

“MARKETPLACE OF IDEAS” AS METAPHOR OF ASYMMETRY IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THINK TANKS AND THE RUSSIAN AUTHORITY

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Abstract: *The “marketplace of ideas” metaphor has been interpreted from democratic and economic theory perspectives. These different interpretive approaches emphasize different policy objectives and have been associated with divergent regulatory philosophies. This duality helps us to understand deeply the asymmetrical type of interactions between think tanks and the Russian authority. Russian think-tanks are contrasted to American. Soviet think-tanks worked for propaganda, while their present-day Russian counterparts lost their chance to influence authorities. In an asymmetrical situation, the authority turns a deaf ear to expert recommendations and ruins “the marketplace of ideas”. Independent analysts are reckoned with only in a crisis. Experts are themselves to blame as they have served authorities, and now are only imitating serious research. Asymmetry undermines strategic planning, and breeds a feeling of uncertainty in the public and the expert milieu alike.*

The “marketplace of ideas” metaphor is one of the foundation concepts in communications regulation. The “marketplace of ideas” is a rationale for freedom of expression based on an analogy to the economic concept of a free market. The “marketplace of ideas” belief holds that the truth or the best policy arises out of the competition of widely various ideas in free, transparent public discourse, an important part of liberal democracy.

The concept of the “marketplace of ideas” is most often attributed to Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes’ dissenting opinion in *Abrams v. U S*, 250 U.S. 616 (1919). Interestingly, while Justice Holmes implied the idea in his dissenting opinion, he never used the term. Holmes stated: “Persecution for the expression of opinions seems to me perfectly logical. If you have no doubt of your premises or your power and want a certain result with all your heart you naturally express your wishes in law and sweep away all opposition...But when men have realized that time has upset many fighting faiths, they may come to believe even more than they believe the very foundations of their own conduct that the ultimate good

desired is better reached by free trade in ideas...that the best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market, and that truth is the only ground upon which their wishes safely can be carried out. That at any rate is the theory of our Constitution.”(Polenberg, Richard.1987: 20-21)

The actual term “marketplace of ideas” was first used in the 1967 Supreme Court decision, *Keyishian v. Board of Regents* in which the the Court stated that “The classroom is peculiarly the “marketplace of ideas” (*Keyishian v. Board of Regents*. 1967).

Despite these rulings, the concept of the classroom as the “marketplace of ideas” was not born in the twentieth century.. have rightly pointed out, the concept has ancient and nineteenth century roots (Hofstadter, Richard.1955; Metzger, Walter. 1955; Maciver, Robert M. 1955). The idea can be traced to Socrates and Aristotle. The Socratic Method is the pedagogical embodiment of the “Marketplace of Ideas.” In the modern era, John Stuart Mill (*On Liberty*.1869) (Mill, John. 1998) and Thomas Jefferson provided their own explication of the “marketplace of ideas.” Making reference to to the University of Virginia Jefferson said, “This institution will be based upon the illimitable freedom of the human mind. For here we are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead, nor to tolerate any error so long as reason is left free to combat it” (Letter, Jefferson to William Roscoe, 1820; Jefferson Th., 2005). More recently the term has come into use by educators in higher education who have linked the concept to academic freedom. As such, it has been the subject of intensive scrutiny and analysis in legal, academic, and policy . A key point that emerges from many analyses is that the metaphor contains elements of both democratic theory and economic theory . The category of think-tank, factory of ideas, or intellectual center emerged in the United States after World War II and concentrate asymmetrical context and disproportions between economy and intellectual policy. Thousands of “factories of ideas” presently exist in the U.S. The largest of them supply the Establishment with intellectual product in the most diverse fields, from recommendations on foreign and defense policies to urban economic development. Prominent political activists came to the top from leading U.S. intellectual centers. Henry Kissinger, a professor of Harvard University, became the National Security Adviser in 1968, and later the Secretary of State. Francis Fukuyama, former expert of Rand Corporation, one of the most influential American factories of ideas, worked on the Department of State Policy Planning Staff. (Abelson, Donald E.1996; Hollings, Robert L. 1993; Lieberman, Trudy 2000)

“The Russian system of authorities’ relations with policy planning centers and the press – “Russian marketplace of ideas” - is an asymmetrical structure. The largest Soviet think-tanks, with the exception of the KGB, either were within the Communist Party system or in the academic milieu. The Academy of Social Sciences, the Institute of Marxism-Leninism, the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, and the Institute of U.S. and Canadian Studies were the best-known of the Soviet think-tanks. They worked on orders from the higher authorities in the Soviet years.

Independent expert centers and institutes mushroomed late in the 1980s. The new authority needed intellectual backing and so attracted leading experts of those new factories of ideas. The Supreme Coordination and Consultation Council, established in 1990, was later incorporated in the Yeltsin Administration. The Presidential Council, with prominent scientists on it, appeared somewhat later. Boris Yeltsin was taking far smaller interest in

analysts in the mid-1990s. However, authority again needed intellectual support during the 1996 election campaign. It was then that the Effective Policy Foundation and the Public Opinion Foundation established close contacts with the Kremlin.

The Putin era changed Kremlin relations with the Russian think-tanks. The old system has been broken by now, just as an emergent pattern on which the Kremlin not merely oriented on several advisers but found through them support of a broader expert circle. Such advisers influence decision-making on extremely rare occasions.

The lack of a financial basis is one of the reasons for Russia's asymmetrical response to the United States in establishing think-tanks, and for the asymmetry in relations between independent political centers, the university world and authority. And of course, we have the Internet — an engine of information and disinformation without equal.

What happens when the “marketplace of ideas” is populated with self-proclaimed “experts,” with “authorities” supporting every view? The result is the devaluing of information — the devaluing of think tanks.

Closeness to the Kremlin does not imply any chance for symmetry between think-tanks' achievements and decision-making on the top. Ever pro-Kremlin analysts have to acknowledge that authority on the whole is blind to the intellectual product, and that strategic studies are not in great demand. There are very few works on analyzing and projecting the social and political environment in present-day Russia, and authority has no high opinion of them. There is no demand for such work—or it is asymmetrical to analytical centers' offers. The authority is uni-centric, and even is developing a kind of autism, which continues the available asymmetry. Independent analysts become necessary in a critical situation or in case of non-confidence in a certain information-supplying body. Home analysts' conclusions do not undergo any extensive professional expertise, and their quality is steadily deteriorating. Corruption is thriving, as in any closed structure. All that reflects the entire asymmetrical socio-cultural situation in Russia, with its absence of public politics and public discussions of decisions. In the United States, on the contrary, the Congress often orders research, whose results are extensively discussed. That is done largely to maintain the symmetry of relations so as (a) to form the public opinion and (b) prompt the authority to making the correct decision.”

The expert community is largely itself to blame for this asymmetry. It made a tremendous blunder by positioning itself as a community of technologists promoting the public interests of the authority, and by offering its services even as authority's decisions were implemented. The Russian mass media made much to promote the asymmetry in the 1990s and the early 2000s. Russian analytical centers have all too often worked as propaganda machines to rule out whatever balanced, unbiased and comprehensive coverage of national problems. They make the asymmetry even worse, instead. The Russian expert and media community does not produce ideas—it merely imitates serious and profound analysis of reality. That is largely why asymmetry has established itself, and why the authority refuses to use analytical recommendations.

There is another, deeper reason why Russian think-tanks cannot start designing political

strategies—Russia has embarked on a strategy of total disorientation. No one can say what awaits us tomorrow. This asymmetrical situation is pernicious for strategic planning.

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