

Can India's Think-tanks Be Truly Effective?

Author: Dhruva Jaishankar*

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I have worked for much of the past decade in, or with, think-tanks in both the US and in India, and am regularly confronted with misperceptions and misapprehensions about the sector. What is the purpose of think-tanks? Who sets their agenda? What do they do on a day-to-day basis? The answers are, unfortunately, not so simple.

These questions are particularly important today because significant changes are afoot among New Delhi's think-tanks. The opening of Carnegie India means that one of the world's leading think-tanks on international affairs will now have a permanent presence in India. Carnegie joins its Washington neighbour The Brookings Institution, in many ways the archetypal think-tank, which established Brookings India in New Delhi a few years ago, and recently moved its offices in the diplomatic enclave of Chanakyapuri.

Meanwhile, in March, the Observer Research Foundation concluded the Raisina Dialogue, giving India a major international policy conference. And the appointments last year of former Ambassador to Nepal and Afghanistan Jayant Prasad as Director General of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) and Nalin Surie, ex-envoy to China and the UK, as head of the Indian Council on World Affairs (ICWA) means that accomplished diplomats now head the two premier government-funded foreign policy think-tanks. Taken together, these developments offer a good opportunity to revisit think-tanks' role in the Indian policy establishment.

How think-tanks work

The primary purpose of think-tanks is to generate ideas and debate on matters of public policy. In that sense, they are both research institutions and conveners, bringing together different viewpoints and facilitating an exchange of views. In terms of research, what think-tanks do is not dissimilar to business consulting, intelligence analysis, investigative journalism, or academic research in the social sciences. The difference, however, is that the research produced by think-tanks is meant to inform and influence public policy. Their target audience is therefore either policymakers in government or the broader public.

Think-tanks also serve as a venue for political leaders, bureaucrats and military officers to exchange views and interact with other actors: foreign counterparts, the media, academics, corporate representatives and the wider public. Having neutral venues for these kinds of interactions is particularly important given the changing roles and growing clout of some of these stakeholders in public policy formulation and implementation.

Despite these broad shared characteristics, there is considerable diversity among think-tanks in terms of their mandates, priorities, and structures. Some focus narrowly on specific aspects of public policy, such as foreign relations and defence, domestic politics and governance, economic and trade policy, or education, migration, and environmental issues. Others are broad, covering a range of topics. Some, such as ICWA and IDSA, are government-affiliated while others are entirely autonomous and privately managed. While some Indian think-tanks function almost exclusively as research institutes, such as the Centre for Policy Research, others prioritize convening, such as the Observer Research Foundation.

Think-tanks such as IDSA and the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) have been active in India since the mid-20th century. But the last 25 years have witnessed a tremendous growth and proliferation of Indian institutions,

including privately-funded entities and military service-specific think-tanks (the Centre for Land and Warfare Studies, the Centre for Air Power Studies, and the National Maritime Foundation). Location matters, given the need to be proximate to policy makers. There is a reason that global think-tanks have congregated in major capital cities such as Washington and London, Brussels and Beijing. So it is only natural that the majority of Indian institutes have been established in Delhi. However, newer initiatives like Gateway House in Mumbai, the Takshashila Institution in Bangalore, and the Hindu Centre for Politics and Public Policy in Chennai now provide platforms beyond the capital.

Glorified talk shops?

If there is one big challenge that all think-tanks face it is measuring their effectiveness. Ideas coming out of think-tanks, even when adopted as government policy, are rarely credited as such. Some of the most effective work done by think-tanks—in the form of private briefings and inputs to government policy makers—is often, by necessity, not publicly acknowledged. It becomes easy, then, to dismiss think-tanks as ineffective talk shops. But at their best, they can play a big role in advising governments on sound policy, enabling increasingly important dialogue with a variety of stakeholders, and interpreting obscure policy issues for the broader public. They can also help build expertise, and perform in-depth or specialised research that government do not have the time or capacity to do. Despite its healthy growth in recent years, the Indian think-tank sector today suffers from certain shortcomings. These have prevented them from competing for talent with academia, the private sector, and competitors abroad. They have also been inhibited from being fully effective.

Making Indian think-tanks more effective

A few measures, if taken, could rapidly revitalize the Indian think-tank industry, to the benefit of these institutions, government policy and public discourse.

1. Research needs to be given priority over convening

There is today no shortage in India of policy conferences, panel discussions, and Track II dialogues (which involve non-official participants from different countries).

On almost any given evening in Delhi, there are book launches or speeches by visiting dignitaries hosted by one or another Indian think-tank. But there remains a paucity of authoritative, in-depth, ground-breaking research. Book-length studies on such topics as the evolution of India-Southeast Asia relations, Pakistan's contemporary political dynamics, India's trade policy, defence acquisitions, the 1965 war, or India during the Narasimha Rao years—to list just a few topics—would be immensely useful. Op-eds and policy papers remain useful vehicles to disseminate ideas, but think-tanks provide the luxury of time for truly detailed and path-breaking work.

2. Quality needs to be given priority over quantity

Think-tank scholars ought to be among the most knowledgeable experts in their fields, and that means that institutions must be able to compete for talent with the private sector, universities and foreign organizations. At present, India's think-tanks often function as homes for retired civil servants and military officers. These former officials can—and do—offer a wealth of experience, enabling them to document issues on which they have had first-hand experience and reflect on lessons learned. But generating new ideas and fresh perspectives will require tapping a wider pool of talent. This means investing in regional and topical expertise, a variety of disciplines (history, economics, and area studies, in addition to political science), and a mastery of languages.

We currently lack the requisite expertise on our neighbours: China, Myanmar, Iran, and even Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan. Economic expertise, in particular, is missing at many Indian institutes. Establishing an external peer review process for publications will also help improve the quality of output across the board.

3. *More autonomy and transparency*

Institutions affiliated with the government are in constant danger of becoming extensions of ministries: rigidly hierarchical, risk-averse, bureaucratic, status conscious, and driven by patronage. The entire raison d'être of think-tanks is to overcome these constraints. Meanwhile, privately funded think-tanks have to show they are not beholden to their benefactors if they are to retain their credibility. Transparency about sources of funding allows people to draw their own conclusions about the nature of any research.

4. *Think-tank scholars need more interactions with government*

This can be mutually beneficial. Unlike in countries where a revolving door enables experts to migrate between think-tanks and government positions, in India, a career bureaucracy inhibits such career paths. Quite often, the lack of interactions with officials means that think-tank experts in India are badly misinformed. Many of their recommendations—while well-intentioned—are simply impossible to implement, failing to take into account bureaucratic processes, political realities or resource constraints. By taking on more government advisory work, think-tanks would increase the expertise available to officials while becoming better-informed about government priorities and processes.

5. *Research needs to be usable*

Finally, one big difference between policy research and other fields is that it cannot simply dwell on the past but must have implications for the present and future. Far too much work being done by think-tanks – and not just in India – tends to be descriptive, rather than analytical.

Additionally, for policymakers pressed for time, only certain kinds of information are useful. New conceptual frameworks that function as shorthand for policies (such as “Look East” or “Digital India”) can enrich public discourse, while specific domain knowledge (such as language or area studies) and data compilation are useful contributions for babus pressed for time or requiring specialized expertise. Policy research must also be easily accessible if it is to inform officials pressed for time or shape the public debate, a particular challenge in an era of information overload. Rethinking outputs, both their form and their very medium, is a necessity for all think-tanks today. Many are branching out into online content and multimedia presentations, such as podcasts, videos and interactive information platforms. Even with traditional written outputs, verbosity is too often equated with erudition. Presenting information in a manner that is easily digestible remains a challenge.

If it were to take some of these considerations into account—more research, higher quality standards, greater autonomy and transparency, more interactions with government, and higher-impact outputs—there is no reason that the Indian think-tank sector cannot flourish. We are witnessing a period of increasingly acrimonious and often ill-informed public discourse. Now is the perfect time for India’s think-tanks to come into their own.

Source: www.brookings.edu

**CRITIQUES OF “*CAN INDIA’S THINK-TANKS BE
TRULY EFFECTIVE?* BY DHRUVA JAISHANKAR”
AND TAKEAWAYS FOR THE NATIONAL
MARITIME FOUNDATION**

CRITIQUE 1

Aastha Vohra*

The above article is an attempt to enlist the major elements for the existence of a successful think-tank within India. As is evident, the importance of think-tanks along with their evolution has resulted in significant changes. There is an advent of Think-tanks dedicated to particular issues such as Centre for Land and Warfare Studies, the Centre for Air Power Studies, and the National Maritime Foundation. The report brought out by Think-tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP) of the University of Pennsylvania mentions of a sudden surge of think-tanks within India from 192 in 2014 to 280 in 2015 making it the fourth country with the highest number of think-tanks.¹ The article tries to address the misconceptions and misperceptions attached to the sector.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The author has mentioned about some of the shortcomings endangering the think-tanks within India. The following is an analysis using parameters mentioned by him providing personal insights to his article.

Dhruva Jaishankar, is Fellow in Foreign Policy Studies at Brookings India in New Delhi and the Brookings Institution in Washington DC. His own background and expertise in the field of International Relations provides for the right facts and figures to analyse India's affairs on the global platform. Hence, providing validation to the article and its arguments.

Target audience- When dealing in the academic field, it becomes utterly essential to categorise your audience for maximum impact. Within the world of think-tanks, the target audience is limited to bureaucrats, politicians or the more informed public who are experts in their respective fields and hence require a maintenance of international

¹ <https://www.livemint.com/Opinion/ZWWNGHbZlI2eczrNwAF2sN/The-growing-tribe-of-think-tanks-in-India.html>

standards. At the same time, having a neutral audience for your work is essential for it to stimulate progress in the area.

Considering the political structure of our country, the reins of policy making lies in the hands of bureaucrats and politicians. According to the author, this proves to be a problem as the implementation and execution can take up a lot of time rendering the policy recommendation redundant.

A think-tank is acknowledged and respected on the basis of the work that it produces. Though public recognition is a difficulty faced by the entities in the form of private briefings and inputs, recognition remains an important basis for its outreach.

Decentralisation of think-tanks across India- Another interesting thing to observe with the growing trend of think-tanks is their decentralization as opposed to their geographical focus in and around the capital (in this case, New Delhi). This has facilitated for contribution and assimilation of ideas and expertise from around the country. Furthermore, it has concluded in increasing awareness about the function and role of think-tanks in the formation of public opinion.

Research over convening- It is difficult to agree with the author on the matter of decreasing focus on convening. Though there is a requirement for focussed and in-depth research by these organisations, the fact remains that these conferences stimulate exchange of information and enriches knowledge base. It provides for a common platform for likeminded people to come together and work together, reducing costs, time and energy.

Quality over quantity- This is one of the most valid arguments made by Mr Jaishankar. There is a requirement to expand our horizons to employ experienced professional with expertise in areas as mentioned in the article to compete on an international front. This also helps in bringing new ideas to the table.

Accountability and autonomy are the two basic pillars of a public institution. For the effective functioning of such institutions, transparency is required otherwise they

can end up on the verge of extinction proving to be inefficient in its functioning. The provision of transparency also ensures a feedback mechanism of a kind within the organisation as well as with other organs of the government.

A challenge faced by any think-tank is the resources for its financial viability in a period of global financial and economic crisis. The maintenance of an independent structure, aloof from external influences, is essential to the core of such an entity.

Relevance to the National Maritime Foundation

The National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi, India is a non-governmental, non-political maritime think-tank. The Foundation aims to undertake studies and analyses on various issues of concern in the maritime domain with a view to formulate and present options for a vibrant and evolving national maritime policy. The genesis of the National Maritime Foundation lies in a long-felt need to redress India's historic neglect of its maritime security domain and to fill an acute intellectual void, by providing a common platform for discourse between maritime related institutions, organizations and disciplines, country-wide. ²

Using the parameters provided by Mr Jaishankar, the following is an attempt to analyse NMF in the context.

Research over convening- The Foundation collaborates with all organizations and institutions that have an interest in the maritime field and remains open to suggestions and exchange of views. Such collaborative activities, including joint seminars, research studies etc.²

Quality over quantity- One of the primary objectives of the organisation remains disseminating information related to maritime affairs. In doing so it employs experts in the field as a part of the organisation.

² <http://www.maritimeindia.org/ABOUT-US.pdf>

Target audience- NMF constantly interacts with its various stakeholders. Therefore, its audience involves intellectuals and experts in the field of maritime security giving the organisation the required exposure.

Decentralisation of think-tanks across India- As mentioned earlier, there is an increasing decentralisation of think-tanks. In lieu of it, NMF has facilitated for "regional chapters" in Chennai, Visakhapatnam and Calcutta resulting in growing outreach within India.

Accountability and autonomy- The friendly and approachable work environment provides for the much-needed accountability and transparency within the organisation. Moreover, its involvement with various departments of the government such as the Indian Navy and the Ministry of Defence provides for the same outside the organisation as well. This also provides for the much-needed public recognition as mentioned above. The organisation at the same time works towards providing a non-biased and independent views through its academic work as against the "politically correct" stand.

Other than that, the ease of accessibility of information at the institute is an important factor. Though the facilities can be improved by means of a larger set of space dedicated to academic resources.

As is common knowledge, the role of think-tanks extends from consulting and advising, that NMF undertakes efficiently, to influencing and deviating public discourse on domestic issues. For instance, with the waves of Nationalism sweeping the grounds of Europe, the role of think-tanks in influencing the public has become most essential (e.g. the Washington based the Carnegie Endowment for Peace, the Brookings Institution and the German Marshall Fund of the United States, which has seven European offices). Similarly, NMF has contributed in the advocacy of maritime studies as an important subject. It can use its resources to disseminate knowledge on the grassroot levels i.e. schools and colleges.

Similarly, in my opinion there is a requirement for a governing central body dedicated to the administering of the think-tanks in country. For example, PASOS- Policy Association for Open Society an initiative to strengthen independent think-tanks to ensure the lessons of transition are understood, shared, and applied, set out its values, short-term and medium-term objectives, and strategic approach.³ Such an initiative provides for immense joint growth in specific fields through sharing of resources and information.

**Aastha is an Intern at the National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi. The views expressed are her own and do not reflect the official policy or the position of the NMF. She can be reached at aastha.vohra96@gmail.com.*

³ <http://pasos.org/about-pasos/> <http://pasos.org/about-pasos/>

CRITIQUE 2

Bharath*

Introduction

The article “Can India’s Think-tanks Be Truly Effective” first appeared in *The Huffington Post* on April 19, 2016 written by Dhruva Jaishankar, *Fellow-Foreign Policy, Brookings India*. Dhruva Jaishankar, having worked in various think-tanks in the US and India wrote this in the third year of establishment of the Brookings Institute’s Indian⁴ chapter and the establishment of Carnegie India ⁵ (another leading US think-tank). This work is figurative of the heterogeneous experience of the author, here he examines the scope of think-tanks in India, evaluates and also suggests measures to ‘revitalize the Indian think-tank industry’ (Jaishankar 2016). My critique offers analysis of the article and augments the ways for development of Indian think-tanks.

Critical Evaluation

The article starts with the mention of leading Indian think-tanks and goes on to explain their workings. He then gives his ideas on how to make Indian think-tanks more effective. When he writes that ‘Research need to be given priority over convening’, I do agree with the author that the convening of conferences has taken a toll on the research effectiveness of the think-tanks, but by this he gives lesser priority to the knowledge disseminating role of the think-tanks. My argument is the need for knowledge disseminating through conferences, seminars and other events is as equal as the research itself. Although the human resource allocated by them for the convening should not distract the researchers rather those have to be dealt by professionals in event management, which would make the events and conferences more successful and will have a greater reach among the policy makers and the public. The professional expertise of the event management teams will add value to such events and conferences and also to the Institution itself.

⁴ <https://www.brookings.in/about-us/>

⁵ <http://carnegieindia.org/about/>

Giving greater importance to the quality, the author undermines the requirement of the quantity of quality expertise required in India's think-tanks. For a country as large and diverse as India, the think-tanks require a significant number of quality experts. The author's concern of think-tanks becoming homes for retired civil servants and military officers has of course led the public considering the think-tanks as glorified talk-shops. These officers having served their lives to entirety in the service of the nation and its people makes them an authentic source of knowledge at ground level. Apart from other roles played by the retired civil servants and military in the think-tanks, those acquiring a mentoring role that guides the young minds, is imperative to tap the new ideas and fresh perspectives in a variety of disciplines. The establishment of the peer review process for publications and an attempt to establish such process not only filters the quality work but also gives value to the content.

Rightly observed by the author, the institutions affiliated with the government are more prone to becoming extensions of the government's ministries. This could be averted by not segregating the think-tanks as government affiliated and privately funded organisations. The think-tanks' funding pattern is to be diversified. For instance, the National Maritime Foundation caters to the needs of the Ministries of Defence, Home Affairs and Shipping among others. In addition, its services can be offered to the state governments, private companies and other stakeholders for the betterment of their functioning. If put into practice, such diverse think-tank models would contribute in the advancement of the country's overall development and in turn enhance the monetary independence and the autonomy of the institutions as well. Expanding into the online content and multimedia presentations, such as podcasts and videos, would further enhance the reach of the discourse of the institutions and this could become a source of funding.

The author's ideas about the need for think-tanks and government interactions has clearly pointed out the problems from the system level to the individual level. His other suggestion of how the research work needs to be more 'usable' overlooks the study of the past problems and situations, as they give us an idea on the implications of

similar complications and become the tools for handling the future issues. The key to the future leads from the historical events, which need to be analysed with equal significance. The descriptive and fact-finding research gives the future researchers a detailed information on the issue and becomes a knowledge-platform for the policy makers. I opine that the author has discounted on the need for descriptive and fact-finding research by emphasising only on the analytical research.

Conclusion

‘Can India’s Think-tanks be Truly Effective?’ is a well-articulated piece based on the author’s research and experiences with think-tanks in India and abroad. The measures for revitalising effectiveness of the Indian think-tanks is a great value addition to the Indian think-tank industry.

**Bharath is an Intern at the National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi. The views expressed are his own and do not reflect the official policy or the position of the NMF. He can be reached at bharaththevar@gmail.com.*

CRITIQUE 3

Dikshita Kaushik*

The article ‘Can India’s Think-tanks Be Truly Effective?’ by Dhruva Jaishankar aims to address a wide range of misperceptions and misapprehensions about think-tanks that exists in this age of information overload. Indian think-tanks are constantly evolving and are going through a number of changes. The author highlights some of the major problems faced by these institutes and offers measures that can ensure the effectiveness of these organizations.

Dhruva Jaishankar is a Fellow in Foreign Policy Studies at Brookings India in New Delhi and the Brookings Institution in Washington DC. His research examines India’s role in the international system and the effects of global developments on India’s politics, economics, and society.

Introduction

The primary purpose of a think-tank should be to able to generate ideas and debate on matters of public policy. Today, we have a presence of a wide number of leading international think-tanks such as Carnegie and Brookings institution. India is the host of various international policy conferences, including the Raisina Dialogue and the Gateway of India dialogue. The think-tanks are increasingly headed by accomplished diplomats, that brings in a wealth of first-hand experience from the field. It is no surprise that the think-tanks are offering a neutral venue or forum for the interaction of a wide range of stakeholders and is thus bridging the gap between the policy makers and the academia. All in all, these developments offer a good opportunity for India, which needs to be exploited for think-tanks to be truly affective.

Characteristics

Although most of the think-tanks share certain common characteristics, they differ in their 'priorities, mandates and structures'. Thus, there are think-tanks that focus on specific topics, like foreign policy or defence (*National Maritime Foundation, Centre for Air Power Studies*); while there are others that cover a wide range of topics (*The Takshashila Institution*). While some think-tanks are government affiliated (*Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis*), others are privately managed (*Brookings India*) and differ in their functions because the structure and practices of the government and private organizations are not the same. Organizations like the *Observer Research Foundation* in fact work with close collaboration with the ministries of the government of India. There are still other think-tanks that are solely research institutes, while others prioritize convening. Recently, we have seen a growth of military service specific think-tanks. The author believes these think-tanks are crucial in the sense that they advise the government on sound policies as well as interpret obscure policy issues for the public. They also build expertise on areas that the government do not have the time or capacity to do.

Problems Faced

The author talks about a wide range of problems faced by the emerging think-tanks. The ideas put forth by many think-tanks aren't credited and are not publicly acknowledged. The author misses out on a wide range of other difficulties that are crucial in understanding the functioning of think-tanks. He makes no mention of the problems faced by think-tanks in relation to funding. There are a number of think-tanks that are facing severe constraints in their research due to lack of funds. Indian think-tanks have not been able to garner support from Indian donors. This is not the case abroad, especially in the US. Further, there is also a need for scrutiny of think-tanks funded by foreign agencies because problems like misuse of funds in antinational activities are increasingly on a rise. The article finds no mention of the internal problems faced by the

think-tanks, especially in terms of recruitment policies, package plans and human resource challenges.

Measures Recommended

For Indian think-tanks to be truly efficient, the author recommends a wide range of measures which aims at the revitalization of these think-tanks. These includes-

- Research needs to be prioritized,
- Priority of quality over quantity.
- Need for enhanced autonomy and transparency
- Increased interaction with the government
- Developing steps so that research is utilized efficiently.

The strength of the article lies in these recommendations. To begin with, prioritizing the research is the key through which these think-tanks can be more effective. Policy conferences, panel discussions, Track II dialogues are drivers of change. The author advises on prioritizing quality over quantity. However, there is scope for think-tanks to increase their scope of research. Research topics are repeated and research is limited only to specific areas. Key areas of policy making remains unexplored. Research on India's South-East neighbours, South America, the 1965 war needs a boost. The authors make no mention of prioritizing research through collaborations with regional or international universities. Universities are crucial actors that can facilitate research and enhance its scope areas. Universities provide high quality research that addresses policy challenges and students offer fresh perspective into research. In addition, collaborating with universities can also help the research to reach a wider audience.

Next, the author talks about the need to enhance the autonomy and transparency of think-tanks. Government aided think-tanks works on the dictates of a concerned ministry, and thereby are prone to reflect opinions of the ministry. Moreover, the research work can also be biased. The goal is to overcome these challenges. At the same

time, however, the author ignored the fact that working in close coordination with those in power can in fact, result in added advantage. This integration and collaboration can add to the strategic thought process of a nation by focusing on key areas. Moreover, it will bridge the gap between policy makers and the academia. A balance, thus, needs to be managed.

Private think-tanks on the other hand, needs to retain their credibility. Transparency about sources of funding affects the nature of research undertaken by the think-tank. However, the misses out on the point that these private think-tanks have their own agendas. These think-tanks often work with a plan, whose goal is not meant for charity but to obtain quality inputs that will give them visibility.

The author advices on enhancing interactions with the government. Lack of interaction can lead to misinformation. Collaborations with the government will help the think-tanks to take into consideration government priorities and processes. However, the writer fails to mention the fact that along with increased coordination with the government, it is also crucial for think-tanks to enhance their interactions with other think-tanks. Today, there are a large number of think-tanks working on different areas. Collaborating with regional or international think-tanks can enhance the quality of research work by synergizing the efforts and minimizing the expenditure, since funding is a major problem faced by Indian think-tanks.

All these measures won't be of much use, unless the research is made usable. Policy research should be easily accessible, particularly in an era of information overload. Today, the various think-tanks around the world is using various means to disseminate their output. This includes, the role of media and new media. The multiple channels of communication are essential for making the research usable and for research to reach the concerned authority.

Where Does NMF Stand?

The National Maritime Foundation is a non-governmental maritime think-tank situated in New Delhi. Established in 2005, NMF provides an open forum for professional debate amongst the various stakeholders within India's maritime domain. It aims to heighten maritime awareness amongst India's policy makers and intellectual elite.

Is research prioritized?

The foundation works on a wide range of publications that includes issue briefs, commentaries, books, magazines and journals covering a wide range of topics relevant to India's maritime affairs. The publications are regular and frequent and are readily accessible in libraries and on the foundation's official website. The organization is also involved in organizing events, dialogues and conferences on relevant maritime issues which allows for the interaction between important stakeholders. The National Maritime Foundation has continued its Eminent Persons' Lecture series which involves presentations by persons with strong domain specific experience.

Priority of quality over quantity.

The workforce of National Maritime Foundation is a small workforce consisting of research scholars and interns. These scholars and young minds offers fresh perspective and generate new ideas on relevant issues. The foundation is headed by serving and retired naval officers that constitutes the Governing Council, which brings in on-ground experience from the field. This small workforce is involved in all day to day business of the foundation. National Maritime Foundation offers a platform for an efficient interaction between the two, indicating preference of quality over quantity.

Increased interaction with the government contributing to enhanced autonomy and transparency

The Foundation works in close collaboration with the Ministry of Defence, particularly the Indian Navy. The institute itself is headed by serving and retired naval officers with a wealth of first-hand experiences. Unlike other think-tanks, the officials at NMF are both able administrators and academicians. This leaves any scope of misinformation. The NMF ensures that government priorities and processes are taken into account during its research. Along with the government, NMF also works in close collaboration with other local and international think-tanks. The Foundation has signed MOU's with various organizations including Centre for Naval Analysis, RAND Corporation, Hainan Institute for World Watch, Research Institute for Indian Ocean Economy among others.

Is research utilised efficiently?

National Maritime Foundation is engaged in the publication of a wide range of research material including books, journals, issue briefs, articles and others. These materials can be accessed from both online and offline sources. The Foundation's website is a hub of information on all topics related to maritime affairs.

Recommendations

- Increased interaction with local think-tanks through joint conferences, workshops and summits.
- An active social media presence, particularly in Facebook and Twitter. New Media today acts as a crucial tool for dissemination of information. The New Media is being utilized by both policy makers, officials and the academia, allowing the information to reach a wider audience. Moreover, live tweeting during important events is crucial for enhancing information outreach.

**Dikshita Kaushik is an Intern at the National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi. The views expressed are her own and do not reflect the official policy of the Indian Navy, the NMF or the Government of India. She can be reached at dikshita.kaushik17-19@ssispune.edu.in.*

CRITIQUE 4

Maitreyee S.K.*

Dhruva Jaishankar's article calls for a re-look at the role of think-tanks in India and examines the extent of their effectiveness in doing what they claim to do – influence policy and serve as centres for exchange of ideas. Given the rapid proliferation of new think-tanks in various Indian cities, the article rightly states that their relative isolation from the policy-making process is worrying. While explaining how think-tanks work, the author assumes several ideal conditions that make think-tanks optimal places for policy-oriented research and convening that need to be further problematised.

While there are some sceptics who believe think-tanks to be glorified talk shops, the author does not take this stance and acknowledges that think-tanks in India face some fundamental issues that need to be addressed before they can play a substantial part in policy making of the country. The emphasis on the priority of research instead of convening reveals many underlying issues that plague Indian think-tanks. First, most think-tanks do not go beyond publishing some analytical pieces and op-eds and real ground-breaking research that can be used by policy-makers is missing. Even when think-tanks do commission projects to evaluate government policies, the lack of empirical data to back the findings often undermines the legitimacy of such research. Second, due to lack of funding for Indian think-tanks, convening sometimes acts as an opportunity for fund-raising and so has to be given priority over research. Third, the stark distinction between academic and popular content prevents the widespread dissemination of serious research while also preventing the academic community from taking popular content seriously. This severely limits the reach of think-tanks and rules out the option of directly or indirectly reaching out to the people as a way of influencing public policy from the bottom up (e.g. through mass media).

Jaishankar also observes that think-tanks are not able to compete for fresh talent and so become homes to retired civil servants and officers, thus reducing the importance given to new ideas and perspectives. In addition, the existing pool of academics

continues to haemorrhage to foreign think-tanks that offer considerably better financial prospects, the chance to directly interact with policy-makers and faster professional development. Reflecting on the lack of informal institutions and cultures like the peer-review process and proficiency in foreign languages, Jaishankar implicitly relates the lack of a comprehensive education to the inability of think-tanks to function up to their expected standard. The missing importance of understanding the culture, language and history of the region one intends to study is endemic in the Indian education system and this ends up producing 'experts' who merely reprocess available information without contributing anything new to the study of the region or without being able to suggest significant policy shifts.

Furthermore, the article talks about the benefits of interactions between the government and scholars at think-tanks. This, according to the author, could not only increase the information available to scholars but also put them in touch with the realities of the functioning of a government and help them conduct more viable research that can be actually used by the government. However, this interaction could possibly have a negative fallout. Fluidity between the government and scholars could bias the research excessively towards or away from the government's standpoint and give the political players avenues to influence the research. Conflict of interest issues could arise, as Jyoti Malhotra states is the case with Brookings India, where Dhruva Jaishankar, son of former Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar, holds a senior position. Such an interrelation between the government, bureaucracy and think-tanks, where the researchers are closely related to the government or hold official positions, does more harm than good to the independence of a think-tank.

As far as producing usable research is concerned, Jaishankar agrees with most other authors that it is the biggest challenge faced by Indian think-tanks. In the recent past, rarely have think-tanks succeeded in proposing new concepts or policy options that have dramatically altered Indian policy – especially foreign policy. Till date, it remains reactive, ad hoc and disjointed. The problem may lie with dysfunctional academic institutions and not only with think-tanks. Ideally, while universities serve as centres for purely academic research pursuits, think-tanks produce more policy-

oriented research. However, in the Indian case, the research in universities is lacking and so this distinction becomes blurred. Since there is a relatively small corpus of academic research on which to build, the research think-tanks publish, to some extent, gets directed at filling this void – thus producing output that is relatively unimportant for policy-making. According to Suba Chandran, “There have to be “quality” inputs, which are “actionable.” While “research” has to be the bedrock of these institutions, they should have “policy” relevance, otherwise there would not be a big difference between a PhD and policy research reports.”

Malhotra also suggests the inefficient financing of think-tanks as one of the reasons for the lack of concrete research. According to her, since most of the funds allotted to think-tanks – especially those supported by the government – are used up in paying salaries, there is hardly any funding available for undertaking robust research. More expensive methodologies like surveys and interviews as well as longitudinal research are therefore discarded in favour of less money-intensive secondary research that usually does not produce anything new.

Ultimately, Jaishankar presents the reader with the challenge of looking at all the issues faced by think-tanks as an interrelated whole and tackling them as such. Moreover, the integration of the coordinative⁶ and communicative discourse⁷ into the functioning of think-tanks makes it their imperative to ensure that the research they produce is equally understandable to the policy-makers who make decisions and to the general public which will push the policy makers in the directions it desires.

Given the fulfilment of the prerequisites stated by Jaishankar, think-tanks can also play a role in changing policy – especially foreign policy – from an elite subject to an issue discussed widely in national politics. By ensuring the availability of easily understandable and reliable information about foreign policy in the public domain,

⁶ “individuals and groups at the centre of policy construction”

⁷ “individuals and groups involved in the presentation, deliberation and legitimation of political ideas to the general public”

think-tanks can act as vehicles to stimulate a top-down approach towards policy making and gradually reduce the influence of elite perception on policy.

**Maitreyee S.K. is an Intern at the National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi. The views expressed are her own and do not reflect the official policy or the position of the NMF. She can be reached at maitreyee27.sk@gmail.com.*

CRITIQUE 5

Noor Bhatnagar*

Dhruva Jaishankar, one of the renowned contributors and analysts in the field of International Affairs in India titles his article in a way as to question whether think-tanks can fulfil their purpose, if at all they have one (if not, are they just ‘glamorous talk shops’?) In the whole piece, he draws out the functioning, the nature, and the features of myriad of think-tanks and supplements them with the developments taking place in the Indian context.

First, to analyse and comprehensively understand the nuances of think-tanks we need to primarily understand their need. We thus narrow down two questions, what are think-tanks? Why do we need them?

Jaishankar, ideates that think-tanks are essentially two things:

1. Research Institutions, with an aim to inform and/or influence the target audience.
2. Conveners, with an aim to be the conjunction of varied ideas from varied stakeholders.

Although Jaishankar does clarify that these are mere broad characteristics, the above questions nudge us to give a bit more detailed analysis of think-tanks to shun the ambiguity and vagueness that surrounds the above given conceptualization.

If the above categorization is sacrosanct, where do we place the Pacific Partners Initiative (PPI), an initiative launched by a think-tank called Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) which incorporates trilateral ‘Track II’ diplomacy and dialogue to address regional security issues? Where do we position Delhi Policy Group’s India-Japan Track 1.5 Dialogue, here do we place these initiatives in the above two categories? Here they do not perform either of the two functions exclusively.

Thus, think-tanks based on their aim/purpose can be categorized as following:

1. Research Institutions, purely based on analysis of ideas, concepts, events, with a goal of influencing and informing the public.
2. Advocacy/Advisory Institutions based on influencing the national policy making process towards a certain inclination.
3. Convening Institutions based on bringing various ideas together harmoniously.
4. Strategic Partnership Institutions, where a collaborative working relationship between the government is established to achieve desired outcomes.

One common and significant error in conceptualization is the perception that these functions are mutually exclusive and independent of each other. These four functions play out simultaneously and in close tandem with each other.

Secondly, another important feature that is essential to the understanding of think-tanks are its inclination/independence which are tied to its funding/support. It would be naïve 'realpolitik-wise' to assume the research initiatives or strategic influence of policy is un-biased. To say this, is also not to concede that all think-tanks are just instruments to some political play. Though, it can be argued that what varies is the level of inclination in different think-tanks.

Some think-tanks are explicitly inclined towards a particular cause, ideology, or a political spectrum.

Military-service specific think-tanks like Centre for Land and Warfare Studies, the Centre for Air Power Studies, and the National Maritime Foundation, which form the triumvirate in Indian context can be labelled as focused more towards their domain and providing in-depth research for the public.

Some are exclusively government-funded and function as an extension of a certain ministry. In India, for example, Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA) is fully funded by the Ministry of Defence with its President being the Minister of Defence (the Raksha Mantri).

Some ascribe to a particular party like the Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation which is affiliated to the ruling government – Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), whereas some are privately-owned and primarily funded by private firms, like the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) conceived by the Reliance Group.

Where Jaishankar's article has spread light on these aspects, the importance, or the lack of thereof given to funding and credibility of work of the think-tank is absent. Does it matter if the think-tank is privately funded, or government funded, or which individual affiliated to what ideology runs it? The answer to this question can play out in manifold ways depending on the think-tank in question, to the individual running it. Though in totality, we can answer the affirmative.

Where the idea of some entity sponsoring your work, does give them certain ownership and influence, the scenario where there are many participants in the policy discourse should be encouraged. Be it private-sector, or government bodies extending aid to these think-tanks, it signifies more investment in the discourse which should be done transparently, making the public cognizant of it. One cannot stop the bias or inclination but can be more aware of it, and then choose among alternatives accordingly. The level of access to funds, also implies the primacy of certain functions over another.

Lastly, moving on from the features of think-tanks, Jaishankar elaborates the often-received criticism of think-tanks being termed as 'Glorious talk-shops' and further suggests certain measures that can turn Indian think-tanks into effective ones. Many pointers like, the primacy of Quality over quantity and more autonomy and transparency are the ones to be taken seriously.

This brings us back to the two initial questions we asked in the beginning of this critique: What are think-tanks, and why do we need them? Where we have answered the former part, the latter question still lingers unanswered. Why is it **necessary** to have certain institutions aimed at research and convening where the government itself takes up these activities in its own domain partially, and sometimes fully?

The answer lies in the nature of expertise and resource provided by these think-tanks. The opportunities and credibility provided by the mere fact that the organisation is a hub of experts and analysts that brainstorm and come up with new, innovative solutions and ideas. Many-a-times, the think-tanks work as check system against government policies, making all the more crucial. This is the exact reason that the presence of think-tanks is necessary to the functioning of an informed polity.

In an extension to the above discourse on think-tanks, the article in question, is appreciated for its suggestions for an effective think-tank environment, highlighting the glaring loopholes that still exist. In hindsight though, it fails to answer how to ensure these mechanisms are taken up. The idea of transparency and autonomy, are righteous and well-placed, but how and who ensures that these are maintained? The very fact that we are pushing for transparency and autonomy implies that the think-tank environment is not capable of it naturally and on its own, thus we need an outside force to nudge it. The solution to this issue, is still food-for-thought for the growing think-tanks and their experts.

Summary of the Critique	The idea of what constitutes as the functions of think-tanks needs to be reapproached and with greater detail.
	Funding, sponsoring, and inclination of think-tanks is an important unit of analysis apart from research impact.
	Presence of think-tanks is necessary, though many steps need to be taken to make them effective in nature.

**Noor Bhatnagar is an Intern at the National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi. The views expressed are her own and do not reflect the official policy or the position of the NMF . She can be reached at noorbhatnagar15@gmail.com.*

CRITIQUE 6

Sakshi Venkateswaran*

The article, “Creating a Sustainable Future for Think Tanks in India”, by Cmde Vasan discusses the role of think tanks in India and some of the challenges it faces. He identifies some important issues that stand in the way of recognizing the usefulness of think tanks and these include human resources, mobilising funds, and using and optimizing the right communication channels.⁸ All these serve to deter think tanks from delivering relevant inputs to policy makers and other stakeholders. The author goes back and forth, commenting upon the challenges that Indian think tanks face, both private and government ones. To substantiate these, he offers examples of some think tanks with regards to the recruitment strategy of think tanks, pay package offered, funding, structure of the think tank etc.

He commences with a widely debated upon observation regarding the strategic culture in India that was made after a publication by Rand in 1992⁹. It is no secret that India lacks a strategic culture and while some might point fingers towards Chanakya’s *Arthashastra*, the truth is that apart from being an ancient text that provided guidance on matters of governance, security and administration, the book was made for kings. While there is no reason to not consider this a base for future strategies, the fact that there is a lack of strategic culture at present is discouraging. One only has to look at the rankings of Indian think tanks across the world in the report published by the University of Pennsylvania to make the connection.

Think tanks in India have not gained the importance and usefulness that are granted to it [think tanks] in other countries. One would assume that a democratic country would provide the perfect platform for a think tank to function and flourish, but even China has made strides to promote the effectiveness of think tanks. Cmde Vasan emphasizes the role the government plays in the functioning of a think tank. Apart from undertaking a few studies on the recommendation of the government, most think tanks

⁸ Vasan, Seshadri. Creating a Sustainable Future for Think Tanks in India. Accessed on 24 May 2018.

⁹ George Tanham, RAND 1992, Indian Strategic Thought an Interpretive essay

in India function independently based on their own interest in the chosen domain. The government being a highly bureaucratic theatre refuses to grant think tanks the feedback and space it needs to function effectively. Even when a policy given by a think tank is accepted, the government does not acknowledge the labour behind it. It is hardly surprising that when formal policy making bodies are not recognised, the chances of think tanks making an impact are minimal. While the present government has made an effort to recognise the usefulness of think tanks, with the establishment of NITI Aayog, the case of other tanks is yet to be determined.

While funding, remuneration of researchers and structure of the organization are factors that determine the sustainability of think tanks, there are others that play a far more important role to their sustainability. The lack of awareness of a strategic culture in India lies in its education system. History serves as a reminder for future generations to make decisions with understanding and caution, even strategic ones. But history taught at schools does not facilitate an appreciation for the subject. It is side-lined as an unimaginative and tedious course with only a few passionate individuals willing to delve further into it. The general public apathy towards think tanks, their role and usefulness only serve to worsen the situation.

The government and the party in power have a major role to play. Even while think tanks claim to be autonomous, by taking on projects on the recommendation of the government they are forced to tow an invisible line. Think tanks become relevant to the Government when their work is in accordance with the latter. Some examples of such think tanks are the Vivekananda International Foundation and India Foundation. These think tanks are headed by people that are affiliated to the RSS and the BJP led Government. With regards to think tanks that deal with security issues (NMF, CAPS, CLAWS etc.), the Government usually appoints retired officials that have gained immense experience by virtue of simply being on field. This has its own pros and cons. These officials are also sometimes constrained, having to toe the line or risk their positions in the organizations. These officials are also of the opinion that while different Governments might come and go, they go on forever. This makes them hard core realists with no room for principles. Nehru has been critiqued for his strategic decisions

based on his principles (idealism) but involving principles does have its benefits. For think tanks to become effective the Government needs to step up and recognise their usefulness. Ministries and think tanks that deal in the same area need to collaborate and work with each other.

The freedom to debate openly is what makes think tanks unique. If the Government restricts that freedom there is no value to a think tank. Several think tanks conduct dialogues and collaborate with their counterparts across the world. This proves invaluable in the process of policy formulation. The Government by refusing to acknowledge the importance of think tanks also loses an opportunity to evaluate these ideas and proposals. Despite all these factors, the sustainability of think tanks boils down to its funding. Though the government allocates a certain amount, think tanks are constantly in a rush to raise funds for its functioning. And this is tied in with remuneration of its researchers. The reason why think tanks are so successful in the US is due to its ties with the Government, philanthropists and several universities. Since universities in India are unaware of the usefulness of think tanks, they are unable to contribute. It is therefore left up to the Government and few philanthropists to keep the think tank afloat. Several international organizations fund most of the think tanks in India.

Sustainability does not just include recruitment and funding. These above points need to be taken into account. A lot of these suggestions will take time and effort to implement and might even face backlash. The results will only be evident after a few years. The concept of a think tank needs to be promoted for a strategic culture to emerge.

**Sakshi Venkateswaran is an Intern at the National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi. The views expressed are her own and do not reflect the official policy or the position of the NMF . She can be reached at sakshi.venkateswaran@gmail.com.*

CRITIQUE 7

Skand Agarwal*

The article ‘Can India’s Think-tanks Be Truly Effective?’ tries to address the common misperceptions and misconceptions held by the public over various spheres of think-tanks as an institution. Over the period since 1990’s government funded think-tanks have grown at higher rate. During the fresh years of independence, India was a little sceptical against the interlinks between think-tanks and national policy making. Also, due to much domination of our former honourable Prime Minister Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru on external affairs of India, it didn’t allow much space for other institutions to grow and yield some help in influencing the external affairs of India. But, later with the upcoming of different governments, awareness about the think-tanks grew considerably. Hence, now not only Indian thinks reside on the Indian soils, but also various international think-tanks have opened their centre in India.

The primary aim of a think-tank is to analyse the contemporary situations in accordance to the various policies executed by the government. It must do theoretical operations against the national policies and bring out a substantial analysis which in turn can assist the government. The author talks about only two major pillars of think-tanks – Research and Convening. Whereas think-tanks stand on three major pillars – Analysis and Advocacy, Convening, and Strategic Communications.

Analysis and Advocacy is one of the most important aspect of a think-tank. First, it analysis the policies and situations and bring out a substantial analysis. Second, it creates various alternative policies which may become alternative choices against governmental policies. Once the analysis part is over then, it advocates the formulated policy papers to the government and other institutions. During advocacy, major aim is to exchange of ideas regarding myriad policies.

Convening is the next step for a think-tank to work effectively. It organises various conferences and workshops to transit the research with which they have come

up. These conferences help the public to get aware about various policies and researches. Hence, convening proves to be an important part to widen the cycle of convening and add public to it, thus accomplishing one of the aim of think-tanks.

Strategic Communications is one of the recent part discovered about the think-tanks. Not all think-tanks exercise this part. It aims to hold track II dialogues in which not only government representatives take part but also people from other backgrounds also play major part. Track II dialogues helps to retain bilateral or multilateral communications between the countries even if official diplomatic communications have stopped. One of the best example is the Raisina Dialogue held in India with by ORF in collaboration with MEA. India and Pakistan have stopped official diplomatic communications but because of track II dialogues, unofficial communications still exist. Also, sometimes strategic communications help the country to deter other countries by making them aware about the consequences.

Think-tanks also serve as a venue for political leaders, bureaucrats and military officers to exchange views and interact with other actors: foreign counterparts, the media, academics, corporate representatives and the wider public. Having neutral venues for these kinds of interactions is particularly important given the changing roles and growing clout of some of these stakeholders in public policy formulation and implementation.

The author says “Despite these broad shared characteristics, there is considerable diversity among think-tanks in terms of their mandates, priorities, and structures. Some focus narrowly on specific aspects of public policy, such as foreign relations and defence, domestic politics and governance, economic and trade policy, or education, migration, and environmental issues. Others are broad, covering a range of topics. Some, such as ICWA and IDSA, are government-affiliated while others are entirely autonomous and privately managed. While some Indian think-tanks function almost exclusively as research institutes, such as the Centre for Policy Research, others prioritize convening, such as the Observer Research Foundation.”

Think-tanks such as IDSA and the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) have been active in India since the mid-20th century. But the last 25 years have witnessed a tremendous growth and proliferation of Indian institutions, including privately-funded entities and military service-specific think-tanks (the Centre for Land and Warfare Studies, the Centre for Air Power Studies, and the National Maritime Foundation). Location matters, given the need to be proximate to policy makers. There is a reason that global think-tanks have congregated in major capital cities such as Washington and London, Brussels and Beijing. So, it is only natural that most Indian institutes have been established in Delhi. However, newer initiatives like Gateway House in Mumbai, the Takshashila Institution in Bangalore, and the Hindu Centre for Politics and Public Policy in Chennai now provide platforms beyond the capital.

The author suggests following measures to make think-tanks more effective.

1. Research needs to be given priority over convening
2. Quality needs to be given priority over quantity
3. More autonomy and transparency
4. Think-tank scholars need more interactions with government
5. Research needs to be usable

The author suggests several ways to make Indian think-tanks more effective, but he does not mention variety of problems faced by Indian think-tanks. Some of the major problems are lack of government funding, reluctance to share important data by the government authorities, lesser integration and influence of think-tanks to government drafted policies. These are some of the fundamental problems faced by think-tanks which make them ineffective, even if they are good in working. Though after 1990's government has started to fund a series of think-tanks such as NMF, IDSA, CAPS and other field specific think-tanks, but because of restraints on funds, these think-tanks find difficulties in accessing some important resources. Similarly, less sharing of secretive and important data to think-tanks leave them with lack of substantial data's. With less influence and integration, all the heavily research papers and policies go in vain and dissuade the aim of the think-tanks.

When author suggests the second measure as '*Quality needs to be given priority over quantity*', he suggests employing more young minds to collect more creative and fresh ideas against the highly educated but retired military personnel. He doesn't mention a way to increase the data base of young employees and thus leaves the empty space on that idea. Collaborations with various educational institutions and training young graduates in accordance to area of interest may become a possible way to enlighten youths about think-tanks and initiate interest in them. Think-tanks such as NMF and USI have been successful in getting curative young minds and initiate interest in the young minds regarding working of think-tanks. However, he also misperceives the idea of quality here, though quality may be defined with credibility and in-depth analysis, but any research is subject to biasness which distorts the idea of quality.

The author misses out one of the very important measure to make think-tanks effective. Lot of policy research organisations which are government funded or internationally funded are given with large capacity, but they fail to convert that into *organizational capabilities*. They need to bring out relevant and reliable research and must not go away from their area of working.

Suggestion about think-tanks being *more autonomous and transparent* is right but the author suggest making them hundred percent autonomous. Whereas think-tanks should *balance the autonomy*, too much of it will also become a demerit to them. Being in communication with the government helps them to foster one of their aim, that is to exercise strategic communications, this not only helps the think-tank but also the government to retain unofficial dialogues with the countries which are reluctant to have official dialogues. Having said that, partial affiliations with government should not bring biasness in the research done by the think-tanks.

How Does National Maritime Foundation Work?

National Maritime Foundation is a non-government policy research organization inaugurated in Feb '05 which is deeply interlinked with Indian navy but stands autonomous as a forum for research and discussions on maritime interests of India.

Greater autonomy and partial links with Indian Navy helps NMF to bring out unbiased research and policies and on the other hand, it lets NMF to analysis the practical current scenario surrounding the Indian Navy. NMF is headed by various retired and current serving Navy personnel which gives the employees, an umbrella of experience and immense knowledge.

NMF insists on a *better quality of research and dissuade the idea of quantity*. It encourages its members and associates to express opinions and idea about the maritime domain

With the database of quality research, NMF tries it's best to *convene and advocate* the research through various regional dialogues and annual conferences such as '*Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue*'. It believes in convening the research and aware the youths and public as much as possible. It gives chance to youths to work with them which in turn help the young minds to venture out in an unchartered territory.

**Skand Agarwal is an Intern at the National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi. The views expressed are his own and do not reflect the official policy or the position of the NMF. He can be reached at skand1436@gmail.com.*

CRITIQUE 8

Subham Kumar*

The Opening of world's leading Think-Tanks like Carnegie, Brookings in India and the Raisina Dialogue conducted by Observer Research Foundation showing the trend of Think-tanks in India. Dhruv Jaishankar a fellow of foreign policy, Brookings India tried to give the answer about the purpose, agenda and day to day basis of think-tanks and attempted to clear the misperceptions and misapprehensions of this sector in his article "Can India think-tank be truly effective".

According to the author the primary purpose of think-tanks is to generate ideas and debate on the matters of public policy towards the end of the discourse he concludes that they act as both research institutes and conveners. However, he did not touch the third purpose of the thinktanks which is advocacy. In term of research, he has combined the aspects of business consulting, intelligence analysis, investigating journalism, or academic research under the same category, which creates more confusion about the research methodology of think-tanks. He has written that the research they produced is only meant to inform and influence public policy, which has narrowed down the role of think-tanks. In addition to inform and influence, think-tanks are also responsible for creating an environment for intellectual discussion among public. He has rightly observed that the think-tanks are now becoming a platform for political leaders, bureaucrats and military officers for talks, conferences and exchanging ideas. Thus, it possesses a challenge for the think-tank to maintain its neutrality. He explained the diversity of think-tanks in terms of their mandates, priorities, structure and the types of think-tanks, such as ICWA, IDSA are government-affiliated, ORF are privately funded think and the Centre for Land and Warfare Studies, the Centre for Air Power Studies, and the National Maritime Foundation are military service specific think-tanks. During the mid-20th century Think-tanks such as IDSA and the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) have been active in India. However only the last 25 years have witnessed a tremendous growth and proliferation of the thin-tanks. Moreover, he

omitted the mention of their role and achievement in any major policy formation or in transformation.

Being a part of think-tank, he is aware about the challenges that are faced to measure the effectiveness of think-tanks. He connects the effectiveness of think-tanks with public acknowledgement. Whereas public attention towards news media is comparatively more rather than towards think-tanks. So, measuring of effectiveness on the basis of public acknowledgement is not a justified way. In addition, the media is suffering from trust deficit, which is why he mentioned the role of the think-tanks in advising governments on sound policy, enabling increasingly important dialogue with a variety of stakeholders and interpreting obscure policy issues for the broader public. On short-comings of think-tanks, he mentions only of competition from academicians, private sector, etc but other structural deficiencies of think-tanks like funding, human resources etc are not mentioned.

For making think-tanks more effective Dhruv Jaishankar suggested five points. In his first point he criticised the daily conferences, panel discussions, and Track II dialogues. He advised that research needs to be given priority over convening. His assumption that in any book launch, seminar, conferences, round table talk and panel discussion whole organisation gets engaged and doesn't give required time on research is a misconception. The think-tanks like ORF and IDSA despite covering wide area of research organises the events independently according to their convenience. In his second point, that the quality needs to be given priority over quantity. He suggests that the think-tanks scholars ought to be among the most knowledgeable experts in their fields, and the institutions must be able to compete for talent with the private sector, universities and foreign organizations. But he has not taken into consideration, the still developing educational system in India, except a few peer institutions, the university level graduates are not job-ready. Also, he did not suggest any method on the think-tanks role in developing the quality of scholars. In his third point he is advocating more autonomy for effective functioning of think-tanks and transparency for the credibility of the think-tank. Due to lack of interaction with bureaucrats and parliamentarians the think-tanks experts are badly misinformed and that's why some of their

recommendation get rejects. In his fourth point that the think-tanks scholars need more interaction with government he stressed upon interaction with bureaucrats. Parliamentarians who are the ultimate policy maker so interaction with them is also very important. In his 5th point he suggests that the research should be descriptive rather than analytical and cannot simply dwell on past.

Giving importance to the digital media platform he advises the scholar that the information should be present in easily digestible manner and give a certain kind of information on time to policymaker. He concluded with an optimistic vision that in a period of increasingly acrimonious and ill-informed public discourse the India's think-tank can flourish by adopting certain measures.

**Subham Kumar is an Intern at the National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi. The views expressed are his own and do not reflect the official policy or the position of the NMF. He can be reached at subhamkumar1800@gmail.com.*

CRITIQUE 9

Thejus Gireesh*

Introduction

Indian think-tanks in the past few years have paradoxically emerged as a new source of voice, pertaining to the economic, finance, political and geo political aspects of this country & to its growing stakes. The Think-tanks of India having their main role as to introduce more ideas, views, provide opinions & research for the society and state regarding the various factors which effect a country as a whole be it defence, Macro-Micro economics, Business etc. In the sense they become one of the key in research institutions and places which conduct events in order to bring several viewpoints under a single roof. The Think-tanks also become a venue for exchanging views for the politicians, military, bureaucracy, foreign counter parts, business houses and the people.

To the total number of think-tanks crosses over 3000 independent organisations, India has leapfrogged Germany to become the country with the fourth highest number of think-tanks, behind the UK (288), China (435) and the US (1,835). The growing numbers notwithstanding, the quality of output and level of influence in policymaking—the two are not entirely unrelated—have been underwhelming. Due to such a minimal number of such organisations in India they haven't been able to influence the government policies at a large scale. Some of the think-tanks in India also suffer from massive under funding which often leads to poor performance in the terms of research production and convening of public events.

Emergence of think-tanks in India

India is credited with having the widest range of Think-tanks in South Asia. It also is fourth, globally, in the number of Think-tanks. Though some Indian Think-tanks, for example, the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) were established before India's independence in 1947, the early post-independence ones were close to government, and had a strong impact on policy.

For example, Prof. PC Mahalanobis, founder of ISI, was instrumental in the production of the blueprint for India's Second Five-year Plan. Their mission could be as generic as 'need for economic research (IEG) or 'the need to build a body of knowledge by undertaking comparative and cross-disciplinary research on social processes, goals and policies'

The Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), the oldest Indian think-tank, was set up in 1943. Most of the early think-tanks had some level of government involvement. ICWA, for instance, is answerable to a governing body headed by the vice-president of India and includes the minister of external affairs among its members. *The National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER)* came about in 1956 as a public-private partnership; the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, set up in 1965, is funded by the ministry of defence; and the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy was jointly established by the ministry of finance, the Planning Commission, several state governments and academicians in 1976. Yet the boom of the think-tanks came after the shortfall of the New Economic Policies imbibed by India in 1991 as a result of globalization. Foreign policy think-tanks created in India after 2009 are more active and visible in the public sphere than their predecessors according to a report published in GIGA.

Positive aspects after the introduction of Think-tanks

The Traditionally marginalised, India's foreign policy and other think-tank sectors have gained in visibility and vibrancy due to new demand in the wake of India's expanding international stakes. The think-tank's greater visibility reflects a more intensive engagement with the government. Importantly, these think-tanks have developed networks and set up new platforms to promote dialogue, including high-profile international conferences, bilateral and multilateral exchanges, and closed-door networking events. Even though India's best think-tanks are minuscule by foreign standards, the fact that they have survived and multiplied and attract high quality faculty and research scholars, indicates that there's growing appreciation of the valuable

role they play in shaping public opinion and aiding policy formulation processes. Over time the think-tanks in India have solving their problem of under funding's through availing sponsorships of corporate and Business giants. This move may finally lead to emergence of better working of these institutions in the long term.

Think-tanks such as the *Centre for joint Warfare studies (CENJOWS)*, *Centre for Land Warfare studies (CLAWS)*, *Air Power Studies (CAPS)* and *National Maritime foundation* have turned up to be a link between the Defence industrial Sector and the Defence. This has been proved to be crucial ground as the Industry could now directly express their views & showcase their systems to the Military without any barriers. Apart from all of these the Forces based think-tanks as mentioned above, have a growing influence over the strategic and at the top brass decision makers from the all of the three commands which intern can lead to more comprehensive strategy creation, the disposal of old techniques of secretization and integration of tri services Strategy creation and operations.

As Think-tanks in India set a foot print, they have been able to produce quality researches and articles and other works, towards the mainstream population where in this was not possible earlier as most of these institutions were restricted on information and resources by the Government and Public agencies, which was a critical aspect into making a qualitative research projects and other offsets of the think-tanks. The Think-tanks after 2014 have been able to get much better government support which intern resulted to better synergizing and effectiveness of the think-tanks. The think-tanks have been able to achieve better credibility and acknowledgement among the private Public sectors of India. The Think-tanks have been able to break the traditionalism in the research field yielding better opportunities to the people in the field of research and also in defence and strategic studies which was once constrained to the Defence personnel and officers back in time.

The think-tanks have worked towards facilitating collaboration among separate groups of researchers for a common purpose, as they keep no permanent interest in any one domain. They have suited to deal with the cross-cutting nature of global policy

issues and to convene and engage stakeholders in the policy-making process. The think-tanks have been able to conceive the means of implementation than government bureaucracies, which may be internally segmented by department and area of specialisation.

The way Forward

Cutting short foreign funding: The Think-tanks in India should find more funding for their organisation with their country rather than relying on foreign source of income. Foreign funding might help in the short run but the think-tanks have to often think that is foreign funding actually beneficial in the long term. Since foreign funding of an institution can raise many questions upon the integrity of the institution, its workings and often the main question arises is that on which side the institution actually has alignment to? & are its policies being influenced by foreign factors if their income comes from abroad?

Moving away from the capital and setting up regional Bases: The think-tanks which cover maritime, trade, economic developments must set up their think-tanks away from the capital city. For Example, the regional maritime issues can be only understood going to the root cause and it needs that the think-tanks should be placed at important shipping and naval regions in India like Vishakhapatnam or Mumbai or Chennai, similarly this applies also to the business or economy-based think-tanks, which can connect to the its corporate sectors at major business hubs like Mumbai or Bangalore or Pune etc.

Lack of Civilian Strategists for defence and foreign affairs in media: The Indian media is dwindled with the shortage of people with experience in defence and geo politics, introducing more civilian defence and foreign affairs analysts could go a long way and also help in shattering the previous tradition of analysts who came with a background in the military. This shortage could be overcome with introducing more think-tanks and with the help current think-tanks.

The Events and Works need to be publicised: the events hosted by many of the think-tanks needs to be publicized in order to gain more attention. Unless and until the events and their work gets publicized, there won't be any provocation of new ideas among the people. The Events held by the institution must not follow closed door policy. One way to achieve this goal is to spreading the news of events and its works of the think-tanks through all kinds of media including social media platforms such that people and the concerned authorities could know of the deliberations made by the institution on various issues.

Conclusion

The think-tanks in India have certainly improved in their roles and capabilities in time. Yet there is the need for more think-tanks in India for better policy making, implementation and to encourage new ideas in the society. The think-tanks and their organisational status has changed with time, they are totally different from their status quo in the 90s and their current self. There are still improvements to be made for better efficiency of think-tanks in India in order to gain positive results in the long-term.

**Thejus Gireesh is an Intern at the National Maritime Foundation (NMF), New Delhi. The views expressed are his own and do not reflect the official policy or the position of the NMF. He can be reached at thejusanad2@gmail.com.*

CRITIQUE 10

Uday Khanapurkar*

Introduction

The proliferation of policy think-tanks witnessed in India since the 1990s and their increased role in the state's affairs has generated significant intrigue regarding their objectives, functions and operations. Authored by Dhruva Jaishankar, Fellow in Foreign Policy Studies at the prestigious Brookings Institution, and published on the 20th of April, 2016, the article entitled "Can India's Think-tanks Be Truly Effective?" sheds light on the *raison d'être* of think-tanks and suggests measures they should take to fulfil their mandate.

Synopsis

The article declares the purpose of a think-tank to be the generation of ideas and debate on matters of public policy which is to be achieved by conducting research and convening policy-relevant interactions in a neutral environment. Particularly, in striving to actively influence policy-making, a think-tank's research is distinguished from that of a business enterprise or an academic institute. New Delhi, on account of its proximity to centres of power, has become home to numerous think-tanks with linkages to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Armed Forces as well as private businesses. The author emphasises the diversity of think-tanks that have emerged with respect to their "mandates, priorities and structures."

While the author concedes the fact that a concrete evaluation of a think-tank's effectiveness in influencing policy is proscribed by government secrecy, he lays stress upon the rectitude in facilitating dialogue among stakeholders, conducting specialised research and informing the broader public of the state's affairs. While the article does not dwell on the obstacles faced by think-tanks, the author suggests five measures they can take to effectively perform these tasks.

Firstly, think-tanks are urged to prioritise research over convening, since the latter takes place in abundance, often to the neglect of the former. Secondly, quality of research must take precedence over quantity; although think-tanks benefit inestimably from being led by influential figures, their experience and expertise is best utilised in admixture with an academic proficiency in language, regional studies etc. Thirdly, think-tanks must strive to attain autonomy and avoid turning into extensions of a government ministry or lobbying tools of corporates.

Fourth, the author calls for the lateral entry of researchers into the policy-making process in order to acclimatise them to those government procedures and political realities which they are generally ignorant of. Lastly, the thrust should be to improve the accessibility of research by harnessing novel modes of communication, while laying emphasis on producing analytical, as opposed to descriptive, work.

While the ends sought and means employed by think-tanks are succinctly adumbrated in the article, the author's recommendations fail to account for heterogeneity in the sector and are, therefore, of limited applicability. The diversity that the author alludes to in the article has more to do with "mandates, priorities and structures" rather than capabilities. The aforementioned recommendations are, therefore, well suited to financially secure organisations with the ability to maintain a sizeable cadre of qualified researchers. However, the article fails to acknowledge the existential threat that many Indian think-tanks are confronted with: the paucity of funding.

Critique

The article does well to drive home the fact that research and convening performed by a think-tank is undertaken keeping more a concrete end in mind, namely, to influence the policy-making process. The lack of a public profile enjoyed by think-tanks is also an important observation since the preference of society at large with regards to these organisations is thus determined. The author's suggestion that the expertise and

influence of ex-government officials or armed officers cannot be supplanted, but must be supplemented with qualified civilian perspectives, was particularly well received.

In failing to address the root causes of the afflictions of think-tanks, however, the author has committed a serious omission, the consequences of which reveal themselves in the limited applicability of the article's recommendations. A lack of stable finance translates into an inability to hire and hold able researchers; the author's recommendations appear to presuppose the ability of think-tanks to acquire the quality of human resources that enables advocacy. Prioritising quality over quantity, as is stipulated in the third recommendation, has become exceedingly tenuous precisely on account of this reality. So long as the ultimate cause is not remedied, such recommendations are mere homilies.

Furthermore, in urging think-tanks to research more and convene less, the author overlooks the fact that, in an ecosystem where think-tanks must largely seek core funding from government ministries, convening emerges as a rational means of catching the government's attention by stroking its vanities. Think-tanks will only be incentivised to set aside convening for research in the event that funding from other sources becomes more forthcoming. The question of promoting autonomy in think-tanks also harks back to the question of funding. In the USA, for example, think-tanks are well poised to reserve autonomy by eschewing government funding which can be sustainably done due to the variety of funding sources available to think-tanks. So long as think-tanks in India are unable to diversify the sources from which they receive funding, autonomy will remain a pipe dream, subject to the idiosyncrasies of government.

With regards to the recommendation of lateral entry into policy-making, the presupposition that think-tanks are capable, by and large, of producing the quality of research fit for government consumption detracts from its general applicability. Think-tanks that are on the verge of insolvency will necessarily struggle to produce policy-relevant research since they will associate themselves with projects not by virtue of capability, but by virtue of necessity of survival. Lateral entry is detrimental to policy-making in such conditions.

It is ironic that the primacy of survival is given short shrift in this article authored by a foreign policy expert. It fails to record that, in order to make useful policy recommendations, a think-tank must first be assured of its continued existence. On account of the public goods nature of the output of think-tanks, survival itself becomes a herculean endeavour. Securing stable and diversified funding must, therefore, be the first order of affairs while contemplating think-tanks.

Takeaways for the National Maritime Foundation

The National Maritime Foundation (NMF), like many think-tanks in the country, draws funding from a corpus consisting of contributions from sources that include the Indian Navy and the MEA. However, ramping up the quality of research conducted will require generating more sources of income and funding. Although providing policy inputs is the main focus of a think-tank, it can monetise some of the by-products of the research it conducts.

Given that India has historically suffered from sea blindness and educational institutes do a poor job of providing a foundation in maritime issues, this is a gap that the NMF could address. Think-tanks are known to organise paid certificate courses and the NMF can duly exploit its expertise in areas as niche as maritime issues. Imparting a breadth of knowledge with regards to maritime affairs will also broaden the human resource base from which the NMF can absorb researchers in the future. Students of the social sciences should be encouraged to enrol; linking with universities in the form of MoUs should be undertaken. Course-takers that are proactive and proficient in the English language should be offered internships; an intern that arrives at the NMF with a foundation in maritime issues could be better immersed into the think-tank's affairs. Since the maritime domain is a niche, a significant deal of advertising will be imperative to prompt students to opt for such a course.

Visibility to the broader public is an important and underappreciated requirement for the nourishment of a think-tank. It translates into a sustained

readership and, by extension, funding in the medium and long run, since it allows a think-tank to eventually erect pay-walls around their research without risking a significant erosion of the readership they command. Partnering with media houses can allow the NMF to register itself with the broader public. As geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific brings the maritime domain to the forefront of the news cycle, news agencies will seek experts in the field for interviews. The NMF should be on their call list. The Communications head at the NMF should take on the duty of being a media guide.

Due to the internet, the costs of broadcasting information have reduced considerably. Podcasts in particular are of negligible costs and have been received extremely well by the less initiated middle classes that are hard pressed for time to read. The NMF could produce podcast versions (not audiobooks) of its issue briefs and commentaries. These should be free in the short run but could be partially or completely monetised as subscribership increases.

With respect to the substance of the research conducted, foreign policy think-tanks in India are in desperate need of personnel with skills in economics and data analytics. Analysing the wage, employment and value addition levels specific to the maritime economy, relating these metrics to the larger domestic economy and recommending policies whereby this sector's contribution can increase, will duly draw attention to the importance of the maritime sector. Developing competencies in the field of economics could also attract the attention of corporates and lead to funding opportunities.

The think-tank community in India is well poised to ride the coattails of India's global ascent. India's foreign policy trajectory will depend upon the ability of the think-tank community to rise to the occasion and facilitate a synergy between government, think-tanks and academia. The arrival of global competition to Asia and its manifestation in the maritime domain confers upon the NMF, the opportunity to rise into the upper echelons of academic excellence.

**Uday Khanapurkar is an Intern at the National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi. The views expressed are his own and do not reflect the official policy or the position of the NMF. He can be reached at uday.khanapurkar.96@gmail.com.*

CRITIQUE 11

Urvashi Jain*

Think-tanks are centres of excellence, a platform for experts, where they meet not only to provide solutions or multiple viewpoints but also to raise unaccounted concerns and create consciousness about issues having policy relevance and practical application. Think-tanks are the specialized bodies for showing the mirror/truth and doing cost benefit analysis thereby aiding the government through various suggestions having viability. This way think-tanks act as a catalyst but for this to happen, it is imperative on the part of the government to not just encourage but also take due cognizance of such outputs and given by the think-tanks and being receptive to it while formulating policies.

Dhruv Jayashankar's article "Can India's Think-tanks Be Truly Effective?", briefly outlines the recent growth of the number of think-tanks in India with Carnegie joining its Washington neighbour The Brookings institution in New Delhi. In the article, he has also presented his views on the present status of think-tanks in India, problems faced by the think-tanks and have also suggested various measures regarding the same.

Jayashankar has correctly pointed out the change in the status of the think-tanks that the Think-tanks presently serve as a venue not only for military officers but also for political leaders, bureaucrats and foreign counterparts, the media, academics, corporate representatives and the wider public to exchange views and interact with other actors. During the Second World War, the think-tanks were limited to providing military advices only.

Talking of the think-tanks as being glorified talk shops represents a grave danger towards the proliferation of think-tanks in India as it results in public apathy, leading to the think-tanks not being viewed as cost-effective and for the youth to be pursuing career in research at think-tanks as unworthy. This perception needs to be changed.

Therefore, in order to attract the best research talent and produce independent works.¹⁰ Think-tanks could be affiliated to universities or be funded by foundations, trusts and individuals, as done in Western countries. This way think-tanks can act as a bridge between the academic community and policymaking functionaries.¹¹ As Richard Haas writes: “Think-tanks... fill a critical void between the academic world, on the one hand, and the realm of government, on the other. Think-tanks’ primary contribution... is to help bridge this gap between the worlds of ideas and action...” This will also help in drawing more people towards research and in attracting high quality of researchers thereby truly harnessing and leveraging the demographic potential and the talent that India holds. In addition to this, it will also be addressing one of the main shortcomings faced by the Indian think-tanks today.

Coming to the various measures suggested by Dhruv Jayashankar, it will be more correct to prioritize ‘quality in quantity’ over ‘quality than quantity’. While it is true that today India’s think-tanks often function as homes for retired civil servants and military officers offering a wealth of experience, but it will help if this experience is also used in tapping and harnessing the well-informed and inquisitive youth potential, leading to the creation and promotion of a culture of healthy debate and discourse across the country.

It is correct that in order not to be beholden to the benefactors or thriving on patronage (like the media these days), think-tanks need more autonomy and transparency which will encourage the boldness leading to more objective and serious researches.

However, sound policy recommendations cannot be produced unless the think-tanks are aware about the various constraints which pose a threat. Think-tanks suffer from this lack of information and involvement in stages of government policy-making. This is one of the loopholes which can be plugged if there’s a forum which can bind all the think-

¹⁰ <https://www.esamskriti.com/essay-chapters/India-needs-Independent-Defence-Think-Tanks-1.aspx>

¹¹ <http://www.fsidelhi.org/the-role-of-think-tanks-in-national-security/>

tanks with the Government in one string, leading to the increased interaction and dialogue through interoperability. It will also help synergize the relationship among similar think-tanks and with the government by enhancing cooperation leading to better analysis in the policy formulation and recommendations, thereby will be a move towards institutionalizing the culture of strategic thinking in India. The forum may well can act as a unified and credible voice before the Government, while fostering standards, ethics and practices, much similar to what the Press Council of India (PCI) does for the Press in India. This can further help India to reach top positions where the western countries generally sit owing to their large number of think-Tanks, provided it does not get trapped into the bureaucratic hurdles.¹² Although India has registered significant growth in the last two-three decades, and managed to rank fourth on the list of nations with the most number of think-tanks, with nearly 100 new ones taking the country's total to 280 in 2015, according to the 'Global Go To Think-tank Index Report (GGTTI) 2015'. But it still remains low when compared to the number of think-tanks in USA.

**Urvashi Jain is an Intern at the National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi. The views expressed are her own and do not reflect the official policy or the position of the NMF. She can be reached at urvashijain.1994@gmail.com.*

¹²<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-ranks-4th-in-number-of-thinktanks/articleshow/50790521.cms>

CRITIQUE 12

Yash Das Sharma*

Introduction

The article by Dhruva Jaishankar focuses on the effectiveness of think-tanks in India and the recommendations by which such effectiveness can be achieved. The subject of the article is of vital interest as it lays the foundation of development of the think-tank culture in India. It focuses on the misconceptions and the misrepresentations of this sector and the ways in which the establishment of think-tanks both domestic and international can facilitate increased interest in developing sustainable and holistic policies.

Dhruva Jaishankar is a research fellow in Brookings India, under foreign policy studies. His area of interest lays in India's role in international affairs and the effects of global developments which affect India.

Aim of the Article

The article focuses on the importance of setting up of think-tanks in the country and he draws attention to the establishment of Carnegie (India) and Brookings (India) which are international think-tanks signalling the presence of world's leading foundations in research studies and policy formulation in India which was previously missing. According to the author, the basic aim of think-tanks is to generate ideas and debate under the broad rubric of public policy. He draws a comparison of the functioning of think-tanks to activities performed by business consultants, intelligence analysis, academia research and investigative journalism.

The forum for think-tanks also offer an effective ground for political leaders, bureaucrats and military officers to exchange views and interact with other actors and stakeholders. He also makes a distinction between think-tanks that focus on specific and broader issues respectively. While think-tanks like the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) and the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) have existed since the

middle of the 20th century, the presence of newer think-tanks such as the Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS), Centre for Land and Warfare Studies (CLAWS) and the National Maritime Foundation (NMF) in the 21st century reflected growth and proliferation of Indian institutions.

The final focal point of the article deals with making think-tanks in India relevant under which he suggests certain recommendations which are as follows:

- Asserting more importance to research than convening of conferences.
- Quality should be given priority than quantity
- More autonomy and transparency
- Need of more interactive interactions with think-tank scholars and government officials.
- Research needs to be practical and utilizable.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Article

Strengths

The strength of the article lays on the formulated recommendations by the author. Each parameter is of utmost importance in effective consolidation of think-tanks in India. Giving more importance to research not only benefits the scholars working under the respective institution, but also the institution itself. The greater the numbers of articulated and comprehensive research papers from a particular institute the better the think-tank's respective policies will be in formulating and aiding official decision making.

In suggesting such recommendations, the article paves the way for finding a solution in developing a robust strategic culture in India, which still seems to be missing. Think-tanks can only be effective in India if the government of the country gives it due attention. Hence there is a need of articles such as these, which leads to more thought stimulating ideas demanding implementation.

Weaknesses

The only weakness that comes up is the author's view of instantaneous development of the think-tank sectors in India. While most of the suggestions or recommendations given are very appropriate in establishing an effective environment, such cannot be done overnight. The tone of the author while mentioning such views reflect a tendency of quick action. However, we need to bear in mind that to implement such recommendations; it needs to be passed at different levels of government which we all know entails a very sluggish and tedious process.

A gradual yet sustained effort towards such cause will only bring the desired change the author is trying to bring.

Role and relevance of the National Maritime Foundation

The National Maritime Foundation (NMF) is non-political think-tank, established in 2005. While it is an autonomous think-tank, it is supported by the Ministry of Defence and the Indian Navy. The role of NMF is very vital as it plays a very important part in developing a holistic maritime policy for India. I will try to evaluate the role and relevance of NMF based on the above parameters suggested by Dhruva Jaishankar in his article.

More importance to research: Being an intern currently at the NMF, the foundation's focus lies in finding out the areas of interest of each intern and subsequently according them a time-line to carry a research on their respective topics in a more assertive manner. Importance indeed is given to the research at the foundation that reflects towards the development of not only the foundation but also the research personnel involved.

Quality over quantity: If one ever visits the National Maritime Foundation, he/she would not see a swarming amount of staff or an extravagant infrastructure, although the infrastructure present would remind one of small ship cabins reflecting the creative acumen of the architect. However, the foundation boasts of a very high-quality team. It

comprises of learned and distinguished academicians and retired officers from the navy. Although, the presence of more interns would not hurt the foundation.

More autonomy and transparency: Observing the structure of administration at NMF, it brings up an interesting understanding. The administrative structure at NMF does not necessarily follow the top down approach but it depends more on the bottom up approach. Administrators, who are not at the top tier, also get considerable opportunities to affect the decision-making mechanism of the foundation.

Interactions between think-tank scholars and government officials: NMF hosts numerous conferences, which provide a platform for interaction between think-tank scholars and government officials. The recently concluded 9th NMF-CNA (Centre for Naval Analysis) dialogue is an example of such. Hence, we can say that the NMF in their endeavour to facilitate such conferences and dialogues establish a common platform for discourse between the foundations and other organizations and formal institutions.

From the above parameters we can evaluate the role and relevance of NMF as an effective organization in India that seeks to develop a robust strategic culture which was hitherto missing from the Indian academic system.

**Yash Das Sharma is an Intern at the National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi. The views expressed are his own and do not reflect the official policy or position of the NMF. He can be reached at yash.sharma17-19@ssispune.edu.in.*