

- These think tanks help country achieve its diplomatic objectives by developing networks and setting up new platforms to promote dialogue, including high-profile international conferences, bilateral and multilateral exchanges, and closed-door networking events.
- However, the growth of foreign policy think tanks in India has been mostly constrained to two distinct types: those which are close to Indian businesses and/or connected to foreign think tanks which tend to promote a liberal worldview and those which are close to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in ideological and personnel terms.
- Secondly, according to Queen Mary University of London's **Stella Ladi**, despite their often-professed public purpose orientation, think tanks are guided by interests of particular section and depend on particular sources of funding. According to **Diane Stone**, although often presented as **bridges between power and knowledge**, **think tanks are arguably a "manifestation of the knowledge/power nexus"** and may help to serve the interests of dominant elites.
- On the other hand, think tanks have faced various challenges in India. Some of the challenges are- a lack of funding (partly due to a lack of investment of the state and a lack of alternative sources); a lack of human resources and the dominance of retired civil servants in senior positions; and restricted access to information. This hinders the production of relevant research and the formulation of timely policy recommendations.
- **Conclusion-** considering the increasing complexity of global politics and Indian foreign policy, think tanks have emerged as important instrument for making well researched, sophisticated and comprehensive foreign policy. PM Modi has also highlighted need for substantial improvement in "the input of intellectual think tanks" for better policy frameworks.

#### **Role of Think Tanks-**

- Think tanks provide expertise and assistance for designing specific policies. ORF, for example, helped to devise India's BRICS policy.
- Think tanks act as brokers of policy knowledge, centres of research, and incubators of new ideas. As brokers, they channel knowledge between scholars, policymakers, and civil society. As applied researchers, they **convert multidisciplinary theory and empirics into insights and recommendations** packaged to inform and meet decision-makers' needs. As innovators, **they expand the policy world's perspectives and possibilities — for example**, showing the power of entrepreneurial solutions. At their best, think tanks provide information that is credible, relevant, and easily understood.
- Think tanks provide platforms for political dialogue among foreign policy actors from India and abroad, such as governments, policymakers, the strategic community. In this respect, the VIF and the IF have played an increasingly important role by organising small exclusive gatherings and meetings with high-profile guests.
- Some think tanks have utilised and further expanded their networks for engaging in informal diplomacy. ORF, in particular, is greatly involved in **Tracks 2 and 1.5 diplomacy**, with the latter also involving government officials.
- According to **Jyoti Malhotra**, in the matters of foreign policy, as the government carefully manages information, a few think tanks have become "platforms for the dissemination of information" by the government.

#### **EVOLUTION OF THINK TANKS IN INDIA**

- According to **Amitabh Mattoo** and **Rory Medcalf**, since Jawaharlal Nehru's reign foreign-policy making has largely remained the preserve of the prime minister, while the MEA has traditionally been in charge of policy implementation. Thus, with the exception of a very few high-profile think tank leaders and public intellectuals, think tanks and other external providers of policy advice have not been influential in shaping Indian foreign policy
- The landscape of foreign policy think tanks began to evolve in the first decade of the twenty-first century, when active and retired high-ranking military leaders started to establish specialist think tanks to produce knowledge on defence-related topics.
- **In 2001–2002**, Air **Commodore Jasjit Singh** created the Centre for Air Power Studies, staffed with retired top brass and ambassadors.