

Think tanks in different political systems: A comparative study of British and Iranian policy think tanks

Abstract

The definition, the size, the level of influence and the types of policy think tanks vary substantially in different political contexts. Those characteristics depend on the nature of political system in terms of the level of openness that provides think tanks' access to policy process, the financial system that policy think tanks could benefit from, the legal platforms that those institutions would be based upon and the legitimacy that amplifies their voice to be heard.

This study comparatively investigates the extent and the way that two substantially different political systems frame the characteristics of policy think tanks. On the one hand, Britain enjoys from a set of great potentials to be seen as the European hub of the most influential policy think tanks. The British liberalism, the close US-UK ties, a more developed civil society and access to London as "the Global City" are examples of advantages for the development of policy think tanks in the UK. Nevertheless, another set of constraining characteristics might limit such an expansion. The centralised-majoritarian government, the disciplined Parliamentary party system, a relatively secretive and close policy process, the existence of a permanent neutral civil service and the lack of access to financial resources, at least compared to the US, are of those disadvantageous features of the British political system. On the other hand, Iran is a developing country that is characterised by a fundamentally different political system: the presidential system with a clear distinction of power, a highly politicised and close policy process as well as a less developed civil society and policy communities. Nonetheless, there is a growing wave of creating policy think tanks in order to influence the process of policymaking. This fact gives rise to an interesting research question about the relationship between the nature of political system and the main characteristics of policy think tanks there. This is the main question that this research tries to focus on.

This paper relies on almost 10 semi-constructed interviews with directors and senior advisors of several main London-based policy think tanks, from political parties-affiliated think tanks to those in which they are domestically apolitical, cross-party or internationally influential. In comparison, the British cases have been critically studied against an analysis of mainly newly-established and government dependent Iranian thin tanks on the basis of around 12 conducted interviews.

Keywords: Think tank, Iran, Britain, Policy system

Introduction

The definition and role of think tank

'Think tanks are non-governmental public policy institutions that are intellectually organisationally and financially autonomous from government and from societal interests such as firms, interest groups, and political parties' [1]. They want to influence policy, but have no formal decision-making power; they lay claim to political neutrality while not making a secret of their ideological standpoints [2]. They can inform decision-makers about policy developments in other countries, may play a role in the development of a 'legitimising discourse' for a new policy paradigm [3] and play a role in transnational policy transfer networks by facilitating policy learning (Evans & Davies, 1999; Stone 2004).

Think tanks are public policy institutions that generate policy-oriented research, analysis and advice on domestic and international issues that in turn enable both policymakers and the public at large to make informed decisions about public policy issues. [4] They want to influence policy, but have no formal decision-making power; they lay claim to political neutrality [5] while what think-tanks do is inherently political – regardless of think-tanks' protestations of 'objectivity' and independence from other political actors – and therefore bound to attract attention by media and researchers

Think tanks want to change policy through intellectual argument rather than through behind-the-scenes lobbying. They advocate ideas, maintain and develop policy networks and provide expertise to policymakers (Stone 2004). They inform decision-makers about policy developments in other countries and can play a role in transnational policy transfer networks (Evans and Davies 1999)

Regarding their orientation and functions, think tanks fall within several specific breeds. They may be affiliated or independent institutions that are structured as permanent bodies but not as ad-hoc commissions. These institutions often act as a bridge between the academic and policymaking communities, serving in the public interest as an independent voice that translates applied and basic research into a language and form that is understandable, reliable, and accessible for both policymakers and the public. Hence, academic and policy-oriented research bodies

may be academic-knowledge driven or policy issue driven. Alternatively, think tanks may primarily be engaged in advocacy and project work, and have an emphasis on policy implementation as opposed to policy formulation. Also, some think tanks focus on debate and information-sharing and are committed to dialogue and the dissemination of information through publishing books, journals and articles, leading outreach activities, engaging in media appearances, or organizing conferences, workshops and seminars [¶]

Think tanks can be known as ‘second-hand dealers in ideas’ [§]. They did serve various important functions: as breeding ground, conveyor belt, providers of a modern facade to the party, producers of policy and larger philosophical ideas which influenced party and public, and producers of headlines. [¥] They develop ideas into products, disseminate them to an ‘effective public’ [¥] of opinion formers and participate in strategic communication with civil servants, decision-makers, business people and academics.

Think-tanks are deemed as elite production mechanisms and their influence on politics and policy has been criticized as often unaccountable and in transparent (Denham & Garnett, 1999; Blank, 2003; Biermann & Klönne, 2008; Plehwe, 2010). Think-tanks have been credited for significantly influencing policy discourses, e.g. (Katwala, 2009; McKewon, 2012; Bache & Reardon, 2013; Gagatek & van Hecke, 2011; Dakowska, 2009), but also been made responsible for the displacement of academic ‘public intellectuals’ by think-tank public intellectuals. [¶]

They can inform decision-makers about policy developments in other countries, may play a role in the development of a ‘legitimizing discourse’ for a new policy paradigm [¶] and play a role in transnational policy transfer networks by facilitating policy learning (Evans & Davies, 1999; Stone 2004). They have all given ‘intellectual companionship’ (Denham & Garnett, 1998) to leadership coalitions within political parties and supported them in their policy modernisation efforts. They have been increasingly analyzed as supra-national agents in the trans-nationalization of policy analysis and (social) scientific expertise (Boucher et al, 2004; Struyk, 2002).

Overall, think tanks represent an important subset of the institutions that make up civil society. Their existence contributes to the creation of a robust civil society. In turn, the presence of a robust civil society strengthens the existence of think tanks, creating a ‘virtuous cycle’ of consolidation. [f]

The main distinctive characteristics

In an effort to create a typology that takes into consideration the comparative differences in political systems and civil societies, we have developed a number of categories for think tanks. While think tanks may perform many roles in their host societies, not all think tanks do the same things to the same extent. Over the last 10 years, several distinctive organizational forms of think tanks have come into being that differ substantially in terms of their operating styles, their patterns of recruitment and their aspirations to academic standards of objectivity and completeness in research. It should be noted that alternate typologies of think tanks have been offered by other analysts. We will argue here that in the global context most think tanks tend to fall into the broad categories outlined below. [f]

Category	Definition
Autonomous and Independent	Significant independence from any one interest group or donor and autonomous in its operation and funding from government.
Quasi-Independent	Autonomous from government but controlled by an interest group, donor or contracting agency that provides a majority of the funding and has significant influence over operations of the think tank.
University Affiliated	A policy research center at a university.
Political Party Affiliated	Formally affiliated with a political party.
Government Affiliated	A part of the structure of government.
Quasi-Governmental	Funded exclusively by government grants and contracts but not a part of the formal structure of government.

Table 1 Categories of Think tanks

In another classification, think tanks can be categorized according to:

1. The range and scope of their activities (broad or narrow)

- γ. Their political affiliations (independent or partisan)
- δ. Their area of specialization
- ε. Their source of funding
- δ. Their organizational structure
- ε. Modes of operation
- γ. Audience or market

[Think tanks and political context](#)

Campbell and Pederson (2008) have started to systematically study think-tanks as part of ‘knowledge regimes’ which vary according to different types of production and policy-making regimes (also Pautz, 2008a). When we look at continental Europe, we mostly find research which analyses think-tanks in their national context (Pautz, 2008b; Williams, 2008; Thunert, 2008; Bohle & Neuhöffer, 2008; Stone et al, 1998; Gellner, 1998a). What constitutes a think tank is highly ‘reflective of the socio-political context in which think-tanks were first constituted’ (Stone 2007, 26). In some studies think tanks were defined as non-governmental institutions, independent from government, political parties or organised interests. They want to influence policy, but have no formal decision-making power; they lay claim to political neutrality while often not making a secret of their ideological standpoints.

While defining and categorizing context is an essential issue, we also must understand not only how context influences the effectiveness of think tanks in achieving objectives such as policy influence, but also how context factors affect the decisions that think tank leaders and project teams face. Understanding these relationships will enable think tanks and those supporting them to better address external context factors that they may face. [1]

In a report from Results for Development Institute and the University of Washington that called “Linking Think Tank Performance, Decisions, and Context” a framework for thinking about context of think tanks has developed. It has different parts. As already mentioned the political and economic factors are important now.

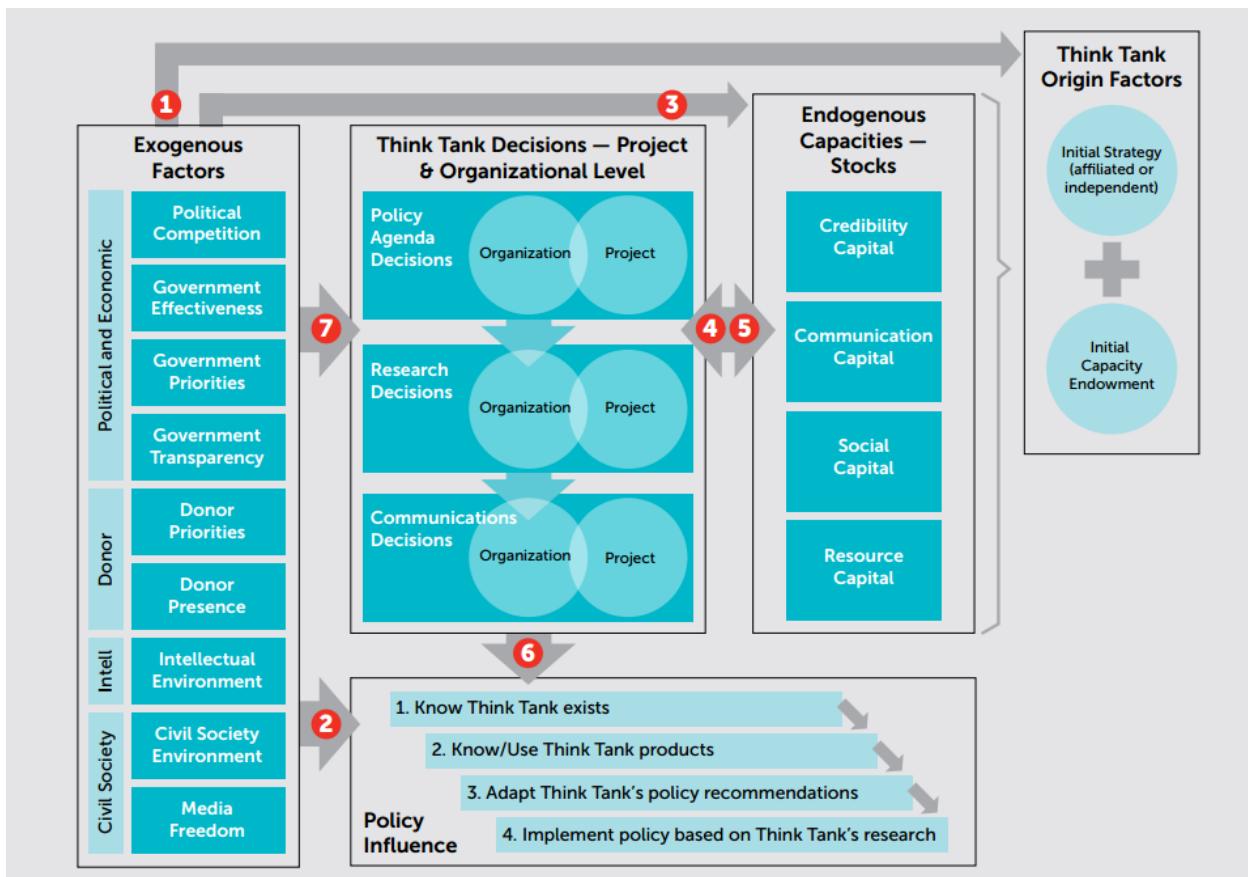


Figure 1 A Framework for Thinking about Context as it Relates to Think Tanks and Their Decisions; source: "Linking Think Tank Performance, Decisions, and Context", Development Institute and the University of Washington

In this report political and economic context is explained with some factors according to brainstorming and focus group .This factors are shown below.

Factor Grouping	Context Factor
Political and Economic Context	Government openness
	Legal environment
	Political will
	Election cycle and changes in leadership
	Decentralization
	Government effectiveness
	Economic crises
	Access to information
	Political oversight
	Sensitivity of issue

Figure 1 Brainstorming Context Factor Results; source: "Linking Think Tank Performance, Decisions, and Context", Development Institute and the University of Washington

Also this report reviews the literature about Political and Economic Context. Its findings identify key factors as: Open political systems, democratic rule; political, civil and media freedoms; economic freedoms, Parties/Factions, level of political competition, Concentration of power, Political transitions and regime change; political volatility, Demand for policy analysis.

Key Factors	Outcomes	Evidence
Open political systems, democratic rule; political, civil and media freedoms; economic freedoms	Think tank spread and proliferation, Presence of think tank culture	McGann and Johnson (2005a); Court and Young (2003); Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal (2010); Ohemeng (2005); Young (2005)
	Influence policy change, but think tank is one of many policy actors	Court and Young (2003a); Executive Director, Armenia (2013)
Parties/Factions, level of political competition	Demand for policy alternatives, New varied ideas	McGann and Johnson (2005a); Hird (2005); Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal (2010)
Concentration of power	Think tank independence and debate; Topic independence	Kimenyi and Datta (2011a); Nachiappan, Mendizabal, and Datta (2010)
	Minimizes the number of policy entities to be influenced	Braun et al. (2010a)
Political transitions and regime change; political volatility	Presents opportunities for think tanks to act, however type of transition may determine pos or neg result	Court and Young (2003); Struyk (1999); Braun (2010a); Kimenyi et al. (2011a)
	Think tank proliferation (after regime change)	Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal (2010); Bentham (2006);
Demand for policy analysis	Think tanks to produce research relevant to current debates	Abelson (2010); Pautz (2011a)
	Influence policy	Braun et al. (2010a); Court and Young (2003a)

Figure 1 Literature Review Findings Summary, Political and Economic Context; source: "Linking Think Tank Performance, Decisions, and Context", Development Institute and the University of Washington

Methodology

Research question

In this study we want to compare the think tanks of two countries, Iran and Britain, and to investigate the influence of political system in the formation and growth of these policy research institutions. So some questions must be answered. The first question is about their political system and position of think tanks in it.

The second question is about situation of think tanks in those countries. profile information such as size, level, antiquity; level of influence in policymaking, connection with political parties and interest groups, their ownership and financing, quality of their reports are some topics that will be discussed.

And the main question here is about the relationship between the nature of political system and the main characteristics of policy think tanks there.

Research method

This paper relies on almost 18 semi-constructed interviews with directors and senior advisors of several main London-based policy think tanks, from political parties-affiliated think tanks to those in which they are domestically apolitical, cross-party or internationally influential. In comparison, the British cases have been critically studied against an analysis of mainly newly-established and government dependent Iranian thin tanks on the basis of around 12 conducted interviews.

Political systems in Britain and Iran

Political structure

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is a unitary state with devolution, is governed within the framework of a parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarchy, in which the monarch, currently Queen Elizabeth II, is the head of state and the prime minister of the United Kingdom is the head of government. Britain's political structure is centralized [1] Executive power is exercised by the British government, on behalf of and by the consent of the monarch, as well as by the devolved governments of Scotland and Wales, and the Northern Ireland Executive. Legislative power is vested in the two chambers of the Parliament of the United Kingdom, the House of Commons and the House of Lords, as well as in the Scottish parliament and Welsh and Northern Ireland assemblies. The judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature. The highest court is the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom. [2]

The politics of Iran take place in a framework of a theocracy in a format of syncretic politics that is guided by a repressive, non-secular Islamic ideology. The December 1979 constitution, and its 1989 amendment, define the political, economic, and social order of the Islamic Republic of Iran, declaring that Shia Islam of the Twelver school of thought is Iran's official religion.

Iran has an elected president, parliament (or Majlis), "Assembly of Experts" (which elects the Supreme Leader), and local councils. According to the constitution all candidates running for these positions must be vetted by the Guardian Council before

being elected. In addition, there are representatives elected from appointed organizations. [၃]

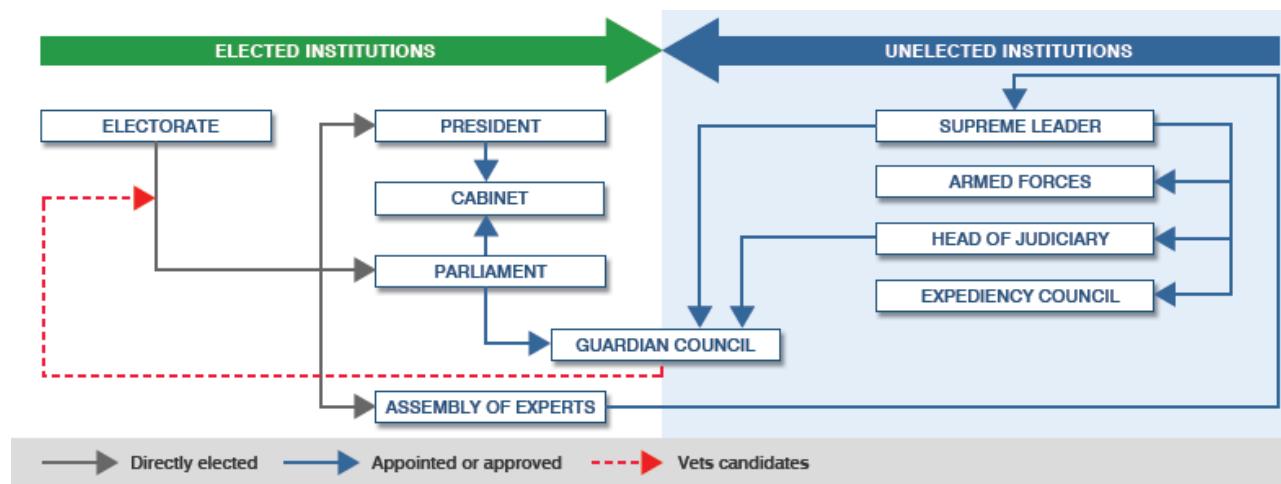


Figure ၁ How Iran is ruled; source: BBC News

Political parties

The Conservative Party (or Tory party) was in government for two-thirds of the twentieth century, but it has been in opposition since losing the ၁၉၇၇ election to the Labour Party. Its modern politics are considered to be ‘centre-right’. The Labour Party was founded at the start of the twentieth century. In ၁၉၉၇ it won the general election under Tony Blair, its first since ၁၉၇၄. The Party describes itself as the ‘democratic socialist party’ and is considered to be ‘centre-left’. The Liberal Democrats (Lib Dems.) are the third-largest party in the UK parliament. However the Party has never been in government. Their ideology is described as giving ‘power to the people’ with politics considered to be ‘centre/centre-left’. United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) has had a growing influence in the United Kingdom. The party’s principal aim is the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union. British National Party (BNP) is a ‘far right’ political party which is hugely controversial in the United Kingdom. It aims to protect native British homogeneity by reducing UK immigration. The Green Party’s radical politics are underpinned by core values to do with ensuring we look after the natural environments around us. [၃]

Iranian constitution which came into effect after the victory of Islamic revolution of ၁၉၇၉ does recognize the formation and activity of political parties. According to article ၂၆ of the Constitution and under the general framework of “Freedom of Association”

the constitution states that the formation of parties, societies, political or professional associations, as well as religious societies, whether Islamic or pertaining to one of the recognized religious minorities, is permitted provided they do not violate the principles of independence, freedom, national unity, the criteria of Islam, or the basis of the Islamic Republic. No one may be prevented from participating in the aforementioned groups, or be compelled to participate in them.

Iran went from being a single-party state under the monarchy to having close to 100 political parties in the months immediately following the 1979 Islamic revolution. The emergence of the Islamic Republic Party (IRP) and the Mujahedin of the Islamic Revolution Organization (MIRO) can be viewed in this context.

The following is a short list of the main entities and groups which see themselves as political parties although they may not fully fit to be recognized as a fully functioning political party: [Δ]

- Executives of Construction Party (Kargozaran-e Sazandegi)
- Islamic Coalition Party (ICP) (Hezb-e Motalefeh-ye Eslami)
- Combatant Clerics Association (MRM) (Majma-ye Ruhaniyun-e Mobarez)
- Party of Moderation and Development (Hezb-e Etedal va Toseh)
- Tehran Combatant Clergy Association (JRM) (Jameh-ye Ruhaniyat-e Mobarez-e Tehran)
- National Trust Party (Hezeb-e Etemaad-e Melli)

Civil society

The concept of civil society has inspired much debate and controversy. There are different approaches to defining civil society, as well as different types of definitions, the most common distinction being made between empirical and normative conceptions of civil society.

Within the terms of reference for this study commissioned by the Carnegie UK Trust, civil society is understood as that space of organised activity not undertaken by either Government or for-profit business. It encompasses the voluntary and community sectors, trades unions, faith groups, co-operatives and mutuals, political parties and philanthropic foundations. It is recognised that this space is not tightly delineated. In both countries there is a close inter-relationship between the public policies and programmes of governments and local government and civil society and also

between business and civil society, for example, corporate social responsibility programmes. In both cases there can be partnership and conflicts of interest. [¶]

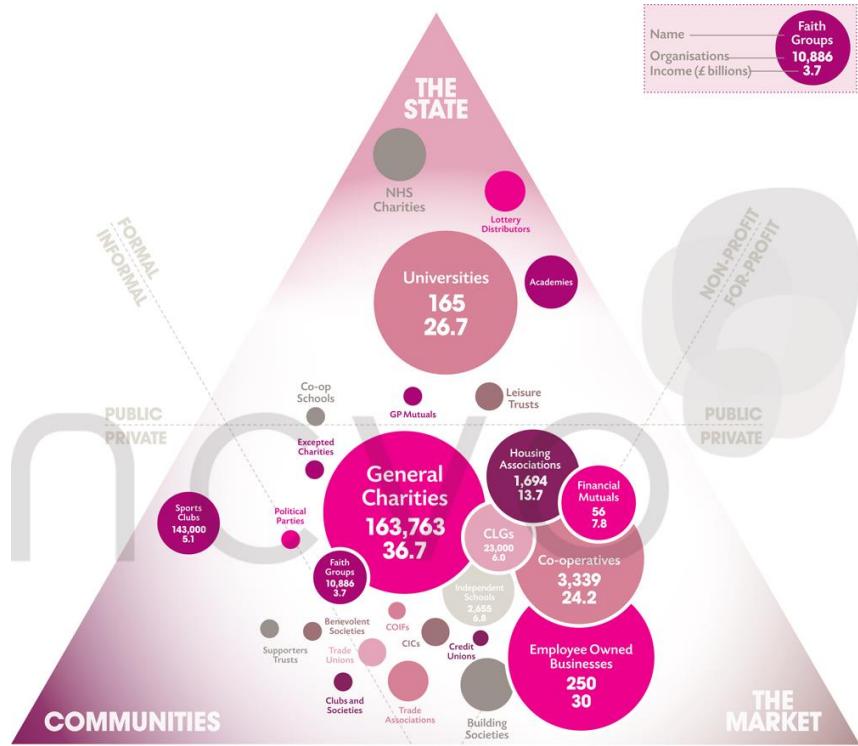


Figure 4 Types of UK civil society organisations, by income, 2011; source: NCVO/TSRC

This graphic, presents civil society at its centre in UK. Organisations at or near the boundaries of civil society are often said to be 'hybrids', sharing the characteristics of different sectors: social enterprise, for example, sits at the boundary with the market. Social movements sit at the boundary with communities. Over time, these boundaries are changing – as is the location of organisations. [Δ]

Although the seemingly sizable list of the setbacks in the road towards a just, free and fair society gives cause for concern to all those who are sincerely trying to bring about genuine changes in Iranian society, the complex realities of modern Iran leave enough room for being optimistic about the future of civil society in Iran. In considering such a future, it must be borne in mind that Iranian society is still suffering from the impact of a long and brutal tradition of despotism. When the Shah's regime was toppled, people were half-jokingly telling each other that there are small shahs hidden inside each of us, which are yet to be ousted. The fact that people have warmly responded

to Khatami's reform programme, however, is a testimony to their readiness to rid themselves of the old habits.

Some factors could impede the consolidation and proper functioning of civil society in Iran. For instance, the fact that Iran is a vast country with diverse ethnic groups surrounded by neighbours with little or no democratic credentials means that, among other things, a powerful state needs to be in control to ward off any threat to national security and territorial integrity. The gradual emergence of a new logic of cost and benefit amongst the Iranian intelligentsia, which is replacing the original logic of sacrifice and selflessness prevalent in the early days of the revolution, could also act as a hindrance. Fewer people are nowadays ready to risk their livelihood, let alone their lives, for the sake of consolidating the institutions of civil society, in the face of menacing reactions from the more conservative classes. Notwithstanding these negative factors, the potential for the formation of a fully-fledged civil society in Iran remains quite strong: whereas, according to some writers, many of the nations in the Middle East region are not well acquainted with modernity [۸], Iranians are at home with modern ideas and institutions. This internal propensity is also being assisted by two external factors: the phenomenon of globalization, among other things, has facilitated the introduction of new ideas and models to Iranian society, and recent international developments, especially the fall of the Ba'athist regime in Iraq, have had a significant impact on the views and attitudes of Iranians at all levels. All in all, it does not seem far-fetched to predict that, given all the forces operating within and without the ecosystem of Iranian society, the future evolutionary path of this society leads towards emergence of a more robust and effective civil society [۹]

[Maturity of civil services](#)

The Government of the United Kingdom contains a number of ministries known mainly, though not exclusively as departments, e.g., Department for Education. These are politically led by a Government Minister who is often a Secretary of State and member of the Cabinet. He or she may also be supported by a number of junior Ministers. In practice, several government departments and Ministers have responsibilities that cover England alone, with devolved bodies having responsibility for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, (for example - the Department of Health), or responsibilities that mainly focus on England (such as the Department for Education).

Implementation of the Minister's decisions is carried out by a permanent politically neutral organization known as the civil service. Its constitutional role is to support the Government of the day regardless of which political party is in power. Unlike some other democracies, senior civil servants remain in post upon a change of Government. Administrative management of the Department is led by a head civil servant known in most Departments as a Permanent Secretary. The majority of the civil service staff in fact work in executive agencies, which are separate operational organizations reporting to Departments of State.

"Whitehall" is often used as a metonym for the central core of the Civil Service. This is because most Government Departments have headquarters in and around the former Royal Palace Whitehall. [1]

In Iran, government reforms fundamentally after revolution in 1979. After it, some ministries change several time, some removed and some others merged or exit from the government. This changes continue until now insofar as last week the bill for demerging of three ministers has delivered to parliament. So civil services in Iran is young and it has a long way to evolution. In term of law, almost there is no deficiency and the Civil Services Management Law is the main relative rule which has passed.

Policymaking process

British policy making has changed from 1975. Here is the main changes in the British policy process since 1975. [2]

1975	2005
Sectorisation and departmentalism	Interdepartmental coordination
Extensive vertical segmentation via policy subsystems	Greater horizontal linkages and coordination across policy subsystems
Policy communities strong and autonomous	Policy communities less closed or stable, and thus somewhat weaker
Many ministers departmental managers first and foremost	Many ministers agenda setters, 'innovators' and policy activists

Civil service advice sought prior to policy formulation	Special advisers and experts play greater role in proffering advice as well as policy development. Civil service role increasingly that of policy management and service ‘delivery’
Policy making predominantly reactive (respond to problems when they arise) ‘Muddling through’	Policy making increasingly proactive (anticipate problems in advance) More evidence-based policy making
Policies from within core executive	Policies from abroad (policy transfer)
Unitary state applied policies nationally	Local level experiments and pilot schemes
Make existing policies work	Develop new policies
Government	Governance
Domestic/national policy	Devolution, Europeanization and globalization
Indivisible sovereignty	Pooled sovereignty

Table 7 Main changes in the British policy process and policy style, 1975-2004; source: *Policy making in Britain*

در ایران سیاست‌ها به چند دسته تقسیم می‌شوند. سیاست‌های کلان تو سط مجتمع تشخیص مصلحت نظام طراحی شده و توسط مقام معظم رهبری ابلاغ می‌شود. و دستگاهها مکلفند انها را در فعالیت‌های خود در نظر بگیرند. در یک سطح پایین‌تر سیاست‌های چند ساله، توسط دولت نگارش شده و توسط مجلس تصویب می‌شود. سایر سیاست‌ها نیز یا به طور مجزا توسط مجلس و یا توسط دولت وضع می‌شوند. شورای نگهبان به عنوان ناظر بر تصمیمات مجلس و تایید کننده‌ی آنها ایفای نقش می‌کند.

There are some ways for policymaking in Iran. Macro policies are designed by Expediency Council (Majmae-Tashkhis-maslehat-nezam) and notified by supreme leader and government organizations must consider them in their activities. At a lower level development policies are designed by cabinet and passed by parliament. Other policies are passed by parliament and final checking is done by Guardian Council. If there is a problem with Consistency with the constitution they ban it and order for review.

The role of lobbies and interest groups

Free societies are pluralist, in that a variety of organisations are allowed to exist and compete for influence over government. No single group can exert a monopoly of power and manipulate the system for its own advantage. In a number of pluralist societies, there are strongly antagonistic ethnic, linguistic or religious organisations; others may be more class-based. Political parties are the most significant of these

bodies, and their composition may reflect some of the differences to which we have referred. But in Western liberal democracies there are thousands of other bodies which seek to influence the conduct of power and make their views known. In all societies there are groups which seek to influence the way the political process operates. [Y]

These groups differ considerably in their internal operation, some being democratically structured, others led by a powerful elite which dominates proceedings on a regular basis. Some are large, others are small; some operate at a national level, others do so regionally or locally; some are particularly effective and have popular appeal, others cater for minority interests and needs. Some are durable and make a great impact; others are short-lived and make little impression. In free societies, groups seek to exert influence via many avenues or access points, mostly peaceful, although on occasion they may resort to more violent forms of protest. Pressure groups have traditionally operated at four main levels, seeking to influence the Executive, the Legislature, the Judiciary and the public at large. In Britain and Europe, they tend to be more closely associated with government than is the case in America. [Y]

Lobbies and interest groups are not mature in Iran. They don't have a legal status and their role-playing are not regulated but there are some groups that affect on policy making. Some of these groups belong to political groups and some are related to ideological groups. Also there are interest groups that are not in line with the governance.

[International connections](#)

The diplomatic foreign relations of the United Kingdom are conducted by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, headed by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. The Prime Minister and numerous other agencies play a role in setting policy, and many institutions and businesses have a voice and a role.

Britain was the world's foremost power during the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, most notably during the so-called "Pax Britannica"—a period of totally unrivaled supremacy and unprecedented international peace during the mid-to-late 1800s. The country continued to be widely considered a 'superpower' until the Suez crisis of 1956, and this embarrassing incident coupled with the loss of the empire left the UK's

dominant role in global affairs to be gradually diminished. Nevertheless, the United Kingdom remains a great power and a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, a founding member of the G7, G8, G20, NATO, OECD, WTO, Council of Europe, OSCE, and the Commonwealth of Nations, which is a legacy of the British Empire. The UK has been a member state of the European Union (and a member of its predecessors) since 1973, but in 2016 a referendum triggered as a result of growing concerns over sovereignty and economic strategy determined that the country would begin proceedings to withdraw from the EU. Since the vote, policymakers have begun pursuing new trade agreements with other global partners. [8]

Foreign relations of Iran refers to inter-governmental relationships between the Islamic Republic of Iran and other countries. Geography is a very significant factor in informing Iran's foreign policy. Following the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the newly born Islamic Republic, under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini, dramatically reversed the pro-American foreign policy of the last Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Since then the country's policies have oscillated between the two opposing tendencies of revolutionary ardor, which would eliminate Western and non-Muslim influences while promoting the Islamic revolution abroad, and pragmatism, which would advance economic development and normalization of relations. Iran currently maintains full diplomatic relations with 17 countries worldwide. [9]

Britain think tanks

ADAM SMITH INSTITUTE

The Adam Smith Institute is a public policy think tank based in the United Kingdom, named after the Scottish moral philosopher and classical economist Adam Smith. It advocates free market and classical liberal ideas, primarily via the formation of radical policy options with regard to Public Choice theory, which political decision makers seek to develop upon. The President of the ASI, Madsen Pirie, has sought to describe the activity of the organisation as "We propose things which people regard as being on the edge of lunacy. The next thing you know, they're on the edge of policy".

Dr. Madsen Pirie, and brothers Eamonn and Stuart Butler were students together at the University of St Andrews in Scotland. Pirie left in 1974 to work for the Republican Study Committee in Washington DC, and then took up a professorship in Philosophy at Hillsdale College. He was joined there by Stuart Butler, while Eamonn Butler went

to work with Edwin Feulner, who became co-founder and director of the free-market think tank The Heritage Foundation. After their US experience, they returned to the UK in 1977 to found their own think tank, the Adam Smith Institute.

The Thatcher era saw the think tank movement come of age and achieve influence, and with the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) and the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS), the ASI was one of three relied upon by the Thatcher government for policy. Unlike the CPS, which had been established by Thatcher and Keith Joseph, and the IEA, which focused on more theoretical matters, the ASI was well-placed to produce bold and direct policies. Despite this role, the Adam Smith Institute developed an iconoclastic reputation, cynical about politicians, but enthusiastic to engage with them. The Institute's relationship with Thatcher was not without troubles. In January 2009 Foreign Policy and the University of Pennsylvania named the Adam Smith Institute among the top 10 think-tanks in the world outside of the US. The Institute is highly influential in UK public policy, and was "a pioneer of privatisation" in the UK and elsewhere.

Early June 2013, the Observer revealed that the Institute of Economic Affairs and the Adam Smith Institute received funding from cigarette firms.^[2]

Both JTI, which makes Camel, and Imperial, whose brands include Embassy, defended their donations to the think tanks. "We believe the contributions of organisations like the ASI and the IEA are very valuable in an open and free society." a spokesman for Imperial told the newspaper.

The ASI confirmed that 3% of its funding came from tobacco firms A spokesman told the Observer it had a policy of capping private donations, but declined to reveal the level of the cap. "However, the latest available company accounts reveal that Adam Smith Services Ltd had an income of just under £750,000 in 2011, which suggests that it received around £24,000 from 'big tobacco'."

CHATHAM HOUSE

In 1919 and during Paris peace meeting, when for the first time, experts were invited to the governments' negotiations, British and American delegates recognized the necessity of an institute to study foreign affairs and then, prevent wars. As a result,

Chatham House was Founded in 1920 and contemporary with US Anglo-Saxons conversation concept of modern international affairs. Based on an interview with one of Chatham House's senior directors who had been working for a major US think tank a few years before joining Chatham House, they originally aimed to help UK Empire but the mission gradually evolved to giving hand to the world through critical issues. Also, they played an important role in both war and post-war years through both providing information for armed forces and construction.

Chatham House engages governments, the private sector, civil society and its members in open debate and confidential discussion on the most controversial developments in international affairs. These affairs range from climate and energy to transatlantic relations. The institute runs more than 200 private and public conferences, workshops, and roundtables annually.

In addition to undertaking wide-ranging research, Chatham House hosts high-profile speakers from around the world. Recent speakers include Shinzo Abe, David Cameron, Aung San Suu Kyi, Christine Lagarde, Madeleine Albright, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Abdullah Gül, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Herman Van Rompuy, Muhammad Yunus, Ban Ki-Moon

Financially, Chatham House is a charity and non-profit organization. They uphold the principles of integrity, independence, objectivity and accountability in accepting any funds. Therefore, this approach ensures that all of their activities contribute to the institute's mission and public benefit. Anyway, they have some particular funders helping giving them a hand. Firstly, they were funded by rich members but the process of funding changed. For example, their income in 2013-14, was mainly gained by the research they did for both British and other governments. Also, corporate and individual membership and philanthropic support accounted for 23% (£2.9m) of Chatham House's income in 2013-14. According to the interview mentioned before, unlike other European countries in which think tanks are fully supported by the governments, every donator including NGOs is willing to fund them because Chatham House as a global think tank is not dominated by UK government. They believe that UK government is just a client exactly like all other clients.

Chatham House as a London-based but globally involved think tank, is not affiliated to any political party. Actually, they assume themselves as a completely independent think tank.

CENTER FOR POLICY STUDIES

Center for Policy Studies was founded by Sir Keith Joseph and Margaret Thatcher in 1974 to promote the principles of a free society and has since played a global role in the dissemination of free market economics. In a report published in 2018, The Telegraph claimed that Center for Policy Studies is among the top twelve British think tanks. Its role in developing the policies of privatization, low-tax government and support for the family is recognized across the world. They also assert that they prioritize the concepts of duty, family, liberty, and the rule of law. The CPS has a stated goal of serving as the champion of the small state. To reach this goal, it has published an abundance of reports such as Andrew Tyrie's 'After the Age of Abundance' which influenced the Chancellor's conference speech and subsequent Treasury policy.

Center for Policy Studies' officials believe that they hold an independent position towards political parties and controversy among themselves, hence, it is known as a conservative think tank. Although no information on the names of the people or organizations backing Center for Policy studies exists, they have just published that they are supported by both organizational and individual donations and membership fees.

Introducing the CPS, it is inevitable to mention Lord Saatchi and Tim Knox as people who are leading this conservative think tank because the existence of CPS owes significantly to them.

DEMOS

Demos was founded in 1993 by former Marxism Today editor Martin Jacques, and Geoff Mulgan, who became its first director. It was formed in response to what Mulgan, Jacques and others saw as a crisis in British politics. It includes decline in voter engagement and inability of political institutions to adapt to major social changes. Demos was conceived as a network of networks which could draw together different sources of ideas and expertise to improve public policy.

In the run up to the 1997 general election, it was seen as being close to the Labour Party, in particular, its then leader Tony Blair. Its first director, Geoff Mulgan went on to work inside Downing Street in 1997 and at that time Demos was seen as central to New Labor's vision for Britain. However, Demos considers itself independent of any political party.

Demos works with a number of partners including government departments, public sector agencies and charities.

As of 2014, Demos has several core research programs: Welfare and public services, Good business, Citizenship, Integration, and Social media analysisDemos publishes a quarterly journal, titled Demos Quarterly, which features articles from politicians, academics and Demos researchers. The organization is an independently registered charity. As a result, their ideas are supported by a wide range of private and public funders. Demos does not accept funding from political parties. They are supported by numerous funders whom are introduced by the think tank itself. Each year, they publish a clear report of their annual funding on their website.

[FABIAN SOCIETY](#)

The Fabian Society was founded on 4 January 1884 in London as an offshoot of a society founded a year earlier called The Fellowship of the New Life. The members wanted to transform society by setting an example of clean simplified living for others to follow, but when some members also wanted to become politically involved to aid society's transformation, it was decided that a separate society, the Fabian Society, also be created. The Fabian Society, which favored gradual change rather than revolutionary change, was named –in honor of the Roman general Fabius Maximus (nicknamed "Cunctator", meaning "the Delayer"). Also, about the history of the Fabian Society, suffice it to say that The Fabian Society is the Britain's oldest political think tank.

The society is alone among think tanks in being a democratically-constituted membership organization, with almost 1,000 members. The Fabian Society is ruled by the democratically-elected Executive Committee while routine operation of the society is overseen by the General Secretary.

At the time being, let us recognize to which party the society is affiliated. The society was one of the original founders of the Labor Party and is constitutionally affiliated to

the party as a Socialist Society. These are membership organizations in sympathy with the party, which sit alongside trade unions as organizational members. The society is however editorially, organizationally and financially independent of the Labor Party and works with a wide range of partners of all political persuasions and none.

The Fabian Society is a non-charitable membership organization which is backed mostly by charitable trusts and sponsorship. It gains revenue by selling its membership and distinguished publications too. It has not been yet recognized whether the society is financially supported by the Labor party or not, however, the society describes itself as having influence on not being influenced by the party.

[**HENRY JACKSON SOCIETY**](#)

The Henry Jackson Society is a British think tank established in March 1990 by academics and students at University of Cambridge (many of whom were affiliated with the Centre for International Studies). It is named after Henry M. Jackson, a US Democratic senator who has been always praised for his anticommunist position.. This society believes that Henry Jackson's legacy is as relevant today as his policies were during the Cold War; indeed, perhaps it is even more important than at any time previously.

About the influence that this society has on the British government policy, many reports have been provided. For instance, Laura Stuart from the Middle East Monitor explains this issue. The article called The Henry Jackson Society and Scaremongering with AIPAC, states that the society pushes an anti-Muslim agenda with executive director Alan Mendoza at top. She further claims that it currently serves as a secretariat, at the House of Commons, to the all-party parliamentary groups for transatlantic and international security and for homeland security.

The organization is a registered charity, The Henry Jackson Society Project for Democratic Geopolitics, and earns financial backing from private donations and grant-making organizations which support its work. Nevertheless, this is just a superficiality of the funding because it has refused to reveal sources of its funding. It is also believed that the Henry Jackson Society funded by the Islamophobia industry should be stripped of its charitable status.

The Stanley Kalms foundation, gave the society £1... last year. Baron Kalms, once a big Tory donor, called then shadow foreign secretary William Hague an "ignorant

“armchair critic” for criticising Israel’s actions in the 2006 war in Lebanon. He was expelled from the Tory party in 2009 after voting for Ukip.

INSTITUTE OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

In June 1988, *The Free Convertibility of Sterling* by George Winder was published, with Fisher signing the foreword as Director of the IEA. In November 1988, the IEA’s Original Trust Deed was signed by Fisher, John Harding and Oliver Smedley.

The IEA is an educational charity and independent research institute limited by guarantee. Ideas and policies produced by the Institute are freely available from the website for any individual or organization to adopt, but they do not “sell” policy. The Institute is entirely independent of any political party or group, and is entirely funded by voluntary donations from individuals, companies and foundations who want to support its work, plus income from book sales and conferences. It does no contract work and

INSTITUTE FOR FISCAL STUDIES

The Institute for Fiscal Studies is an economic research institute based in London, United Kingdom, which specializes in UK taxation and public policy. It is politically independent and produces both academic and policy-related findings. The Institute was founded by four financial professionals – a banker and later Conservative Party politician (Will Hopper), an investment trust manager (Bob Buist), a stockbroker (Nils Taube) and a tax consultant (John Chown) in response to the passing of the 1988 Finance Act.

Today, IFS is Britain’s leading independent microeconomic research institute. Its research remit is one of the broadest in public policy analysis, covering subjects from tax and benefits to education policy, from labour supply to corporate taxation.

IFS is host to the ESRC Centre for the Microeconomic Analysis of Public Policy which analyses fiscal policy to determine its effects on households and companies. The Centre’s work covers the full extent of policy impact, investigating the ways in which policies influence human capital investments, work and occupational choice, firm behaviour, saving and retirement decisions, consumer choices and the public finances.

Whitehall has funded the IFS to the tune of £2.5 million. To take just a few examples:

- The Department for Work and Pensions has spent £1,7 million.
- The Department for Education has spent £4...
- The Department of Business and Skills has spent £25...
- The Treasury has spent £15...

This funding from Whitehall does not include the money paid directly to the IFS by the BBC, the devolved administrations in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, the Bank of England, or the European Commission: all major supporters. Therefore, the true public sector cost of the IFS will be much higher than it appears.

[INSTITUTE FOR GOVERNMENT](#)

Lord David Sainsbury, one-time minister of science and innovation and affiliated to the labour party, founded Institute for Government with 15 million pounds since he believed that the process of government did not work effectively. In order to manage to handle the situation, he went for founding an academic body or a training center. This hybrid model made the institute for Government to exist. Created in 2010 and located in London, Institute for Government is an independent charity which aims to improve government effectiveness.

By comparing founding time of the institute with other think tanks like Chatham House, it is totally clear that it lacks such a history. What matters to us is not why this institute was founded. What matters is the reason of why it keeps its engagement with MPs and top UK civil servants. Those reasons are as follows:

- Supporting the development and skills of senior public servants, politicians and political advisors;
- Conducting and funding research on public administration and government;
- Providing ‘thought leadership’ on effective government through publications, seminars and events.

The key factor separating the institute from others is that it believes to be Trusted, meaning that civil servants should find the institute for Government useful and open to discuss issues that are difficult to discuss in the Whitehall.

The institute is mostly funded by Gatsby Charitable Foundation managed by Lord Sainsbury. He created this foundation to help government and opposition politicians to prepare for political transitions and government. Based on an interview with Lord Sainsbury, the opposition always comes up with great ideas. The institute is also financially backed by other sources according to an interview with a senior member of the institute.

INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH

The Institute for Public Policy Research was the brainchild of Clive Hollick, who developed the idea for an independent progressive think tank in 1986. With John Eatwell, Lord Hollick spent two years establishing the institute, which was publicly launched in 1988 with Tessa Blackstone as its first chair and the late James Cornford as its first director. Located in London, IPPR was established as a charity with educational objectives and from the beginning has involved trustees from varied political backgrounds. In the early 1990s, they published the highly influential report of the Commission on Social Justice. It laid out an ambitious agenda of social policy reform that had a lasting impact on public policy debates. IPPR North which is a dedicated think tank to the north of England was also created in 2004, with an office opening in Newcastle, a second office was opened in Manchester in 2012. They are an independent registered charity with more than 40 staff members, paid interns and visiting fellows. They are autonomous but known as training ground for many of Labor's special advisers. It is credited with developing Labor's policies on New Deal and Child Trust Funds.

The Institute for Public Policy research as a registered charity does not accept any money from the political parties. The funders range from individual donations, charitable trusts, foundations, unions and businesses to local government and national government departments. They assert that since there is a motivation among people to help think tanks, they should try to implement full financial transparency. As a result, every year, they publish their annual report which shows how their funds are gained and spent. Who Funds You? Has awarded IPPR a top transparency rating of 'A'. Below, there is a chart outlining their financial resources.

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

The IISS was founded in the UK in 1958 with a focus on nuclear deterrence and arms control. Today, it is also renowned for its annual Military Balance assessment of countries' armed forces and for its high-powered security summits, including the Shangri-La Dialogue.

Both a private company limited by guarantee in UK law and a registered charity headquartered in London, the IISS also has offices in Washington, Singapore and Manama, Bahrain. The IISS is a non-partisan organization, independent of government and other bodies. Its mission is to promote the adoption of sound policies to further global peace and security and maintain civilized international relations.

As it was mentioned earlier, the IISS is a charity and must present its annual financial report to relevant representatives. IISS has a huge financial turnover every year. In 2014, its total income exceeded 18 million pounds much of which was gained by holding debates and international conferences.

POLICY EXCHANGE

Based in London, Policy Exchange is a British right-wing think tank created in 2002 by a group including Nicholas Boles (director), Michael Gove (chairman) and Francis Maude. Maude went on to become Minister for the Cabinet Office, and names being one of the co-founders as his proudest political achievement. Gove went on to become Secretary of State for Education. The Daily Telegraph has depicted it as "the largest, but also the most influential think tank on the right". Also, the New Statesman named it as David Cameron's "favorite think tank".

It works with academics and policy advisors across the political spectrum, and members of its advisory councils include Lord Trimble, Peter Clarke, former Head of the Metropolitan Police Counter Terrorism Command, James Cameron, Executive Director of Climate Change Capital, and Simon Stevens, former health advisor to Tony Blair.

Although claimed to be an educational charity, not clear financial resources are defined. However, affiliated to the right wing, it is crystal clear that Policy Exchange is mostly supported by the aforementioned political party. Moreover, this think tank is labeled as the "neo-conservative attack dog" but it may or may not be supported

financially by the Israel lobby in England. Where does the money come from? All are connected to groups whose purpose is to change the direction of public life. None will reveal who funds them.

[POLICY NETWORK](#)

Policy Network is an international progressive think tank and research institute based in London. The President of Policy Network is former UK First Secretary of State and EU Trade Commissioner Lord Peter Mandelson; Lord Roger Liddle, former Special Adviser to President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso and UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, is the Chairperson.

Policy Network receives funding and support from a number of sources including private donations, sponsorship and grants. Policy Network is committed to only accept sponsorship for projects that advance the aims and core values of the organization. In 2013, Policy Network received funding from Lord Sainsbury of Turville and from organizations: the Barrow Cadbury Trust, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the Foundation of European Progressive Studies, the Samuel Lindow Foundation, the Confederation of British Industry, the City of London Corporation, and the European Commission Representation in the United Kingdom. External funding and partnerships supports their research, publications and allows them to provide conferences, seminars, and debates at no cost to participants, the vast majority of which are open to the public.

[Iran think tanks](#)

Think tanks do not have much experience in Iran, And the oldest one has less than 10 years old. Since there is not so much information from think tanks in Iran and during interviews, there was no extensive information, Iranian think tank study will be presented in aggregate.

some centres are not known in Iran as the think tank, but their activities are consistent with the nature of think tanks so they are considered as think tanks. A growing trend in the establishment and development of think tank is visible in Iran and various government departments tend to their specialized output. Therefore necessary financial resources to develop these centres are supplied.

According to various criteria, they can be categorized:

[The range and scope of their activities](#)

Most Iranian think tanks like Department of Eurasian Studies, east politics think tank, Institute for Political and International Studies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (IPIS) are focused on a central issue. But some ones such as GPTT¹, ITAN², Starategic Borhan think tank, TETRA has established several groups in several issue like economic, politics, energy, governance, farming and etc. and do various researches.

[Their source of funding:](#)

Most Iranian think tanks are funded by government sources and A few ones like GPTT or ITAN attract donates and do projects for spending their own affairs

[Political affiliation](#)

As it mentioned most Iranian think tanks belong to government or their subset so political affiliation to government can be considered. The main problem for these institutes is the managerial change in their superior department. If there is a change in political atmosphere then these think tanks' orientation change. So knowledge accumulation and long term projects impair. Parliament research center and Presidential Strategic Studies Center are examples. Other think tanks have no direct affiliation to political parties although there is Intellectual nearby between them but they deny any organizational or political affiliations.

[Audience or market](#)

In Iran think tanks` audience determine based on the scope of their activities. Thinks tanks with clear specialized scope have niche market and deliver their products to their specified audience. But think tanks like GPTT or ITAN that have a several professional groups deliver their products to many different audience like ministries, parliament`s commissions and even government broadcast.

[Comparing and Conclusion](#)

Conclusion of the paper will be presented in a table according to data which has gathered about their context and their think tanks. These outputs are result of a deep analysis about political system and its subset in these countries and their relation between think tanks. In this table some factors are considered for comparing two

¹ Government Public policy ,Think Tank

² Iran Technology Analysts Network

habitats. These factors are General features, relationship with political parties, influence on policy making, Ownership and financing and output quality.

	Iran	Britain
General features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few think tanks with a short history • Members are mostly ordinary people without academic and administrative records • Perform low number of projects over the year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are many think tank with different scopes and long history • Most members are high-profile and have executive or academic resume • Mass wide and deep research and policy brief
relationship with political parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of formed parties • Polar electoral system (policy debate goes to the periphery) • Person-centered political system • presidential political system • Lack of local political representation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • long and deep relationship • direct effect on the decisions of the parties • clear position for think tanks in parties
influence on policy making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited direct influence to • Closeness of political administrative system • Politicizing of policymaking 	Multiple examples over the years in various fields
Ownership and financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • affiliated to government institutions • Financing sectional • Lack of charity system incentive • Lack of intellectual charity culture • Political Rent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly clear funding • charity • donation
output quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum university communication • Underutilization of quantitative analysis and limited access to data • faulty incentive system for participation of academics in policy making • Lack of appropriate compliance of output with problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized Output to governmental pass

Table r conclusion, comparing Britain and Iran think tanks

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