

# Between ideas and interests: a comparative study on the levels of scientific production of Chatham House and the Council on Foreign Relations in the face of the Ukrainian War (2022)

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**Abstract.** Given the capacity of information, ideas, and knowledge to change interests and preferences in International Society, we can see the growing inclination towards the production of specialized knowledge in the search for influence in the most diverse decision-making arenas. Ideas, knowledge, and science matter and can be decisive in decision-making processes. The purpose of this research is to verify, in a comparative way, how the level of scientific knowledge is produced by different Think Tanks that operate in the Anglo-American axis. Two Think Tanks will be compared: (a) Chatham House, from the United Kingdom, and (b) Council on Foreign Relations, from the United States, in their actions in the face of the Ukrainian War (started in 2022). The research will use the comparative method and the technique of comparative case studies, as well as documentary analysis.

**Keywords:** Think Tanks, Chatham House; Council on Foreign Relations, decision-making arenas, public policies, International Society

## 1. Introduction

In the current international context, studies underscore the pivotal role of Think Tanks (TTs) in seeking consensus among elites, mobilizing public opinion, and conducting unofficial diplomacy on foreign policy issues [1][2]. These institutions shape public opinion, inform decision-making processes, and guide debates, offering options to the state [3]. Given the strong connection between TTs and public policies, understanding the role played by non-governmental actors in the continuous interplay between domestic and international levels is crucial, transcending the dichotomy between these levels.

While TTs are not strictly interest groups, they are considered actors that influence state policy formulation through research, consultancy, and expert contributions [1](Parmar, 2004). The field of International Relations would benefit from a deeper understanding of how states, civil society, and non-governmental organizations interact and complement one another [2](Legro, 2009). Within

this context, TTs, which are widespread globally, play a pivotal role in comprehending the decisions made by relevant actors in international society. Consequently, this study proposes a comparative analysis to investigate how the production of scientific knowledge by TTs is influenced by the vulnerability of their home states to international phenomena. Two specific TTs, Chatham House from the United Kingdom and the Council on Foreign Relations from the United States, will be examined to better understand this dynamic [1][2][3].

## 2. What is a think tank: following the global index definition of Pennsylvania University

The Global Go To Think Tank Index, initiated by the University of Pennsylvania (USA), assesses and ranks think tanks worldwide based on their influence, performance, and impact [4](University of Pennsylvania, 2020). This index is a key resource for identifying leading think tanks in various

categories, such as public policy, academic research, and policy analysis.

Think tanks are organizations that conduct policy-oriented research, analysis, and provide advice on both domestic and international issues. They serve as a bridge between the academic and policymaking communities and play a vital role in translating research into accessible information for policymakers and the public.

To create a comprehensive typology accounting for variations in political systems and civil societies, various categories for think tanks have been developed. These categories consider the diverse roles that think tanks can play in their societies and their different operating styles, recruitment patterns, and research standards [4]. It's worth noting that other analysts have proposed alternate typologies for think tanks.

## **2.1 Classification according to the Global Index**

In the 2020 think tank index by McGann, various categories were established to address conceptual challenges and consider differences in political systems and civil societies [4]. Think tanks exhibit diverse functions and activities within their host societies. Chatham House and CFR can be classified as autonomous and independent, indicating their freedom from specific interest groups or donors and self-sufficiency in funding and operation, distinct from government influence.

## **2.2 Historical Evolution of Chatham House and Council On Foreign Relations**

Chatham House, founded in 1920, and the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), established in 1921, are renowned international think tanks with significant historical impact [5][6].

Chatham House initially focused on post-World War I reconstruction and evolved into a vital hub for global dialogue and foreign policy analysis. It expanded its research areas to include economics, security, and environmental concerns, gaining authority in discussions on international trade, climate change, and cybersecurity [5]

Similarly, CFR emerged during a time when the U.S. was becoming a global power. It influenced U.S. foreign policies and provided essential analysis of international relations. Post-World War II, CFR continued to shape U.S. policies, expanding its scope to encompass the global economy, security, and terrorism. Today, it remains a prominent U.S. think tank engaged in various global issues [6].

In summary, Chatham House and CFR have adapted and grown over time, serving as influential institutions in policy analysis and strategy development to address evolving global challenges [5][6].

## **3. The phenomenon**

The Ukraine war, stemming from Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, significantly impacted international relations. It led to sanctions against Russia, altered NATO's stance, and escalated tensions between Russia and the West. This conflict underscored the importance of regional stability, international law, and diplomacy [7].

In response to the Ukraine war in 2022, think tanks (TTS) played a crucial role in analyzing causes and consequences and shaping policies for resolution.

Both Chatham House and CFR, established in the 1920s, provide reliable global event analysis, boast expert networks, and inform governments, media, and the public. They offer non-partisan perspectives and aim to enhance understanding of international society and foreign policy options, aligning with research goals:

- (a) Examining non-state actors' role, such as Think Tanks, in policymaking.
- (b) Analyzing the interplay between domestic and international policy formulation.
- (c) Addressing current topics for policymakers.
- (d) Comparing knowledge production and dissemination processes.
- (e) Contributing to academic understanding of Think Tanks' role in policymaking and international relations.

## **4. Scientific production analysis category**

Michel Foucault argued that scientific production isn't a neutral discovery process but is shaped by society and culture [8]. Knowledge is constructed within specific social contexts and influenced by power dynamics.

This aligns with the hypothesis that states' origins and vulnerability to global events, like the 2022 Ukrainian War, affect think tanks' scientific production. Think tanks from directly affected countries tend to produce more due to local factors like politics, economy, and culture shaping their perspectives and actions.

## 5. Methodology

The proposed hypothesis suggests that think tanks' origins and their vulnerability to global events, like the 2022 Ukrainian War, impact their scientific production. Those from directly affected countries tend to produce more due to local factors like politics, economy, and culture shaping their perspectives and actions. The first methodological stage involved collecting necessary data and conducting a bibliography search. Works were selected based on their theoretical credibility, contextualization, knowledge expansion, identification of research gaps, methodological support, validation, and contribution to the scientific community. This helped define the research object and understand its interactions with reality.

Next, a database for comparative analysis was constructed using official documents from both institutions produced in 2022. These documents, sourced from Chatham House and the Council On Foreign Relations' official websites using the keyword "Ukraine War," included scientific articles, technical articles, books, debates, seminars, podcasts, interviews, blogs, and opinions. The information was organized in Excel spreadsheets.

Finally, the assessment of states' vulnerability to the Ukraine War (2022) was based on public opinion research and geographical criteria.

## 6. Results

### 6.1 Vulnerabilidades based on public opinion

According to Ipsos | The World's Response to the War in Ukraine | January 2023 | Global Version | Public, between March and April 2022[9]:

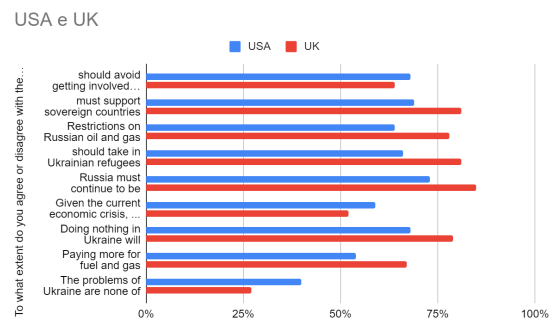


Fig. 1. Public opinion between USA and UK[9]

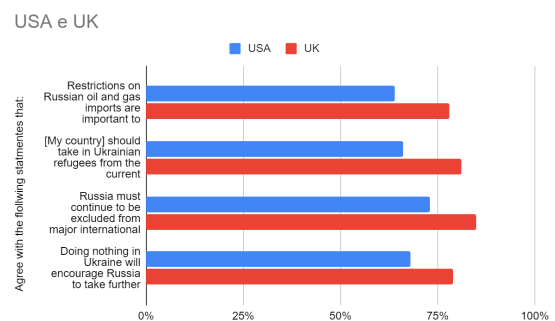


Fig.2 Public opinion between USA and UK[9]

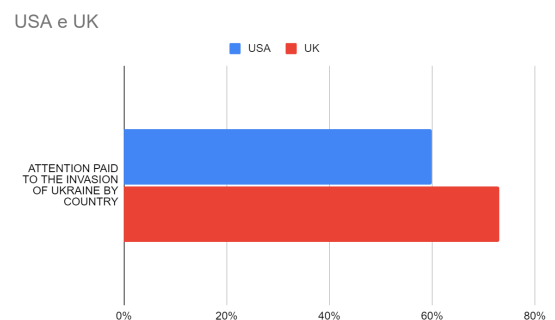


Fig. 3 comparison of attention paid to ukraine war[9]

### 6.2 Vulnerability based on geographic distance

| City/Port in Ukraine | Overland Distance to USA (In km) | Overland Distance to UK (In km) | Maritime Distance to USA (In nautical miles) | Maritime Distance to UK (In nautical miles) |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|---|
| Kiev                 | Approx. 7,400 km                 | Approx. 2,300 km                | Approx. 7,400 nautical miles                 | Approx. 2,300 nautical miles                |
| Lviv                 | Approx. 7,800 km                 | Approx. 2,000 km                | Approx. 7,800 nautical miles                 | Approx. 2,000 nautical miles                |
| Odessa               | Approx. 8,200 km                 | Approx. 2,600 km                | Approx. 5,400 nautical miles                 | Approx. 1,300 nautical miles                |
| Donetsk              | Approx. 7,500 km                 | Approx. 3,200 km                | Approx. 5,600 nautical miles                 | Approx. 1,500 nautical miles                |

Fig. 4 comparison of distances (sea and earth) UK and USA[10]

### 6.3 Production level

O nível de produção de ambos os think tanks abordados

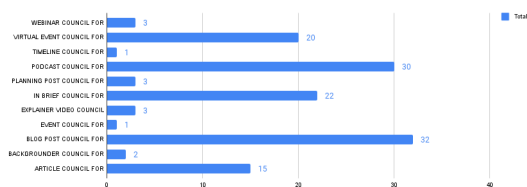


Fig. 5. CFC scientific production in 2022[6]

it was possible to ascertain that during the year 2022, the CFR produced 132 documents on the Ukraine War (2022).

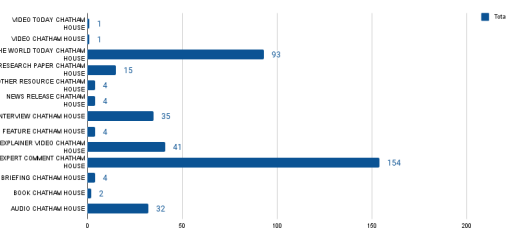


Fig 6. Chatham House scientific production in 2022 [5].

It was possible to ascertain that during the year 2022, Chatham House produced 390 documents on the Ukraine War (2022).

## 7. Discussion

We can perceive through the data found and compared that there is a greater production linked to Chatham House compared to the Council on Foreign Relations. Such a difference is justified by the vulnerability of the home countries of these Think Tanks to phenomena like the Ukraine War, as proposed in the hypothesis. Let's examine the relationship that addresses the same.

Although a certain relationship between the variables has been demonstrated, we must take into consideration that the phenomenon may involve a wide range of omitted variables. Power relations should not be disregarded when addressing the theme of scientific production, as well as the ability of political leaders to shape narratives around their political interests. Realist

approaches may have a lesser capacity to capture the internal dynamics of states, such as public opinion, but they can be effective when seeking a more general and parsimonious overview, emphasizing the material capabilities of states as sources of their strengths and vulnerabilities. In other words, sovereign states may seek more power regardless of their vulnerability, something that may question the causal relationship applied in this research.

However, according to Barry Buzan, known for his work on Comprehensive Security and the theory of "securitization," the argument is that differences in scientific production may be related to how states perceive threats and securitize certain issues[11]. More vulnerable states may be more inclined to securitize specific threats and allocate resources to these areas. Journalist and author Naomi Klein wrote about how the production of scientific knowledge is related to climate change and the vulnerability of affected communities [12]. Her book "This Changes Everything" explores this connection. Political scientist Fouad Ajami wrote about the fragility of states in the Middle East, particularly in his book "The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967," where he discusses how scientific production and governance can be affected by state vulnerability [13].

The strength of the relationship between the variables in the hypothesis is robust and based on official data from both think tanks and their respective home countries. All data are accessible and subject to external verification. The database generated during the research effort was meticulously reviewed. The categories of analysis based on the securitization theory provided sufficient support for directing our focus on the data and the categories of analysis that justified vulnerability. Systematically, categories derived from economics, geopolitics, public opinion, and energy issues were used. Using both abstract and material categories added robustness to this research because it did not limit itself to structural issues of the system but also paid attention to what the public has been demanding from the state regarding the phenomenon, providing independence from the methodology of nationalism and its orbit around the Nation-State's throne.

## 8. Conclusion

We can conclude that the vulnerability of the States of origin of the Think Tanks can change their production coefficient through their vulnerability to a given International phenomenon.

The main objective of this research was to verify how such vulnerability present in the state of origin of these institutions could affect the quantity of scientific material produced during the Ukrainian War (which started in 2022).

The biggest findings revolve around the perception of the influence of the vulnerability of the think tanks' states of origin on their productions through the Ukrainian War in 2022. The bridge that these institutions promote can help to understand the relationship between civil society and the State, by checking its relationships with variables present in them, we can verify how peculiar the connection between the State, civil society, and private institutions is. A better understanding of the peculiarities of the bridge can contribute to the relativization of domestic and international relations, demonstrating one side of its dynamics. We were able to better understand how this relationship varies concerning the same event, better understanding how they cooperate with each other, oppose each other, and eventually complement each other. The dialogue between these three dimensions is contemporary and has demonstrated its plasticity over time. Furthermore, a better perspective on the role of think tanks in International society can help in understanding decision-making coming from relevant actors in International Society, as well as giving new perspectives to events of international scope.

The comparative method serves as advice for those who wish to look into this phenomenon, as the comparative method involves the systematic comparison of different cases or units of analysis to identify similarities, differences, and patterns. Therefore, this method provided support for

Finally, this research is far from exhausting the subject matter addressed here. There is still a vast possibility of understanding the effects of the vulnerability of the States of origin of the TTS in the face of their instrumentalization of scientific knowledge, as well as their way of sharing and mobilizing public opinion. This allows us to greatly deepen our understanding of the phenomenon.

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