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THE WORK OF NON-GOVERNMENT THINK TANKS IN UKRAINE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FULL-SCALE WAR

The article examines the activity of non-governmental Ukrainian think tanks during the full-scale Russian aggression. After 2022, Ukrainian think tanks have to adjust to a new reality. They had to pause in the first days after the full-scale invasion as some had to evacuate to safer locations in Ukraine or abroad. After a short pause, most Ukrainian think tanks resumed full-time work. The work of think tanks and Ukraine's entire civil society during the full-scale war is a phenomenon of sorts. Most of Ukraine's non-government think tanks demonstrated extreme resilience. The author emphasizes that importance of non-government think tanks will grow. Ukrainian think tanks see a window of opportunities in membership negotiations prospects between Ukraine and the European Union. The postwar recovery of Ukraine will be the key frameworks for projects. At the same time new problems faced by think tanks after the full-scale Russian invasion were identified, including security issues, physical and emotional exhaustion, and team retention.

Key words: think tanks, nongovernmental think tanks, Ukraine, war, management, development, policy analyses

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ДІЯЛЬНІСТЬ НЕУРЯДОВИХ АНАЛІТИЧНИХ ЦЕНТРІВ УКРАЇНИ В УМОВАХ ШИРОКОМАСШТАБНОЇ ВІЙНИ

У статті розглядається діяльність неурядових українських аналітичних центрів під час повномасштабної російської агресії. Після 2022 року українські аналітичні центри мають адаптуватися до нової реальності. Їм довелося зробити паузу в перші дні після повномасштабного вторгнення, оскільки деяким довелося евакуюватися в безпечніші місця

в Україні чи за кордоном. Після невеликої паузи більшість українських аналітичних центрів відновили роботу в повному режимі. Робота аналітичних центрів і всього громадянського суспільства України під час повномасштабної війни – це своєрідний феномен. Більшість неурядових аналітичних центрів України продемонстрували надзвичайну стійкість. Автор робить висновок, що значення неурядових аналітичних центрів зростатиме. Українські аналітичні центри бачать вікно можливостей з початком переговорного процесу між Україною та Європейським Союзом. Післявоєнне відновлення України буде ключовим каркасом для проєктів. У той же час були виявлені нові проблеми, з якими зіткнулися аналітичні центри після повномасштабного російського вторгнення, включаючи проблеми безпеки, питання фізичного та емоційного виснаження та аспекти збереження команди.

Ключові слова: аналітичні центри, неурядові аналітичні центри, Україна, війна, управління, розвиток, аналіз політики.

RESEARCH PROBLEM AND RELEVANCE

Think tanks are an important source of quality analysis and profound debate in democratic societies, contributing the element of argumentation into policy- and decision making. In Ukraine, think tanks have evolved in a complex post-soviet context. However, they have developed proactively and impacted political processes. "I was really impressed by the late 1990s and early 2000s in Ukraine. That's when a number of influential think tanks worked in Kyiv that analyzed everything, from politics to government and elections, and conducted sociological surveys," [15] - said Nadia Diuk, an expert in post-soviet countries. After the 2013-2014 Revolution of Dignity, demand for think tanks increased while their work was growing more relevant and impactful. "Following the Revolution of Dignity, think tanks found themselves in better conditions to engage in policy making and implementation. Now, think tanks see their role as an actor in the public policy making process at all three stages, including design, implementation and oversight," comments Oleksandr Sushko, Executive Director of the International Renaissance Foundation [17].

Russia's full-scale invasion of February 24, 2022, forced Ukraine's think tanks, as well as the entire country, to face new challenges. Given their pandemic experience, think tanks quickly adjusted their work to the online format in the first months of the full-scale war. Most did not stop working amidst the full-scale war, and the ones that did suspend operations resumed their work shortly after. Some think tanks reformatted their work immediately to meet wartime needs, including volunteer projects, support for the Army and humanitarian work. Others continued their research in the spheres that were always relevant.

The relevance of this research into non-government think tanks in the context of the full-scale war stems from their strengthened role in helping society comprehend complex wartime processes; their impact on public opinion about the protection of national interest; the distribution of reliable information and discovery of disinformation; their assessment of societal needs; the design of strategies to overcome humanitarian crises; and the design of well-argued proposals on how to counter national security threats comprehensively.

Research into non-government think tanks in the war context is important for stronger national security, building an informed society, and developing efficient public policies. Apart from that, the work of non-government think tanks, as well as the entire civil society of Ukraine, is a phenomenon of resilience that is worth researching. These are the factors that make the problem of this research relevant, given its focus on the work of think tanks during the full-scale war, the challenges they are facing, and the articulation of the areas where their work is particularly valuable and important.

THE ANALYSIS OF THE LATEST RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION

Despite the short amount of time that has passed since the beginning of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, well-grounded research on this topic is already available. A report based on the Ukrainian Civil Society under the War 2022 survey by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology covers civil society overall and non-government think tanks in particular [10].

A series of research by Cedos, a think tank, looks at Ukrainian society through questionnaires, illustrating the opinions, experiences and actions of people in wartime Ukraine[20].

In *New Europe Wonders*, the New Europe think tank surveyed regional opinion leaders on the likelihood of a Russian invasion and how Ukrainian civil society organizations should respond to the threat[22].

Towards European Integration: A Study of Existing Projects, Stakeholder Needs, and Resource Optimization in Ukraine by the Ukrainian Centre for European Policy shows the work done on Ukraine's European integration in 2022-2023 – including the work done by think tanks[16].

Ukrainian Think Tanks as Civil Society Organizations, the key publication on the topic by Laura Christoph, Serhii Shapovalov, and Ljudmyla Melnyk, looks at various aspects of the work of Ukrainian think tanks, including their work during Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine[7]. At the same time, *Ukrainian Think Tanks as Civil Society Organizations* does not explore all aspects of think tank work.

This research, *The Work of Non-Government Think Tanks in Ukraine in the Context of the Full-Scale War*, focuses on the operations of non-government think tanks during wartime. It looks at some aspects that have not yet been covered in other publications, including the work of think tanks in the first months of the full-scale invasion, the challenges they have faced, and how they have contributed to the fight against Russia's aggression.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS RESEARCH

The objective of this research is to analyze the work of non-government think tanks in Ukraine amid the full-scale war, evaluate the impact of their performance on the fight against the Russian aggression.

This research pursues the following tasks:

- o outline the key challenges faced by non-government think tanks that emerged as a result of Russia's full-scale aggression;
- o analyze the management of non-government think tanks in wartime;
- o demonstrate the contribution of think tanks to the fight against the Russian aggression;
- o focus on the aspects of think tank engagement in the reconstruction of Ukraine; and
- o explore the key lessons learned by non-government think tanks during the full-scale war.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There is presently no uniform definition for think tanks. Context, country and the impact of organizations determine this definition. The most debated aspect is whether think tanks should be considered independent institutions – the unique capacity that non-government organizations can have, or whether the definition should take into account the focus of the organization's research work while overlooking its affiliation as non-government, government, university, business/corporate, party or other. The idea that an organization should be independent or autonomous from the government is a typical element of the Anglo-American definition of a think tank that does not take into account other cultures [23, P. 3].

“A think tank is an independent organization that focuses primarily on political research driven by societal needs and makes its research findings available to government actors through various channels to be included in developing the respective policies, then evaluates these policies from the perspective of their significance for primary societal needs,” explains Ukrainian researcher Serhiy Herasymchuk [8].

This research focuses on the work of non-government think tanks because most such organizations in Ukraine are part of civil society and are registered as civil society organizations [15]. This status allows them to be as independent and objective as possible in their research.

Experts of *Notre Europe*, a French research organization, list 9 key criteria that best reflect the essence of a non-government think tank, the most important are: permanent and consistent work;

specialized in producing solutions for public policy; having permanent staff; independent nature of work [4, P. 3].

This research was conducted in several stages.

The first stage included in-depth zoom interviews with the leaders or senior managers of Ukrainian think tanks based in Kyiv and other regions, as well as donors and representatives of foreign research institutions that work with Ukrainian organizations. These included interviews with representatives of the following organizations: Ukrainian Center for European Policy, Razumkov Center, CEDOS, Institute of Analytics and Advocacy, Foundation of Local Democracy, Education and Analytical Center for Community Development, Renaissance Foundation, Civil Society Organization "Initiative Center to Support Social Action "Ednannia", Institut für Europäische Politik, and Foreign Policy Council Ukrainian Prism.

Based on the interviews and other collected data, open and closed questions were designed about the activities of organizations from February 24, 2022, and a Google Forms questionnaire was prepared [18]. This Google form was used to survey representatives of Ukrainian think tanks. The questionnaire was sent to selected non-government think tanks. As the basis for the questionnaire, the author used *Annex 1: Complete list of identified think tanks and the 36 organizations that took part in the online survey of the Think tanks as civil society organizations in Ukraine* research [7].

28 representatives of Ukrainian think tanks, most of them based in Kyiv, responded to the questionnaire.¹

The organizations that responded to the questionnaire, are: Analytical center of the Association of Cities of Ukraine (Kyiv); Analytics Center for Balkan Studies; Vox Ukraine (Kyiv); Data Journalism Agency NGO; Bureau for Policy Analysis NGO (Sumy); Institute of Analytics and Advocacy NGO (Poltava); Pylyp Orlyk Institute for Democracy (Kyiv); DIXI Group NGO (Kyiv); Europe Without Barriers (Kyiv); Institute for Economic Research and Policy Consulting (Kyiv); Institute of Legislative Ideas (Kyiv); Institute of Mass Information (Kyiv); Agency for Legislative Initiatives (Kyiv); Foreign Policy Council Ukrainian Prism (Kyiv); Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research (Kyiv); O. Razumkov Ukrainian Center for Economic and Political Studies (Kyiv); Ukrainian Centre for European Policy (Kyiv); Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation (Kyiv); Foundation of Local Democracy (Kharkiv); Centre for Global Studies Strategy XXI (Kyiv); Centre for Economic Strategy (Kyiv); New Europe Center (Kyiv); Center for Policy and Legal Reform (Kyiv); School for Policy Analysis NaUKMA (Kyiv); ACREC (Kyiv); Case Ukraine (Kyiv); Cedos (Kyiv); ZMINA (Kyiv).

RESEARCH BODY

Preparedness for the full-scale invasion

On February 24, 2022, think tanks found themselves in a new reality, like the rest of Ukraine. While half of the surveyed think tank representatives answered that they expected the full-scale invasion to some extent, they did not think that the Russian aggression would be of this scale.

Respondent 5 "Me personally and my colleagues did not believe it or were prepared to such an extent, even at 5am... We were not prepared at all although we should had foreseen it as analysts".

The organizations that did foresee the Russian invasion and partly expected it implemented various logistic, information and training activities before the war. Among other things, think tanks determined communication channels and developed algorithms of action, thought of the logistics, planned relocation for the team, attended first aid workshops, took care of data security – including transferring data to protected devices, and introduced individual and team security protocols.

¹ The research includes 29 questionnaires because 2 representatives responded from one organization, the Center for Policy and Legal Reform. This fact has no impact on the questionnaire data.

Respondent 4: “On February 23, at night, we presented Safety and Security Policy to the team where we had four security levels: green, yellow, orange and red. We specified indicators for each security level that included financial aspects, security aspects, and personal things.”

The chart on relocation in the first months of the full-scale invasion shows that, in each organization, some employees left their cities, while some staff stayed in their cities, including Kyiv where most think tanks are based [18, question 6].

Respondent 2: “Some of my colleagues stayed in Kyiv, some went to different places, and some colleagues went abroad when they had a chance later.”

At least one member of staff in almost all the think tanks surveyed joined the Armed Forces of Ukraine [18, question 11].

Respondent 2: “Two of our colleagues joined territorial defense as volunteers in the first days, then signed contracts and joined regular units.”

Volunteering

2022 saw a similar development to 2014 as “the role of volunteers in supporting the Ukrainian Army when the Russian aggression was launched was hard to overstate.” [28]. Think tanks joined volunteering both individually, and institutionally.

Respondent 7: “Just like the entire country, think tanks got into volunteering rather than policy analysis in the first two-three months.”

Respondent 4: “... We then provided all kinds of financial humanitarian assistance... I remember vividly how we agreed to this with the donors and were buying materials to make bulletproof vests with the right grade of metal”

Representatives of think tanks specified in the questionnaire that they engaged in many different aspects of volunteering. These included workshops with the collection of donations for the Army, legal assistance to IDPs, support for the victims of war, and financial support for the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Some think tanks developed these activities into standalone projects and continue supporting those in need. For example, the Foreign Policy Council Ukrainian Prism helped buy a generator for the Chernihiv Oblast hospital at the beginning of the war [25]; it then collected funding to help damaged schools in Chernihiv as part of the Angels of Freedom project. For example, they helped school No6 build a modern bomb shelter [27].

Organization of work after the invasion

75.9 % of the surveyed think tanks did not suspend their operations while 24.1% took a short break but resumed their work shortly after.

Respondent 8: “In this, a motivated team is important that is prepared to work in abnormal conditions, willing to engage despite their security issues... This includes an urge to help, and join an effort. Many organizations tried to do research quickly to help local and central governments.”

Importantly, think tanks had the experience of operations during the COVID pandemic and had successful experience of switching their operations to the online format. The think tanks that suspended their work for a brief period resumed it very quickly.

Respondent 1: “We were constantly in touch. Of course, nobody was working in the first weeks, that’s understandable because that was the situation. A month later though, we started working, moving, communicating... We did not stop payments during that month because people needed something to live on, they needed their salaries. So we stopped 50% of our operations but went back to work a month later.”

Most representatives who went to other cities across Ukraine or abroad in the first months of the war have returned. At the same time, the ones who have stayed away are working productively online [18, question 9].

The relocation of some think tank representatives resulted in a mostly hybrid work format whereby most organizations alternate between offline and online operations. This format was popular after the COVID19 pandemic and proved useful during the full-scale war.

Some think tanks have fully quit offline work and switched to remote work.

Almost 50% of organizations that answered the questionnaire do not have bomb shelters in the buildings where they rent offices, and 25.2% have bomb shelters [18, question 13]. Almost 40% do not go to bomb shelters during air raid alarms and 46.4% go to bomb shelters sometimes.

Respondent 3 “We don’t have a centralized policy on getting up and going to a bomb shelter the moment an air raid alarm goes off. We’re like everyone else in Ukraine: sometimes we go to the bomb shelter and sometimes we don’t.”

Most think tanks immediately reformatted their projects because they found it difficult or impossible to keep up with their commitments under the wartime circumstances. All think tank representatives highlighted the fact that the donors responded swiftly and were receptive of the situation.

Respondent 4 “... We were told, let’s save the situation, the country as much as possible. We redistributed resources to support various civilian things – humanitarian and safety”.

Respondent 6 “...The donor asked us what we needed. We saw that there were a lot of civic activists and journalists, there was information about something like an execution list where these people were to be eliminated as the first priority. So, we decided to compensate for a month of living expenses for this target audience.”

Some think tanks continued research on their standard pre-invasion topics. Still, 58.6% of the think tanks covered by this survey took up activities that were different from the normal think tank work. Among other things, think tanks helped evacuate civilians; purchase various things that were necessary for the military, IDPs and victims of the war, including bulletproof vests, medicines, hygiene items, generators and more; crowdfunded for the Armed Forces of Ukraine; provided legal support to IDPs, and supported the affected communities.

Cooperation with the authorities

Over 62% of the think tanks covered by this survey note that their work with the key stakeholders has not changed [18, question 19]. At the same time, they point out that representatives of the authorities have become more closed, access to Parliament and Government has become more complicated, and some data that is necessary for research is no longer available to the public.

Respondent 6 “... For example, government transparency might well become our No1 problem. There is fear that there will be some setback in transparency after the victory. If only we could at least return to the pre-February 24 level.”

Help more than criticize is the key principle in the work of think tanks with the authorities in wartime. Think tanks realize that constructive criticism is important during wartime and are restrained in their criticism.

Respondent 2: “... Of course, experts have been quite balanced and restrained about what has been going on in wartime. This is not quite self-censorship, rather self-control probably... When we all had very limited information about certain developments, causes, phenomena and consequences in this period, of course we tried to be objective – especially in the comments we gave to international audiences.”

The war hardly affected management at think tanks: 65.5% of think tanks did not see any change and the 24.1% that did see change improved their organizational management processes [18, question 24]. Funding proved to be a standalone challenge for non-government think tanks. Interestingly, it manifested itself as the challenge of efficient financial management in institutionally strong and capable organizations and as the shortage of funding in unsustainable organizations [18, question 25].

Think tanks have always struggled with human resources. Representatives of think tanks have often complained in interviews for *think twice UA* about how challenging it was to help analysts grow on the job and keep them with the organization [11]. The full-scale war exacerbated this problem as people left Ukraine, employees have been joining the military, and the remaining staff has been working under increasing pressure.

Respondent 1 “Experts. This is a challenge for everyone.”

Respondent 9 "... What is immediately noticeable is the shortage of human resources and people are on the verge of exhaustion."

Voice on the international arena

Expertise on the international arena has been one extremely important area for non-government think tanks. From the first days of the full-scale invasion, international media bombarded analysts with requests for comments. Representatives of think tanks have been working proactively in this field, keeping international media up to date; spreading important information on the current developments on social media – including mostly English-speaking X (ex-Twitter); and building bridges between Ukrainian experts and the international audience that was in need of this expertise.

Respondent 2: "We resumed our work in about a week, although this was mostly the media component, especially military and international expertise. This work mostly focused on commenting on the current developments, responding to media requests and other similar things."

Petro Burkovsky, Executive Director of the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, and Maria Zolkina, head of the Regional Security and Conflict Studies section at the Foundation, commented for the Qatari Al Jazeera TV channel in the first months of the full-scale war [6]. They debated with other experts, including Russian experts, on a daily basis, offering arguments against Russian propaganda. Kharkiv-based Maria Avdeeva, Research Director at the European Expert Association, spoke about Russian shelling of her city for multiple media, including CNN, BBC, NBC and Sky News [2]. "Avdeeva's audience on Twitter grew 200-fold to 94,000 followers in two months [2].

After the first months of the war, advocacy visits of think tanks to promote Euro-Atlantic integration, lobby for armaments for Ukraine, and explain Ukrainian culture and history gained importance.

Respondent 10: "...What we realized was that Ukrainian think tanks, public institutions and civil society organizations in general had great relations with the neighboring countries of Central Eastern Europe established over the years. Yet, whatever was farther away – we know very little of them and they know very little of us, so we have set the goal of developing expert relations with more distant countries."

Ukraine's context is fairly well understood in European countries. Beyond Europe, modern Ukraine and its problems are often poorly understood. Therefore, representatives of the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, New Europe Center and other think tanks have been organizing and joining civil society delegations to explain the Ukrainian context in other continents, including Africa [19], South America [9], and Japan [1].

Respondent 7 "It is extremely important for not just Ukrainian organizations to speak in favor of Ukraine, but for international partners to speak in favor of Ukraine and provide their arguments. It is think tanks, among others, that equip them with these arguments..."

Presence in Brussels

The Foreign Policy Council Ukrainian Prism launched its full-time work in Brussels by opening its office in April 2023 there. The Ukrainian Prism organizes advocacy visits for Ukrainian experts and works with European officials on the ground [14].

Respondent 7: "Obviously, when we speak about the track of European integration, this requires constant interaction, a permanent dialog. It is not enough to stay in Ukraine and come to events once or twice every six months – this does not leave enough room for being in touch permanently and working on small preparatory things that actually lay a certain foundation for further major analytical solutions... Offline presence matters."

The Ukrainian Prism's office partly serves as a hub – a role that was previously played by the Ukrainian Think Tanks Liaison Office in Brussels.

Respondent 7: "The key idea was for the Liaison Office to offer this opportunity to more than one organization, to enable partnerships, interaction between various think tanks that work on various themes. So, our key word is, of course, cooperation and synergy, and these have not disappeared, they remain of the greatest relevance."

Having a Ukrainian think tank in the city where NATO and the European Commission are based is extremely important.

Respondent 7: "I would be extremely happy if such institutions operated in Belgium, as well as other key countries whose stance determines a lot..."

Respondent 9: "Ukrainian think tanks have a visionary perspective of the future. In 2022, Ukraine and Ukrainian experts began to offer solutions. These solutions may not be perfect but they are debated. This is the agency of both the expert community and of Ukraine."

Social media

Ever since Russia's full-scale invasion, new communication channels have played a more pronounced role. These include the use of social media, such as X (ex-Twitter) and Telegram [7].

Respondent 9: "What impressed me was communication by Ukrainian think tanks. By contrast to 2014 when there was a vacuum, you now have a lot of information from Ukrainian institutions."

The YouTube channel *Tsina Derzhavy* (The Price of the State), a project by Case Ukraine, is worth a special mention [26]. It hit 100,000 subscribers in December, which is phenomenal for a think tank channel. "We need economic education badly. Everyone wants quick results and immediate success stories, but few are willing to invest into the environment that will open the path towards these success stories" [5].

Along with the challenges, Ukrainian think tanks face opportunities that will mostly center around two defining processes – European integration and reconstruction of Ukraine.

Reconstruction of Ukraine

Think tank representatives see the work on the reconstruction of Ukraine as the crucial element. The *RRR4U (Resilience, Reconstruction and Relief for Ukraine)* consortium unites four leading think tanks focused on the economy and energy [12], including the Center for Economic Strategy, the Institute for Economic Research and Policy Consulting, the Institute for Analytics and Advocacy, and DiXi Group. They are working jointly to push for a just, green and human-oriented recovery of Ukraine's economy.

RISE UA is a big coalition of Ukrainian and international civil society organizations, public institutions and activists who "promote the principles of integrity and participation for Ukraine's reconstruction and development, building accountability mechanisms for reconstruction, timely disclosure of data, development of digital solutions for reconstruction, and involving citizens and businesses in the planning, monitoring and oversight" [21].

The Center for Economic Strategy, the Institute for Economic Research and Policy Consulting, and Technology of Progress NGO are implementing the *Recovery Spending Watchdog* project [13]. This project includes the *Big Recovery Portal (BRP)*, an online database of reconstruction projects and analysis of the respective public spending that engages the public in the monitoring of project quality and relevance and oversight of the construction process [3]. The Institute for Analytics and Advocacy has launched a Ukraine reconstruction tracker, a multimedia tool to help receive verified data about various aspects of Ukraine's reconstruction [24].

Most efforts, including the efforts of think tanks, are currently focusing on economic recovery. Yet, other aspects of socio-political life are as critically important.

Respondent 2... "This is not just economic recovery. This is the recovery of proper political life, political competition, and democratic processes... Ukraine is facing a double task of reconstructing the ruined elements on the one hand, and rebuilding them based on the foundation we need to become members of the EU and NATO on the other hand."

European integration

The process of recovery is fragile and Russian attacks can seriously undermine it. However, following the European Commission's recommendation to the European Council to launch the EU accession negotiations with Ukraine, European integration gains new substance. In spring 2022, many institutions, including think tanks, helped Ukraine's government prepare answers for the European Commission's questionnaire on EU candidacy. This helped strengthen the Ukrainian government's institutional capacity [16]. "After accession talks open for Ukraine,

the room for engaging civil society organizations (CSOs) in European integration processes will expand substantially: Ukrainian authorities will need independent expertise and CSO oversight over the harmonization of Ukraine's legislation with that of the EU in 35 different spheres" [22].

Respondent 1: "Accession talks is a complex process from the perspective of our unpreparedness and their internal transformations... We have realized that fundamental reforms are the most important and the most complex aspect, and we would like to focus on that."

CONCLUSIONS

Ever since Ukraine gained independence, non-government think tanks have been researching the agenda and shaping the visions of the future, helping the government, parliament and civil society; creating, advocating and driving key transformations, and doing important work on democratic transformations in the country.

After February 24, 2022, Ukrainian non-government think tanks found themselves operating in a new reality. Shortly after or without any breaks, Ukrainian think tanks resumed full-scale work and dove into the information and analytical fight against the Russian aggression.

Initially, their work partly went beyond analysis, covering humanitarian aid, support for the Armed Forces of Ukraine or direct engagement in the defense of the country.

The work of think tanks and Ukraine's entire civil society during the full-scale war is a phenomenon of sorts. Most of Ukraine's non-government think tanks demonstrated extreme resilience. Barely suspending their operations, they switched to the country's humanitarian needs at the early stage of the full-scale war, then continued the conventional think tank work, including research, advocacy and monitoring. Think tanks are well aware of the current needs and adjust their projects to the aspects that are critical for the country. International work of Ukrainian think tanks has been especially important.

The full-scale war added new challenges of security and mental resilience to the pre-war challenges related to human resources, funding and communications.

The importance of non-government think tanks will grow. European integration and the postwar recovery of Ukraine will be the key frameworks for projects.

Key lessons:

Non-government think tanks are strong intellectual actors that make an important contribution to Ukraine's development. During the full-scale war, think tanks have learned some important lessons that should be applied more widely.

1. Strategic partnerships and joined efforts with stakeholders

It is important for think tanks to build strategic partnerships with various stakeholders, including government, businesses and academia. They should establish efficient interaction and develop cooperation mechanisms with government agencies, including defense entities, to provide them with the best possible analytical support.

2. Partnerships within the think tank sector

Think tank partnerships enable them to join efforts and have an impact on decision making by legislative and executive authorities.

3. Preventing exhaustion

Ukrainian think tanks work overtime. Think tanks have limited resources and excessive work can exhaust their teams. It is important to establish working hours and stick to them, expand teams where there are multiple projects, and provide psychological and social support to strengthen the resilience of employees in wartime.

4. Unity around important issues The issues that can pose a threat to civil society and national security should bring non-government think tanks together.

5. Watchdogging the work of executive bodies

Monitoring of the work of executive government bodies is an important function of think tanks. In wartime, efficient oversight – including the oversight of how funds are spent – is especially important and will have an impact on the efficiency of Ukraine's economic recovery.

6. Ensuring physical safety of organizations

Think tanks should not ignore air raid alarms and set up their offices in more secure

premises. The think tanks that do not have safety policies should revise their safety protocols and implement them.

7. Information and cyber security

Think tanks should ensure confidentiality of their analytical information, especially when it covers military aspects or critical elements of national security.

8. Crisis planning

Management should develop the capacity to respond to crises and switch to crisis work mode swiftly.

9. Representation in important countries

The think tanks that have the respective capacity can establish representative or new offices in the countries that are crucial for Ukraine and strengthen their expert presence abroad.

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