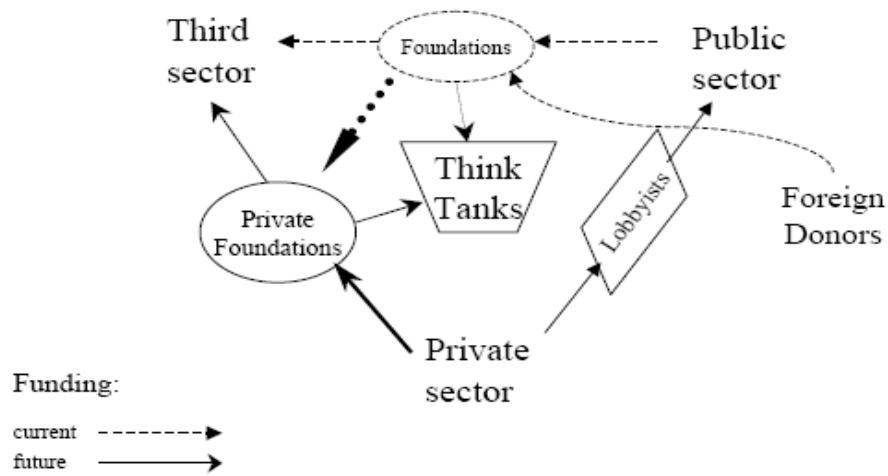
Source: *The 2005 NGO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Ninth Edition, May 2006.*

Schneider<sup>70</sup> attempts to place Czech think-tanks into a three-sector space (private, public and third sector) and finds out that they are mostly located on the intersections of the public and private sector on one hand, and the private and third sector, on the other. Very few attribute to one sector only and hardly any would place itself on or around the intersection of all three sectors. (For an illustration of the three-sector relationships, see Graph 8). That proves the difficulty to keep the balance among the politics, business and the non-governmental sector. Although most think-tanks strive to keep their independence and maintain it even with the infusion of the public funding, the way think-tanks are governed tends to resemble other actors in the ‘market of ideas’ (see Chapter 1.1). Here again comes the problem of what constitutes a think-tank and whether it is the unification or the diversity path they should and are willing to take. (For an overall analysis of think-tanks in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, see Chapter 3).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, pp. 16.



**Graph 8: Placement of think-tanks in the Czech Republic into the three-sector space**



Source: <http://www.policy.hu/schneider/FRP.html>

The question hence remains what the role of think-tanks in the two countries of focus is to be, stemming from the character of their political culture, their experience up to now and a very weak philanthropy tradition. Whether the preservation of their independence status should be maintained or rather a hybrid path followed is one of the think-tanks' current challenges.

## 2. Networking: Strengthening Ties via Cooperation

*“It is increasingly evident that some think-tanks have become global policy actors or, at the very least, policy informants. Many think-tanks are building regional and international networks. While think tank networks are not new, over the past two decades the scale and density of exchange within these networks has mounted significantly and extended from North America and European institutes to include a more globally diverse range of organizations.”<sup>71</sup>*

### 2.1 Networking: The ‘Why’ and ‘How’

The complex problems of today require the engagement of different actors and their perspectives. These form and engage in formal or informal regional and international networks, coalitions and fora and operate increasingly across national borders. Stone (2000) distinguishes among think-tank networks, the activity of networking and ‘policy networks’.

Think-tank networks encompass research institutes that are “organizationally similar in structure and general objectives, and exclude other non-state actors such as NGOs, private firms and professional associations.”<sup>72</sup> These networks bring together think-tanks that either share common views on specific policy issues or are related ideologically.

The activity of networking varies from one network to another and there exist several networking styles and techniques. Stone (2000) refers to four such styles:

- **Person-to-person networking**, such as individual exchanges via email or “after hours” discussions at conferences and meetings, is regarded as a basis for building relationships or strengthening the already existing ones. Such occasions are often fruitful in that they allow think-tank representatives to meet both other non-state or state actors, which can serve as “a means to draw attention to an institute, to garner financial and other resources, and to develop channels of informal influence”.
- **‘Organizational networking’** is a style where there is a ‘headquarter’ organization or a medium, such as a webpage, that keeps “member institutes” informed about one another’s work and activities.

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<sup>71</sup> Stone, D. Think Tanks Transnationalisation and Non-Profit Analysis, Advice and Advocacy, in *Global Society*, Vol. 14, No.2, 2000 in Boucher, S. Europe and Its Think-tanks: A Promise to be Fulfilled, 2004, pp. 15.

<sup>72</sup> Stone, D. Think Tanks Across Nations: The New Networks of Knowledge, NIRA Review, pp. 34-39, Winter 2000, pp. 34.

- **‘Research network think-tank’** is an operating mode through a dispersed network of researchers that are contracted to produce relevant policy studies. Such think-tanks have moved offshore and have established branch offices in other nation states instead of maintaining in-house research staff.
- **‘Virtual networks’** are a reflection of advanced information and communication technologies.<sup>73</sup>

‘Policy networks’ are a “conceptual category to describe coordinated patterns of interaction to influence policy”<sup>74</sup>. Stone (2003) summarizes four types of such ‘policy networks’<sup>75</sup>:

**Policy communities** consist of a tight relationship of policy actors from inside and outside government that are highly integrated with the policy-making process. They include politicians, civil servants, interest groups and non-governmental representatives as well as recognized experts with common views on a specific policy issue.

**Epistemic communities** are a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area.

**Advocacy coalitions** consist of a diverse range of policy actors such as politicians, civil servants, researchers and interest group representatives. They place emphasis on the belief system rather than the knowledge in itself.

Whereas ‘epistemic communities’, are more knowledge-based, ‘advocacy coalitions’ are more policy-focused and value-based in nature. The distinction is similar to the one between ‘academic’ and ‘advocacy’ think-tanks. In addition,

**Policy entrepreneurs** are individuals who derive their influence not only from their expertise in a particular policy field but also from access to elite policy communities.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid, pp. 36-37.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, pp. 34.

<sup>75</sup> ‘Policy networks’ are, broadly speaking, “a mode of governance that incorporates actors from both inside and outside government to facilitate decision-making and implementation.” Stone, D. Denham, A. and Garnett, M. *Think Tanks Across Nations: A Comparative Approach*, Manchester University Press, 1998 in Stone, D., Ullrich, H. *Policy Research Institutes and Think Tanks in Western Europe: Development Trends and Perspectives*, Discussion Paper No. 24, Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, Open Society Institute, 2003, pp. 36.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, pp. 36-41.

An experienced and highly-regarded ‘policy entrepreneur’ can be a valuable asset to any think-tank. Or, a think-tank *per se* can be regarded a ‘policy entrepreneur’ within a network.

‘Policy networks’ are to be distinguished from ‘knowledge networks’. Whereas ‘policy networks’ gather rather heterogeneous actors and frequently apply negotiation and mediation, ‘knowledge networks’ are rather homogenous, with common interests and perspectives.<sup>77</sup> However, even ‘knowledge networks’ can be policy-focused.

The negative connotations that networks might have derive from their elitist or ‘club-like’ fashion, gate-keeping and domination of certain interests. They are only accountable to their members and the inclusion in such networks can hence be conditioned by very subtle criteria and exclude many interested potential candidates.<sup>78</sup>

One further distinction between the network concepts described above that Stone (2002) encounters is that they operate and can be found in different policy environments. “Policy communities tend to evolve in relatively stable and predictable policy environments that are to be found in the advanced industrial liberal democracies of the West. By contrast, epistemic communities and transnational advocacy networks emerge in more ambiguous policy environments where new issues or policy problems are poorly understood or are without political recognition.”<sup>79</sup>

## 2.2 American Exceptionalism Revisited

The US is often perceived as the global bearer of the values of individual freedom, civic responsibility and entrepreneurial spirit which it seeks to transfer to other regions of the world, predominantly to those where they are suppressed or do not exist at all. The first major departure from its long-sustained isolationist policy occurred when the US participated in the World War I.<sup>80</sup> Fauriol describes this shift as follows: “The apparent strength of the American economic system and the potential application of its ideals on a global basis generated a certain sense of mission reinforced by frustration with traditional behavior (exemplified by the catastrophe of World War I). But these same

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<sup>77</sup> Stone, D. Think Tanks beyond Nation-states in Stone, D., Denham, A. Think Tank Traditions: Policy Research and the Politics of Ideas. Manchester University Press, 2004, pp. 37.

<sup>78</sup> Stone, D. Introduction: Global Knowledge and Advocacy Networks, *Global Networks 2*, 2002, pp. 8.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, pp. 5.

<sup>80</sup> However, the US interventionist approach was abandoned after the World War I and not fully restored until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

frustrations also underlined a national feeling of hesitation regarding any deep involvement in global affairs.<sup>81</sup> This new course of American foreign policy coincided with the emergence of think-tanks which considerably expanded their foreign policy research agendas. (These represented the first generation of think-tanks as outlined by Abelson and McGann in Chapter 1.2.1).

According to Krastev (2000), what US exports to other countries “is not just particular economic policies or values, but a specific process of policy-making”.<sup>82</sup> It is without doubt that the US model of think-tanks is a starting point for scholars studying the topic and a recognized point of reference for others attempting to establish one such think-tank.

### **2.3 Central and Eastern Europe: On the Shoulders of Giants?**

For transition countries, think-tank networks represent a concentration of ‘idea factories’ ready to share their ‘success stories’ of transformation and their implications. This can be very cost-effective, especially for start-up think-tanks which can, if applicable, build on the previously-conducted work and experience in the field. It is also a platform for them to create valuable partnerships and support. As Stiglitz (1999) put it, it is imperative to “scan globally reinvent locally<sup>83</sup>”, i.e. think-tanks should know the alternative ‘recipes’ to their problems that other countries employed, and adapt them to their local context.

Stone (2002) looks at policy transfer in greater detail and recognizes ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ transfer of policy ideas. Whereas academics and think-tanks are effective at the former, the latter attributes to formal decision-makers. ‘Knowledge networks’ have a key role to play in the promotion of policy transfer and in what is considered international ‘best practice’.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Fauriol, G. Think Tanks and U.S. Foreign Policy, Washington, DC: Georgetown University, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1984 pp. 12 in McGann, J. Academics to Ideologues: A Brief History of the Public Policy Research Industry, Political Science and Politics, Vol. 25, No. 4, 1992, pp. 734.

<sup>82</sup> Krastev, I. The Liberal Estate: Reflections on the Politics of Think Tanks in Central and Eastern Europe, 2000, pp. 2.

<sup>83</sup> Stiglitz, J. Scan Globally, Reinvent Locally: Knowledge Infrastructure and the Localization of Knowledge, Keynote Address, First Global Development Network Conference, 1999 in McGann, J. Report: Scholars, Dollars and Policy Advice. Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program, Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2004, pp. 20.

<sup>84</sup> Stone, D. Introduction: Global Knowledge and Advocacy Networks, *Global Networks* 2, 2002, pp. 6.

Dolowitz & Marsh (2000) remark that policy transfer is not an all-or-nothing process and continue by referring to four different degrees of it: “**copying**, which involves direct and complete transfer; **emulation**, which involves transfer of the ideas behind the policy or program; **combinations**, which involve mixtures of several different policies; and **inspiration**, where policy in another jurisdiction may inspire a policy change, but where the final outcome does not actually draw upon the original”.<sup>85</sup> The attention paid to the selection of either of the four degrees of transfer should not be underestimated. Quick and often times ‘easy’ options might lead to policy failure rather than success. As already argued above, policies that have been successful in one country do not necessarily prove successful in another. The research Dolowitz & Marsh undertook further suggests that there exist at least three factors that have a significant effect on policy failure:

- **uninformed transfer** when the ‘borrowing country’ “may have insufficient information about the policy/institution and how it operates in the country from which it is transferred”
- **incomplete transfer** when “although transfer has occurred, crucial elements of what made the policy or institutional structure a success in the originating country may not be transferred, leading to a failure”
- **inappropriate transfer** when “insufficient attention may be paid to the differences between the economic, social, political and ideological contexts in the transferring and the borrowing country”.<sup>86</sup>

The second and third type of transfer might be applicable when the ‘US model’ of think-tanks is transferred to CEE. It implies that its transferability can either only be partial or that the US and CEE contexts are yet too different to allow for a success of such transfer.

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<sup>85</sup> Dolowitz, D., Marsh, D. Learning from Abroad: The Role of Policy Transfer in Contemporary Policy-Making, *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration*, Vol. 13, No. 1, January 2000, pp. 13.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, pp. 17.

Krastev (2000)<sup>87</sup> encounters six reasons why CEE think-tanks should network regionally:

- to be influential outside their national borders via concerted efforts
- to create a potential for knowledge-sharing and policy-transfer
- to leave a legitimacy and promote success stories in countries where think-tanks are not recognized as credible sources of advice yet
- to provide training via joint projects
- to increase utility given think-tanks' special organizational capacity (compared with governments and universities)
- to improve the quality of policy products.

All in all, the network literature helps to explain the role think-tanks play when interacting with others. Furthermore, being a member of a renowned network enables one to reach audiences and disseminate ideas to an extent that cannot be achieved by the institute alone. The growth and potential of networking would thus deserve more attention than this paper allows.

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<sup>87</sup> Krastev, I. Think Tanks: Making and Faking Influence. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, May 2001, pp. 32-34.

### **3. Questionnaire: ‘Think-tanks and Their Role in the Civil Society: Unification or Diversity?’**

#### **3.1 Focus and Methodology**

The focus of this survey is to explore the Czech and Slovak think-tank community in detail, both as a whole and separately, and highlight the differences and similarities that exist between the Czech and Slovak group. The think-tank literature on the CEE-region in general and the Czech Republic and Slovakia in particular is poor and the rapid growth of the industry should be paid attention to. Three areas in particular are studied, testing the three hypotheses employed in the introduction. First, the diversity path of the Czech and Slovak think-tanks as a whole is challenged but it is assumed that the divergence of their funding and organizational structures will continue. Second, the application of the ‘US model’ of think-tanks to Central and Eastern Europe is examined but the prospects for the entire transferability are not assumed to be very positive. Although potentially attractive for CEE think-tanks, the conditions for the ‘US model’ are not too favorable given the financial constraints and weak philanthropic tradition in the region. And third, the interest for and the rationale of networking in the CEE-region are investigated.

A special chapter on the US perspective of CEE think-tanks is added to expand the picture. The self-assessment of Czech and Slovak think-tanks is thus completed with how they are viewed by their US-counterparts engaged in the region.

For this purpose, 28 Czech and Slovak and 23 US think-tanks were identified for inclusion in this survey (see the selection criteria below). A questionnaire was then developed and sent to these institutes (see Appendix 5 and Appendix 6). The survey information was collected between January – February 2007.

#### **3.2 Criteria for the Selection of Participating Think-Tanks**

Think-tanks, as defined in Chapter 1.1, imply a number of connotations that often times overlap. To undertake a survey that would assess a few selected aspects of think-tank community, it is necessary to employ a working definition of a think-tank and select the participating institutes accordingly.



For purposes of this survey, think-tanks in the Czech Republic and Slovakia were selected according to the following criteria:

- institutes that focus their activities on the analysis and research of either of the following: economics, politics and international relations
- academic research centers that are affiliated with universities
- institutes that cover part of their funding from public sources or are commercially-based but claim their mission to be an independent research and policy analysis
- institutes that have their own webpage
- institutes that were originated in the Czech Republic and Slovakia and are not branch offices of other international institutes.

Single-issue institutes and those that have been inactive for more than two years are excluded.

In accordance with these criteria, think-tanks were selected from the following databases: The National Institute for Research Advancement (NIRA)<sup>88</sup>, Freedom House Europe<sup>89</sup>, PASOS<sup>90</sup>, ATLAS Economic Research Foundation<sup>91</sup>, The Stockholm Network<sup>92</sup> and two Czech publications: Schneider (2003) and the one published by the American Information Center<sup>93</sup>. The list of Czech and Slovak think-tanks that meet the selection criteria and were asked to participate in the survey are in Appendix 3.

The main criterion for the selection of US think-tanks was the focus of their research agenda on CEE. The two databases used for this purpose were NIRA and ATLAS Economic Research Foundation. The list of US think-tanks that meet the selection criteria and were asked to participate in the survey is in Appendix 4.

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<sup>88</sup> <http://www.nira.go.jp/ice/nwdtt/2005/index.html>

<sup>89</sup> <http://www.freedomhouse.hu/index.php?ttd=1>

<sup>90</sup> *PASOS Public Policy Centres - A Directory of Think-Tanks in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 2005 - 2006.*

<sup>91</sup> [http://www.atlasusa.org/V2/main/page.php?page\\_id=61](http://www.atlasusa.org/V2/main/page.php?page_id=61)

<sup>92</sup> <http://www.stockholm-network.org/home.php>

<sup>93</sup> *Think tanky a jejich společenský vliv, 2006.*

### **3.3 Findings and Implications**

Out of 15 Czech and 13 Slovak think-tanks that were invited to participate in the survey, 23 responded altogether, 8 being of Slovak and 15 of Czech origin. That implies a 100 per cent response rate for Czech and 62 per cent for Slovak think-tanks. All Slovak and almost all Czech (Democracy and Culture Studies Centre - CDK and International Institute of Political Science of the Masaryk University are the only two located in Brno) think-tanks are located in their country's capital. The participating think-tanks expressed a general interest to obtain findings on the whole think-tank community in their respective countries once the survey is completed and noted that so far, there have been very few studies exploring the subject. The majority of the respondents were directors of think-tanks.

A placement of an institute into a think-tank database does not guarantee it will identify itself with such a label. There were a few institutes among Czech and Slovak think-tanks that claimed typically think-tank activities to be secondary to them and identified themselves as 'outliers'. Despite this, such institutes were included in the survey as the family of participating think-tanks would otherwise be too small and important institutes would be excluded as a result. It is hereby confirmed that there is not a general consensus on when can an institute be counted as a think-tank and when it cannot.

#### **3.3.1 General Assessment of Czech and Slovak Think-tanks**

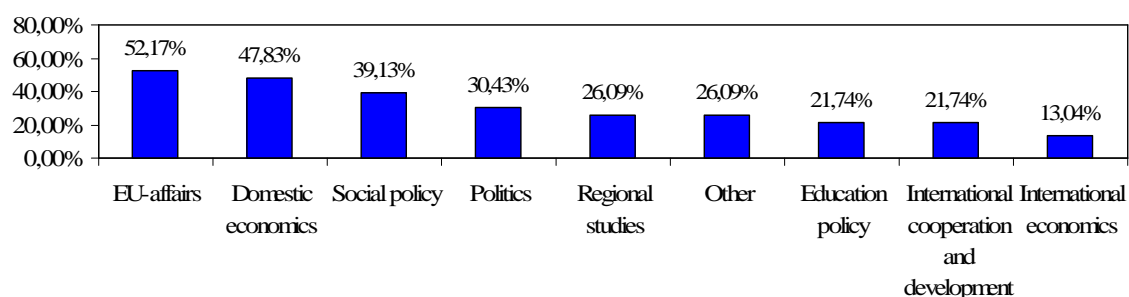
The general characteristics of Czech and Slovak think-tank community are summarized in the assessment of three broad areas: their main policy research topics, composition of the staff and funding sources.

##### ***3.3.1.1 Policy Research Topics***

Think-tanks surveyed were asked to determine up to three policy areas that are crucial in their research agenda and dominate over others. The objective was to assess whether there is a tendency for multi-issue institutes to emerge, i.e. to concentrate on three or more research topics, or whether they specialize more, i.e. evolve to single- or two-issue institutes. Besides very few exceptions, think-tanks in the Czech Republic and Slovakia have proved to be multi-issue institutes with a broad coverage of both domestic and international issues. Closer elaboration (see Graph 9 below) reveals that EU-affairs

enjoy the greatest attention, closely followed by domestic economic issues. The third detected research priority is the social policy.

**Graph 9: Main Research Areas of Czech and Slovak Think-tanks**



### 3.3.1.2 Staff

Czech and Slovak think-tanks are too diversified in size to draw any firm conclusions on the structure of their staff. The number of research fellows varies from 2-40 and employees hired *ad hoc* are commonplace. Out of all 23 think-tanks, 8 employ at least one foreign research fellow and 13 provide internship opportunities.

### 3.3.1.3 Funding

The attempt of this section was to determine what the prevailing funding sources for Czech and Slovak think-tanks are. The question was divided into domestic and foreign funding sources.

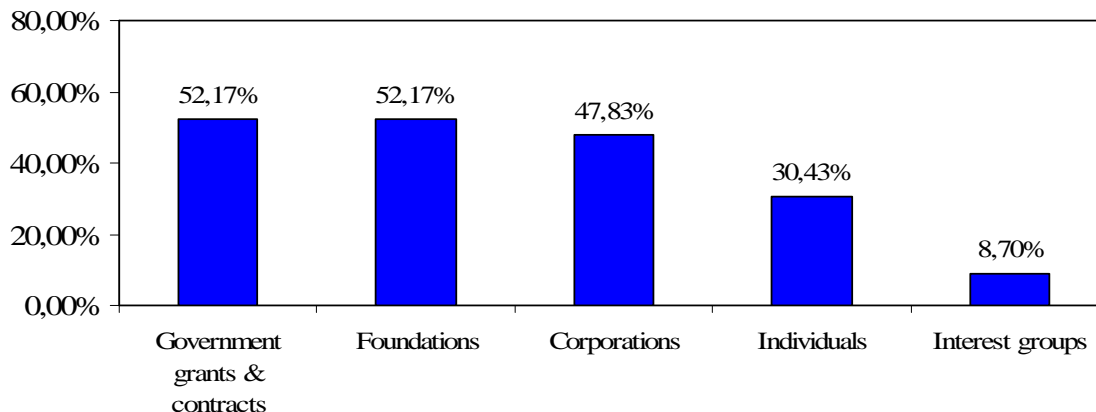
If one takes the sample of Czech and Slovak think-tanks as one, the following conclusions come out. First, the domestic funding sources (see Graph 10) are equally dominated by government grants & contracts and foundations (both marked by 52 per cent of all think-tanks). The third prevailing domestic source of funding is corporations (which support almost 48 per cent of all think-tanks). The foreign funding portfolio (see Graph 11) comprises primarily of foundations and international organizations<sup>94</sup> (for 74 and 70 per cent of all think-tanks, respectively).

However, if one splits up the whole sample into Czech and Slovak think-tanks, surprising results unveil. Not only is the Czech think-tank community by far more dependent on government grants & contracts (with 73 per cent of Czech and only 13 per

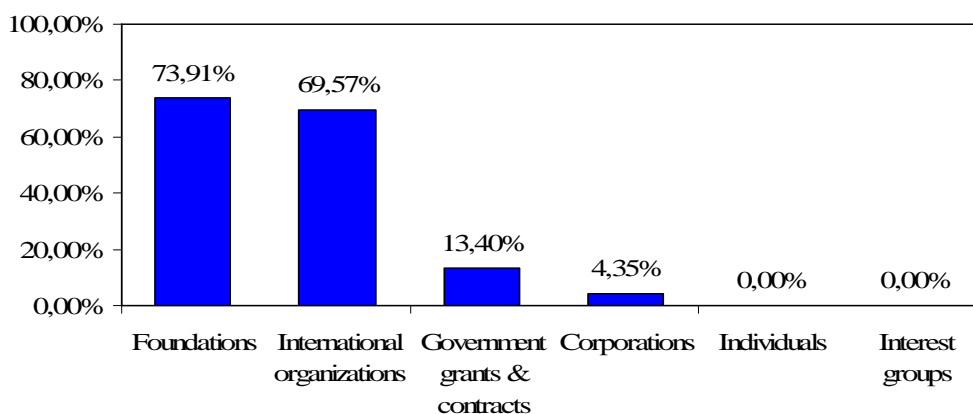
<sup>94</sup> International organizations here account for the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, EU-funds and the like.

cent of Slovak think-tanks stating it as a major funding source), but it also relies more on foreign funding.

**Graph 10: Domestic Funding Sources of Czech and Slovak think-tanks**



**Graph 11: Foreign Funding Sources of Czech and Slovak think-tanks**



Nakamura (2005) undertook a survey of Asian, Western European and North American think-tanks and assessed their funding structure and how that relates to the organizational status. One of his conclusions relevant for the current survey was that governmental giving is basically unaffected by the organizational type of a think-tank, be it governmental or private. It means that the respondents from governmental think-tanks proved to receive non-governmental funds, too, as did private institutes confirm taking public funds as well. Nakamura further argues that the proportion of public funds utilization depends largely on the policy environment, i.e. the nation's public

expenditure and the philanthropic behavior of individuals and corporations and that the think-tanks funding structure cannot be simply modeled from other nations' schemes.<sup>95</sup>

Nakamura's findings seem to be valid also in our survey sample in that the current policy environment does not create favorable conditions for individual and corporate philanthropy and the dependence on public funding remains alarming.

Along with domestic public funding, EU-funds seem to lure with growing intensity. In the 2006 European Union budget, Title 15: "Education and Culture", Chapter 15 06: "Dialogue with the Citizens", Article 15 06 01: "Support for activities and bodies active at European level in the field of active European citizenship", there are two special budget lines referring to think-tanks: (15 06 01 03) "Grants to organisations advancing the idea of Europe<sup>96</sup>" and (15 06 01 05) "European think tanks<sup>97</sup>", with committed appropriations of € 2.96 million and € 400 000, respectively. These two represent about 14 per cent of the total of € 23.56 million referring to the above mentioned Article 15 06 01<sup>98</sup>. This confirms the EU commitment to promote the 'dialogue with citizens' and to improve its lack of appeal to ordinary citizens, often referred to as the 'democratic deficit'. Think-tanks have thus evolved to a recognized entity in Brussels by now and investment into its activities is seen as an asset. However, what the threats of this EU active policy of including civil society, in particular the NGOs, into the decision-making process might be was demonstrated by Václav Klaus in Chapter 1.1.

The excessive reliance on public funds calls for alternative and additional sources, tax assignation being a potential candidate. In Slovakia, the history of tax assignation is rather short-lived. Following the Hungarian example, the non-profits brought forward a 1 per cent tax assignation for physical persons in 2002, which allowed a taxpayer to designate 1 per cent of his or her tax liability to an NGO. In 2004, it was raised to 2 per

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<sup>95</sup> Nakamura, M. *Public Funding and Think Tanks: Asian, EU and US Experiences*, National Institute for Research Advancement, 2005, pp.11-12.

<sup>96</sup> This appropriation is intended to cover expenditure on the activities and operation of organisations actively working for European integration.

<sup>97</sup> This appropriation is earmarked for committees of experts (think-tanks) making a direct contribution to research into European integration policy.

<sup>98</sup> Final Adoption of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2006, Official Journal L 78 of 15/03/2006.

cent and expanded to legal entities, too<sup>99</sup>. Attempts to enact such a provision in the Czech Republic have up to now been unsuccessful.

Overall, tax assignation is found to have little or no impact. However, whereas as much as 87 per cent of Slovak think-tanks confirmed the impact, merely 20 per cent did the same in the Czech Republic. These varying perceptions are not surprising given the fact that whereas Slovak think-tanks can measure the impact in practice, the Czech ones could not experience that yet and it is impossible to estimate the potential results of such a change. The alternative to tax assignations might, according to some, be a variant of the US tax deductions of payments to charitable organizations and NGOs (see the description of US 501(c) 3 tax-exempt organizations in Chapter 1.1).

### **3.3.2 Characteristics of Czech and Slovak ‘Model’ of Think-tanks**

#### *3.3.2.1 Measuring Influence*

There have been attempts to measure the impact think-tanks have on shaping public policies and public opinion but it remains a difficult task to pursue. Abelson<sup>100</sup> mentions two major methodological barriers to determine this influence: the difficulty to measure policy influence and to trace the origin of an idea to a particular individual or organization. To confront the latter barrier is not the purpose here although it is assumed that ideas very seldom attribute to one person or a group. As a matter of fact, they rather undergo a series of modifications and are exposed to attacks on various grounds by the time the original idea reaches the implementation stage. However, what this survey addresses are ways that think-tanks find the most efficient to measure their influence.

Prior to proceeding to the results, a brief overview of measuring think-tanks’ influence in the related literature is provided. The ‘performance measurement’ differs from one think-tank to another. Among the think-tanks surveyed, Boucher (2004) identified the following performance measurement indicators to be the most frequently cited:

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<sup>99</sup> In Slovakia, the criticism and heated debate around tax assignation came along in 2004 with its expansion to legal entities (besides physical persons). It is claimed that as a result, it has been misused in practice as many companies established their own NGOs whom they transferred the 2 per cent to.

<sup>100</sup> Abelson, D. *Do Think Tanks Matter? Assessing the Impact of Public Policy Institutes*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002 in Boucher, S. *Europe and Its Think-tanks: A Promise to be Fulfilled*, 2004, pp. 12.

- membership trends: “If membership increases, it means my work is useful”
- attendance figures for conferences and seminars
- trends in purchases of publications
- visits and downloads on their websites
- media coverage, although very few keep precise figures<sup>101</sup>

However, as Caldara, the president of the Independence Institute, claims, these are all ‘easy’ measures of performance. His point is “Don’t measure what is easy to measure. Measure what is important. And what is important is political change.”<sup>102</sup> Even though such a change or a reversal of political thinking might be a long-term commitment and not directly measurable, such a success will outweigh all short-term and ‘easily’ measurable victories. Wagner, the Director of Coalition Relations at the Heritage Foundation, suggests breaking down the longer-term goals into more immediate goals, such as law changes or other ‘easily’ measured ones. Hereby think-tanks can demonstrate impact, build credibility and advance further to the desired political change.<sup>103</sup> This breakdown of long-term goals can also be looked at as using short-term means to achieve the final end – political change.

Our survey orders the ways of measuring influence according to their efficiency as viewed by the respondents (see Graph 12). Almost 70 per cent marked “demand for think-tanks analysis by policy-makers” as one of the best indicators of measuring influence. The second most frequently cited indicator was “media coverage”, which is used as an influence guideline by 43 per cent of all think-tanks. This confirms that Czech and Slovak think-tanks tend to go beyond the world of academia and reach out to policy-makers and media to sell their expertise.

When addressing the real policy changes inspired or affected by think-tanks, the following policy areas were identified by the respondents. Their domestic influence was observed in “democratization and political transformation” as well as the broadest set of economic and social policies. The foreign policy areas with apparent think-tanks’ influence were NATO accession and the ongoing EU-related debate. One respondent saw think-tanks’ contribution in the “contextual understanding of the country’s [Czech

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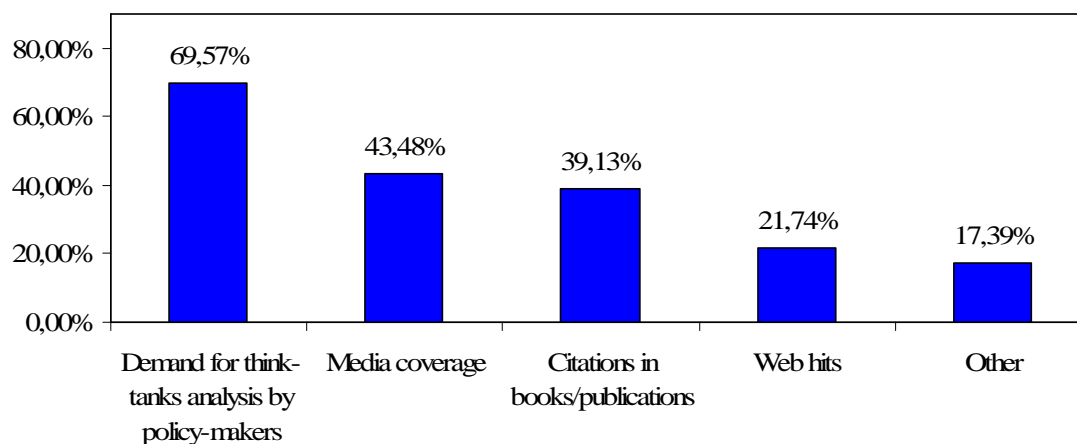
<sup>101</sup> Boucher, S. *Europe and Its Think-tanks: A Promise to be Fulfilled*, 2004, pp. 41.

<sup>102</sup> Caldara, J. *Measure Success, Not Just Output: Evaluating the Effectiveness of State-based Think-tanks*, *State Policy Network News*, Vol. 5, Issue 1, Winter 2004.

<sup>103</sup> Bridgett, W. *A Think Tank’s Bottom Line*, *State Policy Network News*, Vol. 5, Issue 1, Winter 2004.

Republic's] challenges and opportunities". The resulting enumeration is thus extensive and overall, there seem to be no policy areas completely intact by think-tanks.

**Graph 12: Measuring Influence of Think-tanks**



### 3.3.2.2 *European Union: What Impact Has It Made?*

For 74 per cent of all the respondents, the Czech and Slovak EU-entry has had an impact on their agenda, focus and activities although think-tanks got engaged in the EU-related debate long before the EU-enlargement of 2004. EU-affairs represent one of the 3 main policy research areas for 60 per cent of Czech and 37 per cent of Slovak think-tanks.

Although the majority of think-tanks deal with EU-affairs, 11 out of all 23 do not think to have any direct influence in Brussels. Out of the remaining ones who can see their impact there, eurooptimistic and eurosceptic camps are to be recognized. Whereas the former actively contribute to a variety of EU initiatives, such as the European Neighbourhood Policy, Common Foreign and Security Policy/European Security and Defence Policy and the like, the latter critically assesses the current state-of-the-affairs and introduces alternatives. One respondent expressed a “missing joint eurosceptic alliance of think-tanks with representation in Brussels”. When all of the above is taken into account, there are good reasons to expect the ‘European project’ to continue to employ minds of think-tanks with growing intensity.

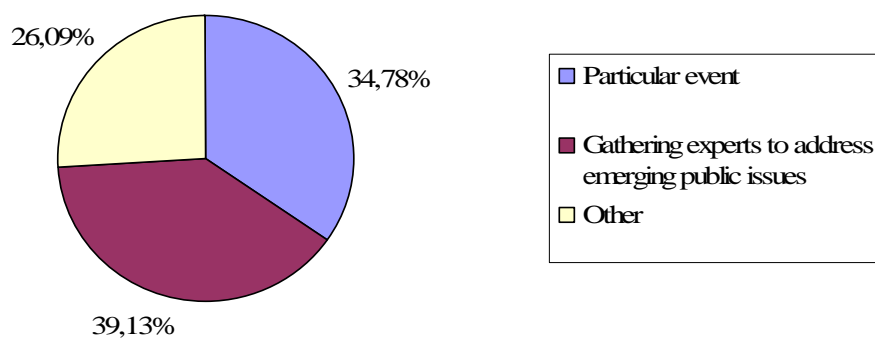


### 3.3.2.3 Does the ‘American model’ apply to the conditions of the Central and Eastern Europe?

The potential transferability of US-style think-tanks to other regions of the world has for long been questioned by scholars and policy makers. Although there have been no clear-cut conclusions reached, the need and desire to replicate the independence and influence of these institutes is unchallenged.<sup>104</sup>

Before raising the question of US model transferability to our sample, the origin of think-tanks was traced and events lying behind it explored (see Graph 13). Over 39 per cent of participating think-tanks saw their origin in the need to gather experts who would address emerging public issues during the transformation period and after. Almost 35 per cent were founded by a particular event – the fall of communism. The establishment of the remainder was triggered ‘other’ than the two previous groups, for instance as a “merger of two institutes”, “by demand” for a particular research area, “to promote development of free research in political science”, etc.

**Graph 13: Creation of Czech and Slovak Think-tanks**



The majority of all think-tanks (65 per cent) can see the application of the US model to Central and Eastern Europe, but in the longer run and with a few limitations. According to one respondent, the development of think-tanks “is moving in that direction but the crucial legislative and philanthropic prerequisites have not yet been created”. Another one can see a more general problem in the “underdevelopment of the civil society”.

<sup>104</sup>.McGann, J. Think Tanks and the Transnationalization of Foreign Policy in U.S. Foreign Policy, *U.S. Foreign Policy Agenda*, the U.S. Department of State, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2002, pp.17.

When asked to characterize the emerging CEE-model of think-tanks in general and Czech-and-Slovak in particular, the answers vary. The respondents mostly do not feel qualified and have the knowledge to assess the think-tank community in CEE-region as a whole. However, the Czech-and-Slovak-model, as viewed by think-tank representatives, has some features shared by most of them. Over time, think-tanks have grown to be more “professional” and “ideological” on one hand, and more dependent on public and EU-funds on the other. To compare Czech and Slovak think-tanks, one respondent notes that “what makes Slovakia a bit more specific is the experience with the authoritative regime in the second half of the 1990s, which was followed by the rule of the two reform-oriented governments. Both factors led to a bit more developed national legislation on NGOs in Slovakia if one compares the Slovak case with the neighboring Visegrad 4 countries”.

In order to strengthen ties with donors and promote philanthropy, 43 per cent of the whole survey sample would welcome organizing joint seminars, conferences and roundtables for this purpose. The second most perspective approach (supported by 35 per cent of think-tanks) is to attract foreign donors and philanthropic foundations. 3 think-tanks are advocates of an individual approach. As expressed by one, “We are not interested in any kind of umbrella or community links and would leave it on individual organizations.” Another respondent can see a potential in “trying to change the general attitude and convince people that it is an investment on their part and not a gift”.

Despite all these limitations, there is a visible aspiration for a US-type think-tank development. However, its transferability is currently only partially attainable given the different legislative conditions, underdeveloped philanthropy and only short-lived think-tank tradition.

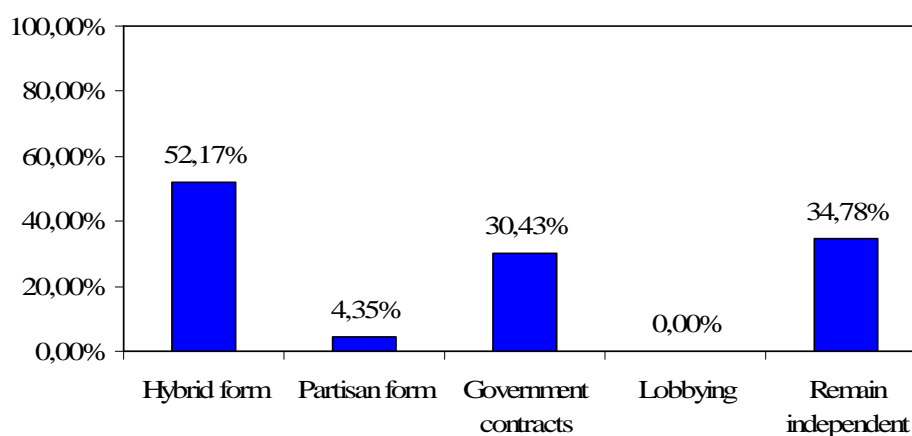
#### ***3.3.2.4 Partisan and Advocacy Trap: Deviation from Independent Research?***

Independence often represents a core value think-tanks claim to preserve. Moreover, it is what distinguishes them from other actors in the ‘market of ideas’ and grants them high credibility. Some assert that preserving their independence might impair their capacity to exert influence on the policy-makers and that getting ‘politicized’, i.e. endorsing a clear political stance is a necessary evolution. Kimball (2000) maintained that “think-tanks can sacrifice the preservation of independence and non-profit status for the sake of their long-term existence. That is a step towards hybrid organizations that

comply with a regional culture.<sup>105</sup> Others maintain that being partially dependent on public funding or performing an advocacy-bias does not necessarily contradict their research independence. What matters is retaining their intellectual independence<sup>106</sup>.

When asked how they would cope with the lack of funding, especially the withdrawal of foreign support<sup>107</sup>, the majority (over 52 per cent) of Czech and Slovak think-tank representatives in the survey affirmed the ‘hybrid’ form, i.e. interrelating commercial and non-profit status, to be their solution to the financial shortages (see Graph 14). The second most cited answer was ‘remaining independent’, closely followed by ‘government contracting’. When the responses of Czech and Slovak think-tanks split up, interesting distinctions stick out. Whereas the preference for the ‘hybrid’ form was much stronger among Slovak think-tanks (with 75 and 40 per cent, respectively), ‘government contracting’ was more supported by Czech think-tanks (with 40 and 12,5 per cent, respectively). Two respondents stated that the withdrawal of foreign funds is not an issue for them as they never relied on foreign support.

**Graph 14: Preferred Status of Think-tanks in the Czech Republic and Slovakia**



‘Remaining independent’ was valued equally by Czech and Slovak think-tanks. One think-tank representative pointed out to the need for a “more intensive fundraising both at home and abroad”. Another one claimed that “although we receive money from the

<sup>105</sup> Kimball, J. From Dependency to the Market: The Uncertain Future for Think Tanks in Central and Eastern Europe in McGann, J., Weaver, K. *Think Tanks and Civil Societies, Catalysts for Ideas and Action: New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2000*, pp. 271 in Schneider, J. *Think-tanky ve visegrádských zemích: Analýza politiky a obhajoba zájmů*, Mezinárodní politologický ústav Masarykovy univerzity v Brně, 2003, pp. 44.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>107</sup> In this question, think-tanks could choose more than one answer as their potential future status.

government sector, we at the same time strive to remain independent from governmental and/or ideological influence.” Two respondents explicitly stated efforts to direct their attention to EU-funds, which should also serve as a “new basis for cooperation with foreign partners”. It seems at first sight that independence is not much of an issue nowadays. A follow-up question, however, uncovers a rather different conclusion.

It explores the guarantees that think-tanks consider sufficient to preserve their independence. Three types of answers prevail over others. First, think-tanks emphasize that the choice of research topics is solely their decision and donors thus cannot exert any influence over what they do or say. This for some requires having their own ‘ethical code’ or ‘code of conduct’ explicitly saying what is allowed and what is not. As one respondent stated, “failing to comply with this code ruins you as a think-tank in the future”. Second, having a diversified enough portfolio of resources is what matters to many. And third, profiling intellectually ranks high among think-tank representatives. They highlight the importance of a “strong intellectual commitment” and “self-confidence in our own persuasion”. In addition, two respondents saw a sufficient independence guarantee in “staying with the university”. One further response and a proposal in one deserves attention: “The crucial factor in terms of improving conditions for think-tanks in general, including ours, is a favourable national legislation, including tax assignation, continuing demonopolization of state-funded academic institutions through development of grant schemes for independent research and public education; in other words, forming a ‘research market’, which facilitates think-tanks’ access to public funds and improves their chance to compete with state-funded academic institutions in the respective field of research”. Overall, there seems to be a shared commitment to preserve intellectual independence in the Czech and Slovak think-tank community. As far as the financial independence is concerned, think-tanks are open to a broad range of donors on condition they do not interfere with their research agenda. The notion of independence here is thus different from the US one and maintains that public funding does not necessarily impair think-tanks’ independence.

The survey further reveals that there is no clear-cut attitude as to whether the current generation of think-tanks in Central and Eastern Europe has gone more advocacy-oriented and/or partisan. Only about 57 per cent of think-tank representatives could observe this bias, whereas the remainder maintained the opposite position. This might

be in part due to the fact that some survey respondents did not feel qualified to assess the entire think-tank community in Central and Eastern Europe or did not find the question significant.

### *3.3.2.5 Future prospects*

All participating think-tanks have a clear vision of their research direction in the future. Two most cited incentives for their future research intentions are the coverage of areas with lack of research and expertise, and the response to burning public issues of the day. The focus on domestic rather than international issues is evident and confirms the importance of national interest. This order of preference might also imply the urge for further social and economic reforms of the two countries in focus.

Out of the most pressing domestic issues think-tank representatives mentioned explicitly, education policy is on the top list in frequency of answers, closely followed by the security and health policies. The desirable future international agenda is dominated by foreign policy issues in general and EU-affairs in particular.

The question of the potential research expansion in the future must be connected with current threats and challenges observed within the think-tank community. Every threat is a challenge in itself and most of the respondents took this into account. The majority of Slovak think-tanks fear the current government's "strong anti-civil sector mentality" and its "initiatives to weaken NGOs' financial support and position". According to some, what is even worse is the think-tanks' "lack of courage for speaking truth to power". They thus "really need to demonstrate clearly their value by loudly pointing out flaws in policies and advertising alternatives". Two other threats shared by both Czech and Slovak think-tanks were financial constraints on one hand, and the lack of "communication of think-tanks with donors, business sector and the public" on the other. The challenges are the implication of the three most cited threats mentioned above: pressure on the pro-civil sector legislation changes, diversification of the financial portfolio and strengthening relations with donors, business sector and public.

### 3.3.3 Networking of Czech and Slovak Think-tanks

The focus of this section was to test the initial hypothesis that there is a growing tendency among think-tanks to join networks and coordinate their activities in a more or less formalized way. Two other related elements are questioned here. First, whether there is a willingness to run a forum that would bring together think-tanks across different ideological lines and second, whether think-tanks would be ready to adhere to uniform 'codes of conduct'.

#### 3.3.3.1 Interest to Join Networks

Out of 23 participating institutes in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, 7 are members of 4 or more established networks, both domestic and international. The way in which they cooperate ranges from "general networking" that is long-term and includes exchanging know-how and information about the upcoming events and publications, organizing regular joint conferences, conducting joint research and fostering student exchange, to *ad hoc* informal cooperation. One respondent stated that "we prefer bilateral cooperation and are not part of a formalized network but we do have a broad net of cooperating institutions in other countries". A special focus of concerted efforts is given to EU-affairs networking, be it eurooptimistic or eurosceptic.

An interesting aspect in exploring the potential of networking is whether cooperation across ideological lines would be endorsed. Over 60 per cent of all the respondents approved of creating a forum of think-tanks regardless of their ideological background. The support was much bigger among Slovak than Czech think-tanks (with 88 and 47 per cent, respectively). One think-tank representative saw a potential risk in that "think-tanks are value-rooted and cross-ideological cooperation would deny sense of think-tanks". Another one, on the contrary, saw such a dialogue feasible. "I can imagine a cooperation of liberal (libertarian) and conservative think-tanks in particular cases in which they are consistent in a common policy." Yet such cooperation is viewed as temporary and fairly restricted. "I do not see much space for anything else than temporary opportunistic coalitions on specific policy issues." All in all, networking enjoys growing attention and its further deepening and widening is to be expected in the future.

### 3.3.3.2 *Unification or Diversity?*

There have been efforts to mark out the think-tank community as a distinctive category and distinguish it from other groups. McGann, for instance, is a proponent of creating uniform standards for think-tanks to improve their credibility internally. "Think Tank Code of Conduct" would in his view "strengthen the capacity of think-tanks and help ensure their sustainability"<sup>108</sup> although it is always a hard task to reach a consensus in a group as diverse as is the one of think-tanks.

Most Czech and Slovak think-tanks (almost 66 per cent of the whole sample) do not welcome this idea of 'unification' and do not see the necessity for it. In particular, forming such a code as a public regulation is strictly opposed. As one respondent put it, "I would not have a problem with think-tanks' adhering spontaneously to certain rules. But it would be ill-wised if such codes of conduct were legislated and enforced by the legal system. This would risk creating a monolithic structure of think-tanks, jealously keeping potential competitors out of business." Therefore, were such a code brought forward, "it would have to be a voluntary agreement of think-tanks". Otherwise, ethical codes for individual think-tanks are preferred.

There is one noteworthy relation between the former two elements of networking. Out of the opponents of a cross-ideological forum, all oppose the introduction of uniform codes of conduct. This finding is hardly surprising as this group links the significance of its ideological bias with a "market approach" of think-tanks competing freely without any rules to follow.

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<sup>108</sup> McGann, J. Report: Scholars, Dollars and Policy Advice. Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program, Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2004, pp. 23.

### 3.3.4 US Perspective on the CEE Think-tanks: Getting a Big Picture

This last chapter seeks to get a broader picture of the CEE think-tank community and adds a US perspective on it. The main focus was to explore the incentives of US think-tanks to study the CEE-region and cooperate with think-tanks there. 23 US think-tanks that direct part of their research to Central and Eastern Europe were asked to participate in the survey (see Appendix 4 for the list of all US think-tanks). Out of these, 12 responded.

In comparison with Czech and Slovak think-tanks, their US counterparts are big multi-issue institutes with capacities for interns throughout the year. It is interesting to find out that as much as 42 per cent marked EU-affairs as one of their three main research priorities. Their funding structure confirms the strong philanthropic tradition: for all US think-tanks, foundations were one of the core funding sources, followed by individuals (for 75 per cent of US think-tanks) and corporations (for 42 per cent of US think-tanks). Government grants & contracts were an important financial source for 33 per cent of all US think-tanks.

Although US think-tanks tend to profile ideologically (see Chapter 1.2.2 on the “war of ideas”), the majority (83 per cent) would support a cross-ideological forum “limited to specific areas”. As one US think-tank representative specifies, “we work across ideological lines when we have a common position on an issue – in order to advance a specific policy position.”

The question of uniform ‘code of conduct’ for think-tanks has its advocates as well as opponents, both equally represented in the current US sample. The advocates emphasize the greater transparency and accountability such a code would bring, along with its essential role in fundraising activities. The anti-code group, on the other hand, follows an individual approach and raises the fact that the “freedom think-tanks enjoy is unique and should be protected”. One respondent adds that moreover, the existing Internal Revenue Service (IRS) regulations “already dictate the parameters we may operate within”, i.e. funding and tax provisions.

What is central to the current survey is what motivates US think-tanks in their ‘mission abroad’. Central and Eastern Europe attracts US think-tanks for a variety of reasons. For some, it is and for long has been “an important region of the world”, whereas others naturally turned to this region after the fall to communism to help “spread the concepts



of freedom and individual liberty”, “promote democratic consolidation and economic reform” and thus contribute to the “salvation of Europe”. One US representative defines two catalysts for the development of think-tanks. He maintains that “think-tanks are an essential part of a vibrant civil society. To get started, usually they need the incentive of a) a ‘sense of crisis’ and b) the conviction that something can be done about it. Both conditions existed, and in some cases still exist in Central and Eastern Europe”.

When asked whether they can see the “American model” of think-tanks being applicable to Central and Eastern Europe, 58 per cent were rather sceptical about it. There seems to be a consensus between US and Czech and Slovak think-tanks on reasons why such transferability would not be feasible in the foreseeable future. In addition, one US respondent notes that “what makes think-tanks in the US ‘work’ is that they collectively bring together academia, government, corporations, individuals and philanthropists. This cross-coordination takes time to develop, and it is a shift in mindset from many Europeans, particularly in terms of involving the corporations”. Mr Chafuen, the President of the ATLAS Economic Research Foundation, can see the applicability of the US model “but as a glove, which in some aspects is always the same and has room for five fingers, to fit properly and be useful, it [US model] will need to adapt to each person and the need and particular aspects of the culture.” His global network of think-tanks “helps create, enhance and mobilize other think-tanks”.

Despite their interest in Central and Eastern Europe, only 5 out of 12 US think-tanks have developed networks with their CEE-counterparts. “Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program”, for instance, is a global initiative led by McGann that conducts research on think-tanks around the world and “promotes an on-going interdisciplinary global dialogue among think-tanks, policy-makers and civil society representatives that will explore the critical role think-tanks play in civil societies and how these institutions can be sustained over time<sup>109</sup>”. To accomplish the efforts, the program fosters establishing regional and international networks of think-tanks.

Since 1989, the CEE-US cooperation has grown both in number and intensity and has become “more open”. The threats and challenges the US respondents see in the region mostly relate to the EU and how Russia fits into the picture. Questions like “where should the EU end”, “does a wider Europe require an inner-core and outer-core Europe”

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<sup>109</sup> <http://www.fpri.org/research/thinktanks/objectives.html>

or “how does enlargement affect the quest for energy security for all of Europe” resonate high in their research objectives. One US respondent summarized four core threats he can see in the region to be the “EU immobility and fracturing, NATO weakening, US withdrawal and Russia’s ascendancy and neo-imperialist ambitions”. These responses demonstrate that the path the EU has taken is of a great concern to the majority of US think-tanks, along with the “Russian hegemonism”, which keeps them alert, too.

#### 4. ‘Mission’ of Think-Tanks: What Lies Ahead?

*“How do you change the world? Well, there are the obvious routes, such as seizing power, being monstrously rich or slogging through the election process. And there are short-cuts, such as terrorism... or forming a think-tank.”<sup>110</sup>*

STEVE WATERS

Over time, think-tanks have gradually evolved into a well-recognized and credible category worldwide. Some challenges they have to cope with emerge as think-tanks develop, some persist or rise anew. Seven of them in particular are of importance here and are assessed below in greater detail.

First, the respondents of the questionnaire above cannot see Czech and Slovak think-tanks taking the path their US counterparts have. The vast majority of Czech and Slovak think-tanks were established after the collapse of communism to counterweight the discredited old-regime institutions and governments and to plant seeds for democratic principles, free market and the “civil society movement”. Hence their initial ‘mission’ was a commitment to advice on the transformation and a ‘new order’ at its end. They have further taken up an active role of proposing or contributing to economic and social reform proposals that significantly shape the nations’ political and economic course. That said, think-tanks are currently facing a challenge of whether to specialize and be more narrow-focused or remain multi-issue institutes addressing a broad range of issues.

Second big challenge for Czech and Slovak think-tanks is to secure a stable funding base and a long-term commitment of their donors. The rule of thumb here is to receive funding from as broad a range of sources as possible and avoid over-dependence on one source only<sup>111</sup>. The massive inflow of foreign funds in the transformation period that sought to export Western-type democratic ‘blueprint’ is on a decline. The US and foreign foundations have begun moving eastwards, to former USSR and non-EU

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<sup>110</sup> Waters, S. Dangerous Minds, *The Guardian*, November 10, 2004.

<sup>111</sup> Weaver and McGann point to the existence of the “weaning” problem that may emerge if a think-tank depends overly on foreign funding at the expense of developing domestic sources. McGann, J., Weaver, K. *Think Tanks and Civil Societies: Catalysts for Ideas and Action*, Sommerset, NJ: Transaction Press, 2000 in Stone, D., Ullrich, H. *Policy Research Institutes and Think Tanks in Western Europe: Development Trends and Perspectives*, Discussion Paper No. 24, Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, Open Society Institute, 2003, pp. 59.

countries<sup>112</sup>. This withdrawal of foreign funding raises a question of what sources should the desired diversified funding base be comprised of. There is no such philanthropic tradition or tax laws encouraging private and corporate philanthropy in place as is the case in US. As one survey respondent put it, to run a think-tank is a continuous and daily struggle for a survival. Therefore, high quality research coupled with stable and forward-looking funding count above all for think-tanks. The crossroads Czech and Slovak think-tanks are currently at points to a number of possible directions: to remain independent and thus distant from public funding, to provide consulting services commercially or to learn the advocacy game and reach the policy-makers and political parties. Translated into McGann, Weaver & Weiss terminology, think-tanks confront options of following either of the four models – academic think-tanks, contract researchers and advocacy- or political party think-tanks.

Third, a challenge common to both US and Czech and Slovak think-tanks is the tremendous opportunities advanced communication technologies offer. Not having its own webpage makes the think-tank an outlier and having one places it into a competing cyber world where ideas spread instantly. However, this almost entirely unregulated flow of information, as McGann (2000) warns, also means that there is no quality control and it is hard to distinguish relevant and reliable sources from the ones only trying to resemble them<sup>113</sup>. In addition, although online fora and periodic debates might attract broad audiences and thus be a valuable source of ideas and research dissemination, they should not be at the expense of regular seminars, conferences and public events where the actors in the ‘market of ideas’ can meet and talk in person.

Forth, think-tanks should consider what their target audiences are and publish accordingly. To attract and gain access to the media and intellectuals, i.e. to ‘second-hand dealers in ideas’, is the first step in the process of ‘selling’ ideas and in gradually changing the conventional wisdom. Following this ‘pattern’ implies and requires a certain style of communication and writing techniques. These communication requirements tend to push think-tanks more into publishing short reports and policy briefs focusing on the big picture and key points rather than lengthy and complex studies. Some think-tanks even have directories of their scholars ready for the media,

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<sup>112</sup> McGann, J., Weaver, K. *Think Tanks and Civil Societies, Catalysts for Ideas and Action*: New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2000 in Boucher, S. *Europe and Its Think-tanks: A Promise to be Fulfilled*, 2004, pp. 78.

<sup>113</sup> McGann, J. *How Think Tanks Are Coping with the Future*, *The Futurist*, 2000, pp. 18.

including their areas of expertise. The preference of either of the communication techniques depends on the model think-tanks follow. The very core of think-tanks' asset –an in-depth and complex analysis- should, however, not be sacrificed completely.

Fifth, as the world is becoming more globalized and interconnected, think-tanks are prone to follow the suit and transnationalize their research agendas. Or they remain focused on national issues. If the latter is the case, McGann (2000) detects the risk of the so called “tyranny of best practices”<sup>114</sup>, which means that sticking to national approaches to policy problems might discourage funders and international agencies like the International Monetary Fund. Thus another challenge is to reconsider the national priorities and the proportion of research devoted to national issues on one hand and to ‘going international’ on the other.

Sixth, think-tanks are increasingly attracted to create networks in order to exchange ideas on a myriad of international issues and to cooperate on finding solutions to global problems. This networking, as McGann (2004) argues, creates synergies, extends the reach of think-tanks to a broader audience and makes them more productive.<sup>115</sup> In addition to think-tank networks, he further proposes creating a forum where think-tanks, policy-makers, media and donors would engage in a constructive dialogue about how to fund public policy research most effectively.<sup>116</sup>

And seventh, the “war of ideas” is ongoing in the US think-tank community. Liberal and centrist think-tanks are exposed to attacks on their overtly focus on research rather than ideas and seem to be losing in this “war”. Thus last but not least, it should matter to think-tanks across ideological lines to rethink their mission and strategy. On the contrary, Czech and Slovak think-tanks are in no such “war”. They are yet to find and secure their place in the society. Hence it is now too soon to foresee whether such or similar “war” is to come.

The challenges outlined here are by no means the only ones. They were selected as the most important with respect to the main areas of concern this paper attempts to shed some light on. Given how rapidly growing the think-tank community is and how

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid, pp. 23.

<sup>115</sup> McGann, J. Report: Scholars, Dollars and Policy Advice. Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program, Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2004, pp. 14.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, pp. 7.

diversified the US think-tanks in particular have become, a lot more challenges are yet to be expected.

## Conclusion

The focus of this thesis was to provide an in-depth study of the Czech and Slovak think-tank community, expanded by the US perspective on think-tanks in the CEE-region. To date, there has been little research done on the subject and this study seeks to correct this omission.

Three hypotheses were employed and tested in the questionnaire survey. First, it was assumed that Czech and Slovak think-tanks have become too diverse to follow the same route. This assumption has proved correct, both between the Czech and Slovak think-tank groups and within each of them. Although the inter-group assessment reveals similar policy research priorities and staff decomposition, a few critical distinctions stick out. The Czech think-tank community is by far more dependent on government grants & contracts on the one hand, and relies relatively more on foreign funding on the other.

Although the desire to remain independent is not dead, the value of independence has been called into question given the aforementioned developments. Although there is a shared commitment to preserve intellectual independence and not to be beholden to any specific interest, the notion that public funding does not necessarily lead to the deviation from this quest is employed and challenged simultaneously. This Czech bias towards public funds is further intensified by relatively more support given to 'government contracting' as a potential future source of funding, compared with Slovak support for a 'hybrid' form of think-tanks dominating in the future, i.e. interrelating commercial and not-for-profit status.

Similar concerns are evoked by the growing EU-funds as one of the core foreign funding source for both Czech and Slovak think-tanks. The EU entry and its implications have naturally dominated the Czech and Slovak foreign policy research agenda over the past few years but overall, the focus on domestic rather than international issues can be observed. The importance attached to the national interest is thus evident. This comes as hardly surprising given the communist past, which implies strong reservations about the ongoing transfer of national competencies to the supranational EU-body. It may also imply the need for further social and economic reforms.

The scores of the NGO Sustainability Index 2005 displayed very similar advocacy and public image scores for Czech and Slovak think-tank groups. However, whereas Czech think-tanks performed relatively better in the financial viability of the NGO sector, the Slovak ones led in legal environment, organizational capacity and infrastructure indicators.

The Czech and Slovak think-tanks have proved to be forward-looking in clearly stating their future policy research priorities. The three most pressing domestic issues shared by both countries' think-tank representatives are education policy, broadest security issues and health policy (ordered by the frequency of answers). When evaluating the current threats Czech and Slovak think-tanks face, two are shared by both groups: financial constraints and the lack of communication of think-tanks with donors, business sector and the public. In addition, the Slovak intra-group assessment reveals a fear of the current government's "strong anti-civil sector mentality" and its related initiatives.

For US think-tanks, Central and Eastern Europe is an important region. The detected threats that seem to be of a great concern to them mostly relate to the path the EU has taken and its implications on the one hand, and the "Russian hegemonism" on the other.

The second hypothesis assumed the non-transferability of the 'US model' of think-tanks to the current CEE policy setting. Strictly speaking, the conclusions arrived at in the survey reject the indisputable 'no' to the 'US model'. Although there is indeed a visible inspiration by and aspiration for a US-type think-tank development, its application can only be seen in the longer run and yet with a few limitations. There seem to be a consensus among Czech and Slovak and US think-tanks on reasons for either an 'incomplete transfer' with a few limitations or an 'inappropriate transfer', i.e. although desirable, practically only feasible in the distant future. The crucial legislative and philanthropic prerequisites that characterize the US policy environment have not yet been created in the CEE-region and the civil society is underdeveloped relative to the US standards.

The third hypothesis sought to scrutinize the rationale of creating networks and assumed that there is a growing interest in and potential of networking. This is indeed the case as think-tanks increasingly engage in regional and international networks and employ a variety of networking styles to reach the broadest audiences and advance their ideas more efficiently via such concerted efforts. There is a shared necessity among Czech



and Slovak think-tanks to bring together a heterogeneous set of actors which would, besides think-tanks, include the academia, media, corporations, donors and policy-makers and engage them in a constructive dialogue on burning public policy issues.

The intention of a cross-ideological forum of think-tanks was given more support by Slovak than Czech think-tanks although such cooperation is viewed as temporary and fairly restricted to only specific policy issues. The majority of Czech and Slovak think-tanks opposed introducing uniform “codes of conduct”. Were such provisions established, it would have to be a voluntary agreement of think-tanks and not a public regulation, which would lead to a strong opposition.

The ongoing ‘war of ideas’ in US has resulted in think-tanks profiling ideologically. The studies on the subject conclude that whereas conservative think-tanks clearly declare their ideological stance and promote the media and public outreach function of their ideas, their mainstream and liberal counterparts support the production of policy expertise for its sake over deliberate promotion of ideas.

The development path of CEE think-tanks is essentially different from that of their US forerunners. With a short-lived tradition, think-tanks in the region have no history of generations behind nor are engaged in any ideological battle. What they represent is a counterweight to the communist past and a quest for political and economic freedom and liberal-democratic system of governance.

Since 1989, think-tanks in the Czech Republic and Slovakia have attained a highly visible presence and take an active part in their countries’ economic, social and political debates. Although underfunded and understaffed in comparison with their US counterparts, they have a considerable and unabated potential and are bound to develop further in the years to come. That said, this paper is a contribution to the study of think-tanks in the CEE-region and implies a challenge for further research.

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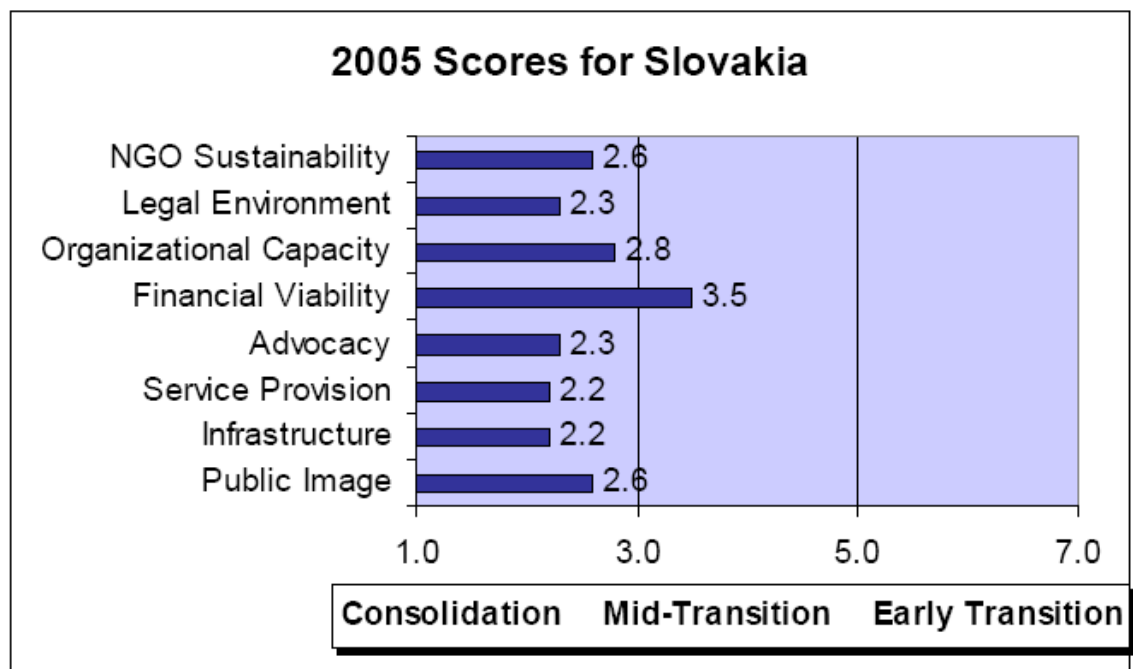
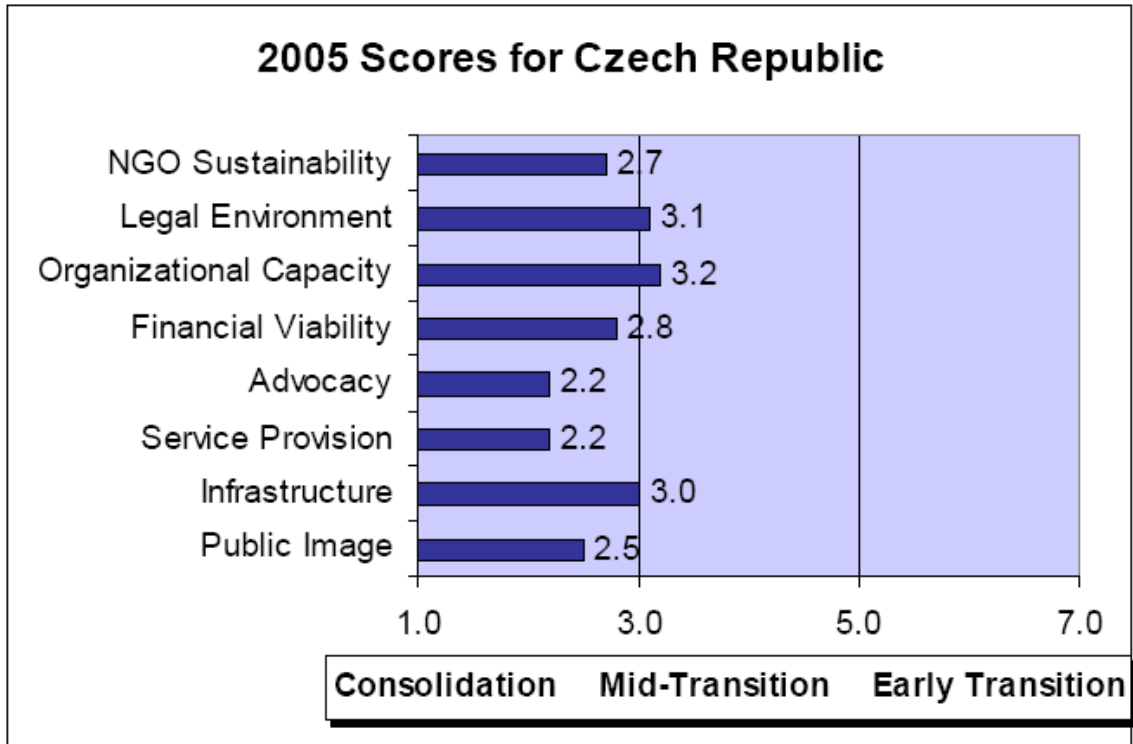
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## Appendix 1: NGO Sustainability Index 2005 for the Czech Republic and Slovakia



*Source: The 2005 NGO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Ninth Edition, May 2006.*



## Appendix 2: Types of Advocacy Groups

Types of advocacy groups	
<b>501(c) Groups</b>	Nonprofit, tax-exempt groups organized under section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code that can engage in varying amounts of political activity, depending on the type of group. For example, 501(c)(3) groups operate for religious, charitable, scientific or educational purposes. These groups are not supposed to engage in any political activities, though some voter registration activities are permitted. 501(c)(4) groups are commonly called “social welfare” organizations that may engage in political activities, as long as these activities do not become their primary purpose. Similar restrictions apply to Section 501(c)(5) labor and agricultural groups, and to Section 501(c)(6) business leagues, chambers of commerce, real estate boards and boards of trade.
<b>527 Group</b>	A tax-exempt group organized under section 527 of the Internal Revenue Code to raise money for political activities including voter mobilization efforts, issue advocacy and the like. Currently, the FEC only requires a 527 group to file regular disclosure reports if it is a political party or political action committee (PAC) that engages in either activities expressly advocating the election or defeat of a federal candidate, or in electioneering communications. Otherwise, it must file either with the government of the state in which it is located or the Internal Revenue Service. Many 527s run by special interest groups raise unlimited "soft money," which they use for voter mobilization and certain types of issue advocacy, but not for efforts that expressly advocate the election or defeat of a federal candidate or amount to electioneering communications.
<b>Non-Federal Group</b>	A group set up to raise unlimited contributions called “soft money,” which it spends on voter mobilization efforts and so-called issue ads that often criticize or tout a candidate’s record just before an election in a not-so-subtle effort to influence the election’s outcome. 501(c) groups and 527 groups may raise non-federal funds.

<p><b>Political Action Committee (PAC)</b></p>	<p>A political committee that raises and spends limited "hard" money contributions for the express purpose of electing or defeating candidates. Organizations that raise soft money for issue advocacy may also set up a PAC. Most PACs represent business, such as the Microsoft PAC; labor, such as the Teamsters PAC; or ideological interests, such as the EMILY's List PAC or the National Rifle Association PAC. An organization's PAC will collect money from the group's employees or members and make contributions in the name of the PAC to candidates and political parties. Individuals contributing to a PAC may also contribute directly to candidates and political parties, even those also supported by the PAC. A PAC can give \$ 5,000 to a candidate per election (primary, general or special) and up to \$ 15,000 annually to a national political party. PACs may receive up to \$ 5,000 each from individuals, other PACs and party committees per year. A PAC must register with the Federal Election Commission within 10 days of its formation, providing the name and address of the PAC, its treasurer and any affiliated organizations.</p>
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Source: <http://www.opensecrets.org/527s/types.asp>

### Appendix 3: Czech and Slovak Think-Tanks Directory

Think-tanks		
Czech Republic		Slovakia
1.	Liberální institut	Konzervatívny inštitút
2.	Občanský institut	IVO
3.	CERGE	S.P.A.C.E
4.	AMO	INEKO
5.	Centrum pro demokracii a kulturu	M.E.S.A. 10
6.	Gabal Analysis & Consulting	Nadácia F.A. Hayeka
7.	CEP	INESS
8.	CESES	Slovenská spoločnosť pre zahraničnú politiku
9.	Ústav mezinárodních vztahů	Centrum ďalšieho vzdelávania Ekonomickej univerzity
10.	Institut ekonomických studií	Centrum pre európsku politiku
11.	Europeum	Inštitút pre slobodnú spoločnosť
12.	CEVRO	Inštitút pre dobre spravovanú spoločnosť
13.	Program atlantických bezpečnostních studií PASS	Inštitút ASA
14.	Mezinárodní politologický ústav Masarykovy univerzity	
15.	Institut pro sociální a ekonomické analýzy	

## Appendix 4: US Think-Tanks Directory

<b>US Think-tanks focusing on Central and Eastern Europe</b>	
<b>1.</b>	Acton Institute
<b>2.</b>	American Enterprise Institute
<b>3.</b>	ATLAS Economic Research Foundation
<b>4.</b>	Brookings Institution
<b>5.</b>	CATO Institute
<b>6.</b>	Center for International Private Enterprise
<b>7.</b>	Center for Strategic and International Studies
<b>8.</b>	Center for Transatlantic Relations
<b>9.</b>	Council on Foreign Relations
<b>10.</b>	East-West Institute
<b>11.</b>	Ethics and Public Policy Center
<b>12.</b>	Foreign Policy Research Institute
<b>13.</b>	Foundation for Economic Education
<b>14.</b>	Heritage Foundation
<b>15.</b>	Hoover Institution
<b>16.</b>	Hudson Institute
<b>17.</b>	International Republican Institute
<b>18.</b>	National Center for Policy Analysis
<b>19.</b>	The Atlantic Council of the United States
<b>20.</b>	The European Institute
<b>21.</b>	The National Endowment for Democracy
<b>22.</b>	The Peterson Institute for International Economics
<b>23.</b>	Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

## Appendix 5: Questionnaire: ‘Think-Tanks and Their Role in the Civil Society: Unification or Diversity?’ – Czech and Slovak Experience

### GENERAL INFORMATION

1. What have been your institute’s main research priorities over the past five years? (Please check maximum three.)

- Domestic economics
- International Economics
- Politics
- Regional Studies<sup>117</sup> (please specify):
- Social Policy
- Education Policy
- International Cooperation and Development
- European Union Affairs
- Other (please specify):

2. How was your think-tank established?

- It was triggered by a particular event(s)
- It was aimed at gathering experts who would address emerging public issues
  
- Other

3. Staff (please state in number):

- Administration and support staff
- Research fellows
- Interns

Out of the research fellows, how many work  Full-time  
 Ad hoc

Out of the research fellows, how many are foreigners relative to the origin of your think-tank?

---

<sup>117</sup> Regional = other than federal and/or state; subnational.

4. Which of the domestic and foreign funding sources prevail in your think-tank?  
(Please mark two for each group)

A) Domestic:  Foundations  Individuals  Government grants & contracts  
 Corporations  Interest groups

B) Foreign:  Foundations  Individuals  International organizations (i.e. IMF, WB, EU-funds and the like)  Government grants & contracts  Corporations  Interest groups

### **YOUR POSITION**

5. What would you say is the best way(s) to measure the impact/success of think-tanks?

Media coverage  Citations in books/publications  Web hits  Demand for think-tanks analysis by policy-makers  Other

6. In which policy areas would your think-tank like to expand its research in the future? Please give your reasons.

7. Would you assume that the ‘American model’ of think-tanks with its strong roots in philanthropy and independent policy research is applicable in Central and Eastern Europe<sup>118</sup>?

8. Would you regard the current generation of think-tanks in the Central and Eastern Europe to be more advocacy-oriented and partisan<sup>119</sup>?

Yes  No

### **NETWORKING**

9. How many think-tank (or other) networks/coalitions are you part of? Please state areas in which you cooperate.

10. Would you be an advocate of a forum that would bring together think-tanks across different ideological lines?

11. Would you support uniform ‘codes of conduct’ for think-tanks in order to distinguish them from pressure groups and/or lobbyists? Please give your reasons.

---

<sup>118</sup> For purposes of this questionnaire, Central and Eastern European countries include the following: Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

<sup>119</sup> Partisan = a political party’s think tank.

## **CZECH AND SLOVAK THINK-TANKS**

**12.** How would you strengthen the link between the think-tank community and donors in your respective countries?

- Setting up an umbrella philanthropic foundation that would link donors and think-tanks
- Organizing joint seminars, conferences and roundtables
- Attracting foreign donors and philanthropic foundations
- Other

**13.** Are you a proponent of a tax assignment for NGOs and think-tanks? If yes, please state what impact (in % of your income) has it made (the case of Slovakia) or most likely would make (the case of the Czech Republic)?

- No impact  Has an impact

What other alternatives to a tax assignment would you support?

**14.** Has the latest EU-enlargement in 2004 made an impact on your agenda, focus and activities?

- No  Yes

**15.** In which areas would you say has your think-tank been influential in the EU-policy-making in Brussels?

**16.** Think-tanks in Central and Eastern Europe are currently facing a number of challenges, one of which being the withdrawal of foreign funding. How would you cope with this loss of funds?

- Hybrid form (interrelating commercial and non-profit status)  Partisan form
- Government contracts  Lobbying  Remain independent

**17.** What guarantees do you consider sufficient to preserve your independence status?

**18.** How would you describe the features of the current think-tank community in Central and Eastern Europe?

Can you think of any country-specific characteristics of think-tanks operating in your country (derived from the historical context, current political climate and/or other)?

**19.** In what areas and reforms do you think think-tanks have been the most influential in your country?

**20.** Where can you see the biggest threats and challenges to think-tanks in your country?

Threats

Your proposals how to solve these threats

Challenges

**21.** Other comments



## Appendix 6: Questionnaire: ‘Think-Tanks and Their Role in the Civil Society: Unification or Diversity?’ – US Experience

### GENERAL INFORMATION

1. What have been your institute’s main research priorities over the past five years?  
(Please check maximum three)

- Domestic economics
- International Economics
- Politics
- Regional Studies<sup>120</sup> (please specify):
- Social Policy
- Education Policy
- International Cooperation and Development
- European Union Affairs
- Other (please specify):

2. How was your think-tank established?

- It was triggered by a particular event(s)
- It was aimed at gathering experts who would address emerging public issues
- Other

3. Staff (please state in number):

- Administration and support staff
- Research fellows
- Interns

Out of the research fellows, how many work  Full-time  
 Ad hoc

Out of the research fellows, how many are foreigners relative to the origin of your think-tank?

---

<sup>120</sup> Regional = other than federal and/or state; subnational.

**4.** Which of the domestic and foreign funding sources prevail in your think-tank?  
(Please mark two for each group)

A) Domestic:  Foundations  Individuals  Government grants & contracts  
 Corporations  Interest groups

B) Foreign:  Foundations  Individuals  International organizations (i.e. IMF, WB, EU-funds and the like)  Government grants & contracts   
Corporations  Interest groups

### **YOUR POSITION**

**5.** What would you say is the best way(s) to measure the impact/success of think-tanks?

Media coverage  Citations in books/publications  Web hits  Demand for think-tanks analysis by policy-makers  Other

**6.** Would you regard the current generation of think-tanks in the United States to be more advocacy-oriented and partisan<sup>121</sup>?

Yes  No

**7.** What have been your main incentives to direct part of your research agenda to Central and Eastern Europe<sup>122</sup>?

**8.** Could you briefly describe how the ways in which you cooperate with Central and Eastern Europe have evolved and changed since 1989 up to now?

**9.** Would you assume that the ‘American model’ of think-tanks with its strong roots in philanthropy and independent policy research is applicable in Central and Eastern Europe?

**10.** In which policy areas in Central and Eastern Europe would your think-tank like to expand its research in the future? Please give your reasons.

**11.** Based on your research in Central and Eastern Europe, where can you see the biggest challenges and threats in Central and Eastern Europe?

Challenges

Threats

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<sup>121</sup> Partisan = a political party’s think tank.

<sup>122</sup> For purposes of this questionnaire, Central and Eastern European countries include the following: Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

## **NETWORKING**

**12.** How many think-tank (or other) networks/coalitions are you part of? Please state areas in which you cooperate.

Are you a member of a network that connects think-tanks operating in Central and Eastern Europe with those in the United States?

Yes. Please specify:

No.

**13.** Would you be an advocate of a forum that would bring together think-tanks across different ideological lines?

**14.** Would you support uniform 'codes of conduct' for think-tanks in order to distinguish them from pressure groups and/or lobbyists? Please give your reasons.

**15.** Other comments