



# **Think Tanks and Policy Advice in The US**

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## Think Tanks and Policy Advice in the United States

Public Policy Research, Analysis and Engagement Organizations (also known as Think Tanks) play a vital role in the political and policy arenas at the local and national level in the United States. Their function is unique, as they provide public policy research, analysis and advice, are non-profit, and operate independently from governments and political parties. While the primary function of these civil society organizations is to help government understand and make informed choices about issues of domestic and international concern, they also have a number of other critical roles, including:

- Playing a mediating function between the government and the public that helps build trust and confidence in public officials;
- Serving as an informed and independent voice in policy debates;
- Identifying, articulating, and evaluating current policy issues, proposals and programs;
- Transforming ideas and emerging problems into policy issues;
- Interpreting issues, events and policies for the electronic and print media thus facilitating public understanding of domestic and international policy issues;
- Providing a constructive forum for the exchange of ideas and information between key stakeholders in the policy formulation process;
- Facilitating the construction of “issue networks”;
- Providing a supply of personnel for the legislative and executive branches of government;
- Challenging the conventional wisdom, standard operating procedures and business as usual of bureaucrats and elected officials.

The activities involved in fulfilling these functions involve a balance between research, analysis and outreach. The range of activities that think tanks engage in include: framing policy issues, researching and writing books, articles, policy briefs and monographs, conducting evaluations of government programs; disseminating their research findings and conducting various outreach activities (public testimony before congress, media appearances and speeches); creating networks and exchanges via workshops, seminars, and briefings; and supporting mid-career and senior government officials when they are out of office (what I described as a “Human Resource Tank”).

Think tanks are a diverse set of institutions that vary in size, financing, structure and scope of activity. There are currently well over 1,500 think tanks or political research centers in the US, around half of which are university affiliated institutions and approximately one-third of which are located in Washington, DC. Those think tanks that are not affiliated with academic institutions, political parties or interest groups are described as freestanding or independent think tanks.

The 25-30 top think tanks in the US have a highly diversified research agenda that covers a broad range of policy issues on both the domestic and international fronts. However, since 1980 the vast majority of think tanks that have been established in America are specialized. These “Specialty” or “Boutique” think tanks focus their activities on a single issue (i.e. global warming) or area of public policy (i.e. national security).

Think tanks often play the role of insiders and become an integral part of the policy process, such as the RAND Corporation and the Urban Institute, which provide research and analysis for key agencies within the government, or as outsiders like the Economic Policy Institute and the Heritage Foundation, which attempt to get their ideas incorporated into policy by conducting research and analysis that is then aggressively marketed to policy elites and the public. There is often a clash within these institutions and in the policy community between those who believe that think tanks should be “scholarly and objective” and those who feel they must be “policy relevant” and get their research in the hands of policy makers in order to have any value. This is an age old tension between the world of ideas and the world of policy. This tension is best expressed by Plato in the *Republic* when he writes: “There can be no good government until philosophers are kings and the kings philosophers.” The academic oriented school believes that think tanks should adhere to academic research standards and focus on big picture and longer term issues while the policy relevance school believes that think tanks should be more policy oriented and thus focus more on the needs of policy makers and current policy issues.

## **The History of Think Tanks in the United States**

### ***Origins***

Think tanks have a long history of playing an important role in the formulation of domestic and international policy in the US. The origins of think tanks can be traced to America's Progressive-era traditions of corporate philanthropy, its sharp distinction between legislative and executive branches of government (which creates few barriers to entry into the policy making process), the desire to bring knowledge to bear on governmental decision making and inclination to trust the private-sector to “help government think.” As think tanks have grown in number and stature, scholars and journalists have begun to examine more closely the many factors that have led to their proliferation, factors that include a:

- Division of power between the three branches of government (legislative, executive and judicial) and the levels of government (states and federal government)
- Political system that has weak political parties that exhibit little or no party discipline
- Highly developed philanthropic and civil culture
- Public that has a healthy distrust of government and prefers a limited role for government
- Proclivity of citizens to join and support interest groups rather than political parties to represent their interest and express their policy preferences
- Political system that has many points of access
- Tendency to embrace independent experts over politicians or bureaucrats

Clearly the permeable, decentralized and pluralistic nature of American political culture or what some have described as “American Exceptionalism” is the driving force behind the growth and diversity present among the more than 1,500 think tanks in the US.

Think tanks have flourished despite the growth in staff in the legislative and executive branches of government which has raised questions about what value they add to the thinking being done

by the professional bureaucrats and congressional staffers. The perception is that think tanks can often do what government bureaucracies cannot. Specifically, think tanks are:

- More effectively future-oriented than government research functionaries, who work in an environment in which efforts at creative disruption are rarely rewarded;
- More likely to generate reconfigured policy agendas, while bureaucracies thrive on the security-maximizing environment of standard operating procedures;
- And better able to facilitate collaboration among separate groups of researchers for a common purpose because they have no permanent vested interest in any one domain.

In addition, think tanks aid the intellectual synthesis that comes from breaking down bureaucratic barriers. They are uniquely suited to do this because they are:

- Better able to disseminate relevant policy research within government than government agencies themselves, for no jealousies attach to proprietary rights;
- And better able to "telescope" the policy function (i.e., from data collection to knowledge to conceiving means of implementation) than government bureaucracies, which may be internally segmented along such lines.

An Illustrative List of the more than 1500 Think Tanks in the US is provided in the table below.

US Think Tank	Date Founded
American Enterprise Institute	1943
American Foreign Policy Council	1982
Brookings Institution	1916
Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs	1914
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace	1910
Carter Center	1982
CATO Institute	1977
Center for American Progress	2004
Center for Defense Information	1972
Center for Nonproliferation Studies	1989
Center for Security Policy	1988
Center for Strategic and International Studies	1962
Century Foundation	1919
Chicago Council on Foreign Relations	1922
Council on Foreign Relations	1921
East-West Institute	1981
Economic Policy Institute	1986
Economic Strategy Institute	1989
Foreign Policy Association	1918
Foreign Policy Research Institute	1955
Heritage Foundation	1973
Hoover Institution	1918
Hudson Institute	1961
ICEG International Center for Economic Growth	1985
ICG International Crisis Group	1995
Institute for International Economics	1981
Institute for Policy Studies	1963
Institute for the Analysis of Global Security	2002
Middle East Institute	1946
Middle East Policy Council	1981
Migration Policy Institute	2001

National Bureau of Asian Research	1989
National Bureau of Economic Research	1920
National Endowment for Democracy	1983
Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development	1992
New America Foundation	1999
Population Reference Bureau	1930
Progressive Policy Institute	1989
Rand Corporation	1948
Resources for the Future	1952
Stimson Center	1989
United States Institute of Peace	1984
Urban Institute	1968
Washington Institute for Near East Policy	1985
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars	1968
World Watch Institute	1974

### **Classifying Think Tanks**

US think tanks can also be best understood by examining their affiliation, organizational structure and culture, and political and philosophical orientation. The strategy and structure of a think tank often influences the type of policy output it produces and what stage in policy process it chooses to focus its activities. American think tanks tend to be one of four types: academic (general purpose and specialized), contract research, advocacy and policy enterprise or a hybrid of the first three. Party-affiliated think tanks are almost nonexistent in the US while they are the dominant model in Europe. There are also think tanks that are affiliated with Congress and government agencies or with a university or a corporation. This study does not focus on those think tanks that are affiliated with government, a for-profit corporation or political parties. This study examines university affiliated and independent, nonprofit think tanks. In terms of ideology most think tanks fall into 5 categories: Conservative, Center Right, Centrist, Center Left and Progressive.

#### **The major organizational types are as follows:**

1. **Academic-diversified:** These think tanks tend to conduct research and analysis on a whole range of policy issues, including, but not limited to: economics, foreign policy, and the environment. In addition, they typically:

- Have the credibility, support and influence of the academic community and are endowed with the respect paid to scholars and scholarly research
- Resemble academic institutions but are “universities without students”
- Are staffed by academics
- Follow established academic disciplines

- Research on longer time horizons
- Are objective and independent
- Have the same outputs and rewards as academic institutions
- Produce book-length studies, journal articles, and monographs
- Follow a collegial, consensual model of management

Examples include *The Brookings Institution*, the *American Enterprise Institute* (AEI), the *Center for Strategic and International Studies* (CSIS). A researcher at an academic think tank said: “We conduct research for policy makers that is only read by students and professors We are not slaves to the legislative agenda of Congress or the White House.”

2. **Academic-specialized:** These institutions focus on a single issue or discipline, such as economics or welfare reform. They are quite similar to Academic-diversified think tanks. However, they typically:

- Differ by degrees of specialization
- Have a specialized research agenda, funders and client base
- Often have a single issue, narrow research agenda

Examples include the *National Bureau of Economic Research* (NBER) and the *Hamburg Institute for Economic Research*.

3. **Contract Research Organizations/Contract Consulting:** These are think tanks, which perform the majority of their research and analysis for government agencies. They typically:

- Have a policy orientation, and close working relationship with government agencies
- Rely on government contracts
- Serve as policy/program consultants
- Offer Objective and Quantitative Analysis
- Produce policy analysis rather than research
- Allow researchers a limited degree of freedom
- Produce work that is only for their contract agencies and cannot be widely disseminated. That is, findings are the property of the contracting agencies, not the organizations or the researchers
- Reflect the research methodologies of contracting organizations
- Are multi-disciplinary
- Have consulting firm cultures and organizational structures
- Have reward systems, production schedules and products that are determined by the contract

Examples include *RAND*, an acronym for Research and Development (R&D), which was started as a defense think tank and now has a high diversified set of government contracts, and the *Urban Institute*, which started to help design and manage the Great Society social program.

4. **Advocacy Think Tanks:** Those organizations that promote a point of view and whose analysis has a sharp partisan edge. Some of their more common characteristics:

- A mission defined by an ideological, moral, or partisan world view
- Their goal is to advance a:
  - i. *Cause*
  - ii. *Constituency*
  - iii. *Ideology*
  - iv. *Party*
  - v. *Platform*
- Driven by issue, philosophy and constituency
- Are organized to promote their ideas
- Reject the academic and technocratic orientation to policy analysis
- Are rewarded on their ability to advance their cause
- Litmus test rather examine the publication record or academic credentials
- Output how it will play with constituency or will advance a particular philosophy

Examples include *Citizens for a Sound Economy* and the *Cato Institute*.

5. **Policy Enterprise:** These groups place a premium on packaging and marketing their ideas. They typically:

- Are organized with the effectiveness and the efficiency of a corporation
- Apply principles of management, marketing and sales to public policy research
- Argue that the orientation of think tanks is wrong insofar as it is too academic and does not recognize the needs of policy makers
- Digest and formulate research into a form that meets the needs of busy bureaucrats, politicians and policy makers
- Produce short, journalistic studies and focus on current legislation or policy concerns
- Are organized like a newspaper
- Follow a tight production schedule for outputs/products
- Reward those who can operate on a tight timeline and can produce action-oriented policy briefs

Examples include the *Heritage Foundation* and the Economic Policy Institute



### Affiliated and Independent Think Tanks

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Date Established</b>	<b>Organizational Type</b>
Progressive Policy Institute	1989	Political Party
Congressional Research Service	1914	Government
Stanford Research Institute	1946	Private For-Profit
Asia Pacific Research Center, Stanford University	1977	University Based
American Enterprise Institute	1943	Independent

### Public Policy Think Tanks Organizational Structure and Culture

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Date Established</b>	<b>Organizational Type</b>
Brookings Institution	1916	Academic/ Diversified
National Bureau of Economic Research	1920	Academic/ Specialized
Rand Corporation	1948	Consulting/ Contracting
Institute for Policy Studies	1963	Advocacy
Heritage Foundation	1973	Policy Enterprise



## **Political and Philosophical Orientation**

Although the organizational structures of think tanks differ, all think tanks can be classified broadly in the categories of conservative, libertarian, centrist and progressive. These lines are not easily drawn and one can find both scholars and institutions that consider themselves to be liberal or conservative but are not ideological and are open to countervailing evidence and outcomes that challenge long held assumptions and world views. The political and philosophical foundations of think tanks can affect not only the perspective from which research is conducted, but also its outcome. Some think tanks offer forthright explanations of their ideological bent, while others prefer to maintain at least the appearance of nonpartisanship. Based on their self-expressed political or philosophical orientation, the orientation of their associated scholars, and their sponsored publications, this study categorizes some of the most influential think tanks, following the widely accepted definitions of conservative, libertarian, centrist, and progressive. At one end of this spectrum are the conservative think tanks, which generally espouse both a free market economic policy and a traditionalist social policy. Libertarian think tanks are similar, yet their emphasis on laissez-faire economics is primary, and the government's role in social policy is discouraged. The centrist think tanks that exist today are noteworthy for the wide range of their scholars' views but also for their emphasis on a detached and nonpartisan approach to policy that allows for a synthesis of conservative and progressive elements. Finally, the think tanks listed as progressive generally support state interventionist economic policy, with many supporting less state intervention in social issues at the same time. Some think tanks that focus on particular fields or issues (i.e. defense and security think tanks) are categorized as conservative or progressive based on the current manifestation of conservative and liberal orientation in those particular fields. Thus, think tanks that follow the realist or neoconservative school in defense and foreign policy are categorized as conservative, while think tanks that generally represent a more liberal internationalist approach are categorized as progressive. The association of narrowly-focused think tanks may shift over time, but the categorization below identifies the current ideological alliance of some of these more particular think tanks. This being said, the think tank community regardless of an individual scholar's party affiliation or philosophical orientation, recognizes a scholarly tradition, a commitment to finding the truth and figuring out what is best for the country. Obviously, not every scholar or institution adheres to these standards a 100 percent of the time, but that is the standard that most think tanks and policy makers have come to expect from the scholars who work at these institutions.

<b>Think Tank</b>	<b>Political/Philosophical Orientation</b>
<b>Conservative</b>	
Heritage Foundation	Conservative
American Enterprise Institute	Conservative
Hudson Institute	Conservative
Hoover Institution	Conservative

Progress and Freedom Foundation	Conservative
Manhattan Institute	Conservative
Competitive Enterprise Institute	Conservative
Family Research Council	Conservative
National Center for Policy Analysis	Conservative
<b>Libertarian</b>	
Reason Foundation	Libertarian / Conservative
Cato Institute	Libertarian / Conservative
<b>Center-Right</b>	
Washington Institute for Near East Policy	Center-Right
RAND Corporation	Center-Right
Center for Strategic and International Studies	Center-Right
<b>Centrist</b>	
Institute for International Economics	Centrist
Milken Institute	Centrist
National Bureau of Economic Research	Centrist
Council on Foreign Relations	Centrist
Freedom Forum	Centrist
Economic Strategy Institute	Centrist
Progressive Policy Institute	Centrist
Public Policy Institute of California	Centrist
Resources for the Future	Centrist
Baker Institute	Centrist
<b>Center-Left</b>	
Urban Institute	Center-Left
Carter Center	Center-Left
Brookings Institution	Center-Left
New America Foundation	Center-Left
Carnegie Endowment for	Center-Left

International Peace	
<b>Progressive</b>	
Citizens for Tax Justice	Progressive
Center for American Progress	Progressive
Justice Policy Institute	Progressive
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities	Progressive
Center for Public Integrity	Progressive
Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies	Progressive
Worldwatch Institute	Progressive
Center for Defense Information	Progressive
Institute for Policy Studies	Progressive
Economic Policy Institute	Progressive

### **Organization and Staffing**

In the United States, the norm for a large think tank is to be headed by a president or CEO, either of which is the senior salaried employee at the facility. This person is responsible for day-to-day management (projects, applying the institute's guidelines, appointing new employees) and is generally answerable to a board of trustees or board of directors. He or she is supported by a number of vice presidents or research directors. The board of directors — made up (for the most part) of leading figures from the fields of business, finance and academia, former members of the White House and Congress, and in some cases members of other think tanks. These board members serve on a voluntary basis and are responsible for appointing the president and approving the budget, developing long range plans, and ensuring that programs conform to the mission of the organization and that the independence of the institution is maintained. Furthermore, one of the most important jobs of the board of directors is that of fundraising, a task ever more critical in the current think tank environment. Many think tanks also have a board of advisors as well. At the AEI, for example, this body is made up almost exclusively of scholars from renowned US universities, whereas elsewhere it can also consist of high-ranking figures from business and politics, including members of Congress.

Within the US think tank community, there is a highly complex system of categorization for the various types of full time employees and associates. This can vary from think tank to think tank but generally the research staffs are referred to as scholars, senior fellows, policy analysts, senior researchers, etc. At the same time, a distinction is made between resident fellows/scholars, associates, and nonresident or visiting fellows or adjunct scholars. Resident fellows or scholars are part of the think tank staff, have an office, and are generally employed on a full-time basis, usually with a fixed-term contract. Nonresident fellows, on the other hand, are as a rule employed on a part-time or fixed-fee basis, and work from an office elsewhere, usually at their place of principal employment (e.g., a university). Although associates or adjunct

scholars very often work quite closely and regularly with one or a number of think tanks, and frequently do so for a period of many years, they are not part of the think tank workforce. The question of whether any payment is made for the work they do for the think tank is settled on an individual basis. Guest scholars, as a rule, are provided merely an office plus logistical support for the research activities they carry out at the think tank. Finally, visiting fellows are normally given a fellowship, which is usually restricted to one year and includes a fixed stipendium plus office space and logistical support for the pursuit of a research project in line with the think tank's own program. Some of these guest researchers may well be members of the military, the administration or industry, whereby their respective employer will have financed the research sabbatical, which generally lasts several months.

## **Overview of Staffing Patterns at Top 15 Think Tanks**

<b>Institution Name</b>	<b>Staff Size (Researchers)</b>	<b>Total 2001 Budget (Dollars)</b>
American Enterprise Institute	58 Resident, 15 Visiting	\$16,300,994
Brookings Institute	98 resident, 173 adjunct, 48 visiting	\$30,227,800
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP)	48 resident 4 visiting.	\$20,092,833
Cato Institute	37 resident, 31 adjunct	\$14,045,306
Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)	94 resident, 54 adjunct	\$16,775,453
Council on Foreign Relations	65 resident, 100 adjunct, 20 visiting	\$25,720,500
Heritage Foundation	45 resident, 43 adjunct, 5 visiting	\$33,481,921
Hoover Institution	80 resident, 30 adjunct, 50 visiting	\$28,400,000
Hudson Institute	50 resident, 40 adjunct	\$7,110,011.

Institute for International Economics	18 resident	\$6,060,577
National Bureau of Economic Research	500 adjunct	\$23,844,357
Progressive Policy Institute	18 resident, 18 adjunct	\$ 2,740,000
RAND Corporation (R&D)	640 resident, 460 adjunct	\$169,046,925
Urban Institute	263 resident	\$64,490,821

As a rule, the various topics of research are assigned to think tank employees who specialize in a small number of fields or geographical areas. The degree of autonomy afforded to researchers is determined by the structure and culture (academic, consulting, advocacy) of the organization. Scholars at academic oriented institutions have almost complete control over their research interests and priorities while policy analysts at consulting and advocacy oriented think tanks tend to have the least amount of freedom. The members of the academic staff may well have a highly diverse professional background, and each has often had a successful career in public administration, journalism, or legal affairs — or as an academic at a university, research institute or public organization. Not infrequently, they have some type of doctoral degree and are recognized experts in their special field. Logistical support for their activities is provided by administrative and research assistants, librarians, public relations experts, and journalists. Although a research topic may often take the form of an individual project run by a fellow, teamwork is actually more common, usually within the framework of a more extensive research program that may well be interdisciplinary and involve not only the think tank’s own experts but also academics and specialists from somewhere else. In certain cases, this can even extend to collaboration between a number of think tanks in the form of a separate study center (e.g., AEI-Brookings Joint Center for Regulatory Studies).

**Marketing, Public Relations and Public Engagement**

The principal task of the large US think tanks is to generate policy relevant knowledge and provide information for political and business elites as well as the public at large. Over the last 20 years think tanks have placed increasing emphasis on disseminating their research, appearing in the media and conducting public outreach programs. Think tanks often employ professionals with experience in marketing and public relations in order to facilitate the dissemination of information. For instance, at *The Heritage Foundation* (US), the president, Ed.

Feulner, has a MBA in marketing, while Burton Yale Pines, the former director of research at the institute, was a journalist. Think tanks employ a wide range of methods to accomplish the vital goal of effectively propagating information, including:

a) **Seminars, Conferences and Briefings:** Think tanks make a conscious effort to target their audience with a range of lectures, seminars, conferences, expert meetings, and individual or group briefings. The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), for example, reports that it stages around 700 events of this kind every year, and the annual report of the AEI generally lists 200 such occasions.

b) **Publications:** As a rule, the large US think tanks also operate as highly productive publishing houses, generating both traditional and, increasingly, multimedia publications. In addition to numerous print publications (e.g., Brookings stages press conferences and readings to launch new publications), each think tank today also publishes its very own high-quality journal or magazine several times a year (e.g., the Cato Journal appears three times a year, and The American Enterprise every two months). Such publications also carry work by external analysts and academics (e.g., Foreign Policy from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, or Foreign Affairs from the Council on Foreign Relations). Similarly, institutions often also print a number of quickly and easily produced newsletters and information brochures as well as policy briefs on individual topics. Finally, some think tanks provide special information services via fax or e-mail, which comment on the day's political and economic developments. Such daily analyses are often sent free of charge to members of Congress, government representatives, and top business executives.

One of the most important tools for any think tank is its website. Today, almost every think tank publishes an extensive range of information online, which serves to reach the public at large. Most think tank websites also carry speeches, commentaries by the fellows, conference reports and programs, synoptic analyses, book abstracts, biographies of their experts, information on events and, increasingly, video and audio clips, all of which can be downloaded free of charge. At the same time, a website will publish information on research topics, research programs, and the think tank's organizational structure. It will also provide details for contacting specific institution members and offer information for those who wish to apply as visiting fellows, general employees, or interns (e.g. the AEI employs almost 100 interns each year).

c) **The media:** Journalists looking to fill column inches or program slots profit from the expertise of think tank employees. In turn, the think tank and the expert concerned gain a wide forum for the opinion expressed – and sometimes even a certain renown as a result of the direct media exposure. Think tank analysts are quoted as experts in the print media and appear on television and radio news programs as well as on talk shows. Numerous think tank experts regularly publish their work, sometimes in their very own newspaper columns, but mostly in the form of op-ed pieces. The large number of online political magazines also represents an increasingly important forum for publication of such contributions. Similarly, other forms of electronic media are also playing an increasingly important role for presenting both the think tank itself and its employees. The Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars, for example, has a regular radio program called “Dialogue,” which is broadcast by more than 200 stations and already has around 200,000 listeners. The Brookings Institution and the Heritage Foundation both have their



own TV studios and two think tank experts from the AEI each have their very own weekly show broadcast by the US public television station PBS. Many of their think tank colleagues appear several times a week as regular political commentators on CNN and other cable channels.

d) **Relations with government agencies:** The US think tanks are particularly concerned with maintaining lines of communication to members of Congress and their staff, administration officials, federal judges, and representatives from state and local bodies. Think tank experts regularly testify at Congressional hearings and also hold individual briefings for members of Congress and the administration as well as their staff. In turn, government officials and members of Congress are invited to speak at think tank events, which provide them with opportunities to test out political ideas or initiatives on “neutral ground” in front of an audience of experts. A number of the major think tanks also stage regular meetings and discussion forums in an effort to develop formal networks with government representatives. For example, the Council on Foreign Relations has a Congress and US Foreign Policy Program, which brings together Congressional staff members from both major parties. Additionally, members of Congress also serve on the board of directors of numerous US think tanks. Some US think tanks purposely cultivate close links to political circles, since many of them — most notably the RAND Corporation and the Urban Institute — obtain a significant portion of their budget from contract work (research projects, producing studies, preparatory work for legislation) for various US government agencies.

### **Measuring the Influence of Think Tanks**

Political scientists view think tanks as either part of the political elite or as one of many institutional interests competing for policymakers' attention in a pluralist framework. Neither approach helps us much in determining what kind or level of influence think tanks have on policy. My research has led me to conclude that think tanks are most influential in the early stages of the policy making process, particularly in issue articulation and formulation. Don Abelson has concluded that influence in Washington can take many forms, as some institutions work quietly behind the scenes with great success and without any publicity, while others attempt to transform public opinion with a more public approach. Thus, he suggests, we need a more nuanced understanding of what constitutes influence and how it is measured before we can specify how these different types of think tank work. He suggests that influence should be tracked and measured by direct and indirect indicators at various points in the policy cycle as follows:

- **Issue articulation** (such as addressed to publics, intermediaries such as media, elites, governments, channeling policy currents, coalition formation, and aim to get issues onto the public agenda).
- **Policy formulation** (such as studies, evaluation, briefings, testimony, consultation, networking, iconic projects, demonstration effects).
- **Policy implementation** (such as contracting, advisory, media, supply of officials, training, database maintenance).

However, measuring such influence is even harder than specifying what counts as influence. It is particularly difficult in the US context where there are many actors and outside forces in the

policy-making process. Some indicators that suggest that a think tank's influence has been realized or made manifest include:

- **Resource indicators:** Level, quality and stability of financial support; proximity and access to decision makers and other policy elites; background and skills of staff; quality and reliability of networks and key contacts in the policy and academic communities and the media.
- **Demand indicators:** Media exposure, web hits, testimony, briefings, official appointments, consultation by officials or departments/agencies, conducive or receptive political environment, books sold, reports distributed, numbers of conferences and seminars.
- **Impact indicators:** Recommendations considered or adopted by policymakers, perceptions of users, network centrality, advisory role to parties, candidates, transition teams, awards, publication in or citation of publications in academic journals, listserv and website dominance, adoption of contrarian positions (that is, opposed to official line), etc.

Since think tanks are not lobbyist and the tax laws governing nonprofit organizations in the US prohibits them from attempting to influence a specific piece of legislation, think tanks tend to understate rather than overstate their influence on major policy issues. Furthermore, given the complexities of the legislative process and the number of competing interests in American politics, it is difficult for any one actor to claim sole responsibility for any public policy. Finally, since there has never been any systematic analysis of the think tank sector and their impact on public policies, we have to settle for indirect indicators to assess the impact of think tanks.

Actual policy initiative/change/implementation is the most obvious indicator of impact. Research (case studies) and data on causality is hard to come by because funders are not inclined to support this type research. Because of these limitations we are forced to rely on anecdotes, policymaker testimony, and circumstantial evidence in place of hard evidence. The literature on knowledge utilization and the World Bank's bridging knowledge and policy program are particularly instructive on this issue. If one is skeptical about such claims and the value of such evidence, there are other ways to measure a program's relevance to the policy process and potential to shape outcomes:

- Relationships/contacts with policymakers/implementers
- Relationships of individuals (Board members etc.) with policymakers
- Extent of/quality of circulation of research products
- Utilization of products by policymakers (public references)
- Utilization by other influential elites: editorial boards, columnists, media commentators
- Utilization by political pressure groups and other civic actors
- Cumulative media references to research products
- References made to research and analysis in scholarly journals, new media, public testimony, etc.

All think tanks play a networking role and help create alignments and form coalitions that feed into policy currents that influence the executive and legislative branches of government. Depending on who is in the White House, some think tanks supply key policymakers and staff who then formulate and implement actual policy. Policy makers draw on think tanks to display, trial, or implement policies, at least in a supplementary manner. Other think tanks, such as the Urban Institute or the Institute of Defense Analysis, work continuously on a contract basis with executive agencies and are largely insulated from the media and congressional dynamics of the electoral cycle, but also supply staff or policy input to key bureaucrats to work the policy cycle.

In general, these American think tanks have a competitive advantage in the formation of public policy and public opinion because access to policy makers and the media which increases the utilization of their research and analysis by high level policy makers and the public. Think tanks may also have a competitive advantage over officials in the executive and legislative branches in relation to international organizations, foreign governments where they have greater degrees of freedom, fewer legal and diplomatic constraints, better networks than states, governments and bureaucracies.

### **Think Tanks Funding**

Think tanks finance their activities by raising funds from private foundations, corporations, individuals and government grants and contracts and endowment income. The mix of funding varies from institution to institution but all institutions strive to have a diversified funding base in order to avoid being overly reliant a single funding stream or donor.

#### Think Tanks in the United States.

These figures have been taken from lines 12 (“total revenue”) and 17 (“total expenses”) of the 990 forms that were submitted to the US Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Source: were obtained from [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org).

#### **American Enterprise Institute**—Filed 11/21/04

Fiscal year ending:	12/31/03
Revenue:	24,934,545
Expenses:	19,324,796

#### **Baker Institute of Public Policy-Rice University**—

Fiscal year ending:	6/30/03
Revenue:	3,970,723
Expenses:	3,348,397

#### **Brookings Institution**—Filed 10/30/03

Fiscal year ending:	6/30/03
Revenue:	11,384,194
Expenses:	36,393,857

**Carnegie Endowment for International Peace**—Filed 11/14/03

Fiscal year ending:  
Revenue: 24,202,448  
Expenses: 19,479,319

**Carter Center**—Filed 4/9/04

Fiscal year ending: 8/31/03  
Revenue: 127,115,819  
Expenses: 80,758,571

**Cato Institute**—Filed 9/12/04

Fiscal year ending: 12/31/03  
Revenue: 12,975,701  
Expenses: 15,630,490

**Center for Strategic and International Studies**—Filed 8/31/04

Fiscal year ending: 9/30/03  
Revenue: 19,300,637  
Expenses: 20,292,732

**Center on Budget and Policy Priorities**—Filed 8/9/04

Fiscal year ending: 12/31/03  
Revenue: 9,923,780  
Expenses: 8,213,458

**Council on Foreign Relations**—Filed 4/20/04

Fiscal year ending: 6/30/03  
Revenue: 30,108,067  
Expenses: 29,650,900

**Economic Policy Institute**—Filed 10/30/04

Fiscal year ending: 12/31/03  
Revenue: 6,032,241  
Expenses: 4,939,243

**Heritage Foundation**—Filed 5/21/04

Fiscal year ending: 12/31/03  
Revenue: 31,522,575  
Expenses: 34,249,890

**Hoover Institution - Stanford University Board of Trustees of Leland Stanford  
JU**—Filed 7/13/04+

Fiscal year ending: 8/31/03  
Revenue: 31,000,000  
Expenses: 30,100,000

**Hudson Institute**—Filed 8/8/04

Fiscal year ending: 9/30/03  
Revenue: 9,343,536  
Expenses: 7,654,419

**Institute for International Economics**

Fiscal year ending: 12/31/03  
Revenue: 6,826,410  
Expenses: 7,809,752

**Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies**—Filed 8/18/04

Fiscal year ending: 12/31/03  
Revenue: 5,295,581  
Expenses: 5,785,404

**New America Foundation**—Filed 4/15/04

Fiscal year ending: 12/31/03  
Revenue: 3,404,737  
Expenses: 2,888,727

**Nixon Center**—Filed 2004

Fiscal year ending: 11/17/03  
Revenue: 6,475,479  
Expenses: 5,671,834

**National Bureau of Economic Research**—Filed 11/19/03

Fiscal year ending: 6/30/03  
Revenue: 18,705,568  
Expenses: 24,495,854

**Progressive Policy Institute**++

Fiscal year ending: 2003  
Revenue: \$2,750,000  
Expenses: \$2,450,000

**RAND**—Filed 2004

Fiscal year ending: 9/28/03  
Revenue: 209,458,856  
Expenses: 202,989,063

**Resources for the Future**—Filed 8/15/04

Fiscal year ending: 9/20/03  
Revenue: 17,703,100  
Expenses: 11,489,527

**Henry L. Stimson Center**—Filed 7/18/04

Fiscal year ending: 12/31/03

Revenue: 2,209,889  
Expenses: 2,801,101

**Urban Institute**—Filed 7/26/04

Fiscal year ending: 12/31/03  
Revenue: 82,478,144  
Expenses: 77,756,499

**United States Institute of Peace**—Filed 8/9/04

Fiscal year ending: 9/30/03  
Revenue: 6,452,110  
Expenses: 6,643,001

**Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars**—Filed 8/30/04

Fiscal year ending: 9/30/03  
Revenue: 16,094,595  
Expenses: 17,589,871

++ Hoover Institution and the Progressive Policy Institute financial data are provided by the institution and are not taken from their IRS 990s since they are filed by the host institution and not filed or reported independently.

## Current Trends Facing Think Tanks

In recent years, a number of external changes have presented the think tank community with new challenges and opportunities that influence the ability of these organizations to effectively operate. To identify these trends and to provide guidance on how the credibility and sustainability of the think tank community can be ensured, 34 of the leading US think tanks were invited to participate in a survey addressing these issues. The Foreign Policy Research Institute was not included in the study due to my affiliation with the institution. From these invitations, 23 institutions responded.

## List of Participating Institutions

*Baker Institute for Public Policy*  
*The Brookings Institution*  
*Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*  
*Center for American Progress*  
*Center for National Policy*  
*Center for Strategic and International Studies*

*Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*  
*Council on Foreign Relations*  
*Economic Policy Institute*  
*Ethics and Public Policy Center*  
*Henry L. Stimson Center*  
*Heritage Foundation*  
*Hudson Institute*  
*National Center for Policy Analysis*  
*New America Foundation*  
*The Nixon Center*  
*Progressive Policy Institute*  
*The RAND Corporation*  
*Reason Foundation*  
*Resources for the Future*  
*United States Institute of Peace*  
*Urban Institute*  
*Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*

These respondents identified a multitude of changes in the think tank community occurring in six major areas. These include: 1) changes in funding; 2) the proliferation of NGO's generally, and think tanks specifically 3) the emergence of a 24/7 media; 4) technological advances, and more specifically the dominance of the Internet; 5) increases in partisan politics; and 6) the continuing impact of globalization. Think tank survey respondents identified both positive and negative consequences that have emerged from all six of these catalysts which have provided institutions with new challenges to their effectiveness, as well as novel opportunities on which to capitalize in order to improve their operations. What is new and significant is the convergence of certain trends and the impact they have had on the role of think tanks as policy advisers. The report examines how the cumulative effect of restrictive funding policies by donors, the short term and narrow orientation of Congress and the White House, and the superficial and sensational orientation of the cable news networks and the print media have served to erode the quality of policy research and limit the range of policy options available to the American public.

The survey results and follow up interviews have revealed major negative trends in a number of areas, the most noted of which is the handling of funding within the think tank community. Funding has become increasingly short-term and project-specific, rather than longer term, general institutional support, a development which has altered the focus and diminished the capacity of many think tanks. The short-term funds have challenged the independence and innovation of think tanks, as donors specify research projects and inhibit these institutions from exploring new research areas and thinking outside the box. Similarly, the omnipresent media with its focus on sound bites rather than sound analysis is driving think tanks to respond to its time and content parameters by producing quick, pithy analysis that is quotable and accessible. The growth of the internet has exacerbated the problem of funding, as think tanks increasingly publicize their research findings and policy advice online, providing free access to the public, the media, and potential donors. The independence and objectivity of think tanks is being challenged by an increase in partisan politics, from which a corresponding rise in partisan organizations and institutions that produce analysis along partisan lines has been identified. These negative trends

combine to pose great challenges for the sustainability of think tanks as independent, reliable providers of sound public policy advice in the future.

These six major environmental changes have also provided opportunities for think tanks to advance their missions. The advent of the 24/7 media and the Internet have helped raise the profile of think tanks, enabled them to reach a larger more diverse audience and disseminate their publications more cheaply. The proliferation of organizations has facilitated greater cooperation between think tanks and other NGO's at the local, state, and international levels. This networking allows for the utilization of new mechanisms to effectively influence policy and to reach larger audiences. Additionally, the impact of globalization and unexpected transnational events such as 9/11 and SARS have ignited a greater interest in international affairs, foreign policy, and national security, allowing think tanks to increasingly focus on these issues. All these trends have been brought into greater focus during the 2004 presidential campaign. These opportunities that arise from the changing environment afford think tanks the ability to advance both their institutional specific missions and the role of the think tank community as a whole.

The main goal of this survey was to ascertain how think tanks can cope with a changing environment while maintaining their relevance, independence, efficacy, and sustainability in today's world. The survey responses point to two main areas in which changes can be instituted to accomplish this. The first is through changes in funding mechanisms. If donors alter their funding timelines to allow for greater flexibility in research areas, think tanks can perform more thorough analysis and produce better policy advice for policymakers and the media. Similarly, if funders also change their focus by granting longer term, organizational support, institutions will have the ability to innovate and analyze emerging issues. Altering the funding will allow for the think tank community to regain some independence and innovation, both revitalizing and strengthening it. The second key way to ensure the vigor of the think tank community is for these institutions, despite partisan or ideological differences, to work together to insist upon high standards in their research, integrity, and independence from interest groups, partisan ideologies, and donors. Institutionalizing these reforms will help think tanks to benefit from the opportunities the environmental changes have provided, while minimizing the negative consequences that have manifested themselves in recent years.

**Summary of Key Findings**

<b>Change in Environment</b>	<b>Positive Consequences</b>	<b>Negative Consequences</b>
<b>Funding Changes: Short term, project specific and results driven grants</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Has forced think tanks to be more efficient and required them to demonstrate effectiveness</li> <li>2. Increased policy orientation and focus on current issues and legislative agendas</li> <li>3. Has put greater focus on dissemination</li> <li>4. Gives donors greater control over how their gifts and grants are used</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of long run, general institutional support tends to distort the mission and research agenda of many think tanks</li> <li>2. Limits the depth of analysis and innovation within think tanks</li> <li>3. Increases the influence of donors on research design and outcomes</li> <li>4. Limited ability to attract and retain the best scholars</li> </ol>
<b>Increased Number of Think Tanks &amp; NGO's</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Virtually every interest or issue has a think tank</li> <li>2. Increased collaboration between</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increased competition for funding</li> <li>2. Increased competition for the attention of policymakers and the</li> </ol>



	<p>think tanks and other NGO's at state, local, and international levels (more vertical and horizontal integration)</p> <p>3. Greater competition increases output and sharpens focus</p> <p>4. New energy and talented new players have entered the scene</p>	<p>media to utilize output</p> <p>3. The rise of advocacy organizations that have been labeled think tanks results in a confusion between lobbying and promoting sound public policy via research</p> <p>4. Increased competition for scholars</p>
<b>Emergence of a 24/7 Media</b>	<p>1. Higher level of media demand for output of think tanks</p> <p>2. Provides think tanks with a larger audience</p> <p>3. Connects think tanks and other policy elites with the public</p> <p>4. Makes think tanks more visible and relevant</p> <p>5. Engages an apathetic electorate on issues of national and international importance</p>	<p>1. Media's focus on the provocative and sensational distorts policy debate</p> <p>2. Lure of media limelight forces think tanks to go for the sound bite rather than sound analysis</p> <p>3. Increased focus on op-eds and pithy reports rather than in-depth analysis</p> <p>4. Shift in focus to the big picture and key points rather than on the details</p>
<b>Dominance of the Internet/Technological Advancements</b>	<p>1. Reduces costs of disseminating information</p> <p>2. Allows for think tanks to reach a wider audience</p> <p>3. Facilitates rapid and inexpensive coordination and collaboration between think tanks and other non-governmental organizations</p> <p>4. Increases the visibility of think tanks, which may lead to greater influence</p>	<p>1. Diminishes the quality of dialogue on certain issues</p> <p>2. Pressure for think tanks to stay on the cutting edge of technology and expand staff to include professionals in the field</p> <p>3. Loss of control over the intellectual assets and research on the part of think tanks as the immediacy of the Internet places demands on organizations to demonstrate their influence on policy</p>
<b>Increased Partisan Politics</b>	<p>1. Policy debate in Washington has greater openness and variation in ideas, allowing for output from all think tanks to be heard</p> <p>2. Partisan politics has forced some think tanks to conduct more focused research and analysis and to be increasingly cautious of how and when to disseminate ideas</p>	<p>1. Increased polarization within the think tank community</p> <p>2. Increased pressure to politically align/difficulty to remain nonpartisan</p> <p>3. Decrease in the number of centrist organizations</p>
<b>Globalization: Increased connectedness of issues, people, and ideas</b>	<p>1. Increased interest in foreign policy, public policy, and international issues (they have emerged as hot topics)</p> <p>2. Complexities/interrelationships of globalization have caused policy makers to increasingly turn to non-governmental sources, like think tanks, for research and analysis</p>	<p>1. Has facilitated the proliferation of think tanks, creating a more crowded and competitive environment</p> <p>2. There has been a disproportionate focus on Iraq, the war on terror, and homeland security, while other important international issues have been ignored</p>

## **Recommendations for the Future**

The recommendations that follow are based, in part, on the results of the survey but are also informed and defined by my 25 years of studying, consulting and surveying think tanks in the United States. In addition, they flow from two previous studies: ***Thinking about the Future of Think Tanks***, Foreign Policy Research Institute 1999 and ***Responding to 9/11: Are US***

***Think Tanks Thinking Outside The Box? Foreign Policy Research Institute July 2003***, which addressed some of the issues facing public policy research organizations. These reports, however, only identified problems and failed to recommend a corrective course of action. The set of recommendations provided below is intended to serve as a starting point for further thought and action, a process that will hopefully lead to the development of a new architecture for how think tanks are funded and operated. At this stage in the process, not all the institutions that participated in the study have endorsed the proposed recommendations. Specific interventions also need to be mounted that will help develop the critical mass of researchers and analysts that will be needed to confront the domestic and international challenges that lie ahead. If we want our think tanks to be able to effectively challenge the conventional wisdom in Washington and around the country, we must be prepared to strengthen these institutions so that innovation, diversity and collaboration can flourish. Finally, the recommendations are not intended to focus exclusively on the 23 institutions that participated in the study but the entire think tank community of more than 1,500 institutions.

1. Convene a working group involving a broad cross section of think tanks to develop a set of strategies and recommendations for improving the funding environment for public policy research organizations.
2. Donors should take a more strategic and long-range view of funding public policy research organizations and in so doing should engage more in institution and capacity building and less in micromanaging institutions and research.
3. A broad cross section of the donors should create a forum where think tanks (producers of policy research), policy makers and the media (users of policy research) and donors (private foundations and corporate donors) would engage in a constructive dialogue about how to fund public policy research so that it is more innovative, interdisciplinary, forward looking and effectively addresses today's complex and intractable policy problems.
4. Donors and the think tank community need to explore ways to foster greater synergies, collaboration and consolidation among the more than 1500 public policy think tanks in the United States.
5. Develop a set of reasonable standards for funding public policy research in order to insulate think tanks from private and public donors who may attempt to exercise undue influence over their research and its findings.
6. Understanding that think tanks may be considered a "public good" they nonetheless need to find ways to better demonstrate the utility and efficacy of their work for donors and the public. A fuller and more enlightened set of criteria for measuring the impact of these institutions needs to be formulated.
7. Strategies and technologies need to be developed and shared that help think tanks recover the costs associated with the content service they provide to the media and the public through the Internet.

8. Think tanks should explore ways to effectively use the television, Internet and other technologies to advance and improve the dissemination of their policy research and engagement of the public in a meaningful dialogue on key policy issues.
9. Think tanks on the right and left should avoid being drawn into the partisan politics and ideological battles that are currently consuming American politics.

## ***About the Author***

James G. McGann, Ph.D.

Dr. James McGann is a Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where he directs the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program. He is also President and founding Partner of McGann Associates, a program and management consulting firm specializing in the challenges facing think tanks, policy makers, international organizations and philanthropic institutions. Established in 1989, McGann Associates is pleased to count many of the leading policy institutions, foundations and international organizations in the United States and abroad as its clients.

Dr. McGann has served as the Senior Vice-President for the Executive Council on Foreign Diplomacy, a private organization that assists the US Department of State by providing international and economic affairs programs for senior foreign diplomats, high level government officials, and fortune 500 corporate executives. In that capacity, he developed programs focusing on aid, trade and development issues involving diplomats from Russia, Asia, Eastern and Western Europe, and Latin America who are posted in the US. In addition he helped develop and administer the US Foreign Policy Briefing Program for foreign ambassadors posted in Washington and New York.

From 1983-1989, Dr. McGann served as the Public Policy Program Officer for The Pew Charitable Trusts, one of the largest private charitable foundations in America. In this capacity, he directed a \$10 million grants program and launched a series of multi-million dollar domestic policy and international affairs initiatives involving many of the leading think tanks and university research centers in the United States. These initiatives included the Pew Diplomatic Training Program and the Economics and National Security Program.

Dr. McGann has been the Assistant Director of the Institute of Politics, John F. Kennedy School of Government, at Harvard University. He currently is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Villanova University where he teaches domestic and international politics public policy courses.

Dr. McGann earned his master's and doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania. His doctoral thesis examined the nature and evolution of public policy research organizations in the United States by comparing and contrasting the mission, structure and operating principles of some of the leading think tanks (Brookings Institution, Rand Corporation, American Enterprise Institute, Heritage Foundation, Urban Institute, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Institute for Policy Studies, Institute for International Economics and Cato Institute) to determine how these factors influence their role in the policy making process. Dr. McGann also holds a master's degree from

Temple University where he specialized in the administration of non-profit organizations. He has published numerous articles and books on a range of issues including a book on think tanks entitled: The Competition for Dollars, Scholars and Influence (University Press of America 1995) which examines the strategy and structure of public policy research organizations and their role in the policy making process in the US. He has edited with Kent B. Weaver of the Brookings Institution, an international comparative study of public policy research organizations entitled: Think Tanks and Civil Societies: Catalyst for Ideas and Action (Transaction Publishers 2000). Dr. McGann is also the author of The International Survey of Think Tanks (Foreign Policy Research Institute) (2000) which summarizes the findings of his research on 817 think tanks in 95 countries. This study was supported in part by a research grant from the National Institute for Research Advancement (NIRA) in Japan. Dr. McGann is currently researching and writing a book entitled Ideas and Influence: Think Tanks, Politics and Public Policy (Edward Elgar 2004).

Dr. McGann has served as a Senior Advisor to the Citizens Network for Foreign Affairs and the Society for International Development. In addition, he is a consultant and advisor to the World Bank, United Nations, United States Agency for International Development, Soros Foundation and foreign governments on the role of non-governmental, public policy and public engagement organizations in civil society. He served as a consultant to several USAID-supported organizations working in Russia and the Ukraine. This work included a long-term assignment for one of the largest USAID supported organizations operating in the region. Dr. McGann developed a strategic plan that included a blueprint for an endowment for several non-governmental organizations in the Middle East for USAID.

He is a former Associate of the Una Chapman Cox Foundation, a member of the Philadelphia Committee on Foreign Relations and a member of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of both the International Visitors Council and Forum International. He also serves as a member of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in England. He is a dual citizen and holds both a US and EC passport.

#### **RECENT ASSIGNMENTS:**

Developed strategic plans for the Brennan Center for Justice, New York; Center for the Study of Health Systems Change, Washington, DC; Egyptian Center for Economic Studies, Cairo, Egypt; and The Citizens Network for Foreign Affairs, Washington, D.C.

Advised foreign governments and civil society organizations on how to improve the policy making process in the following countries: Colombia, Ethiopia, Latvia, Estonia, Egypt, Canada, Hong Kong, United Arab Emirates, Germany, Czech Republic

Led missions for Private Donors, the World Bank, USAID and United Nations to developing countries and countries in transition.

Helped conceptualize and develop a global network of policy organizations and knowledge-based institutions (Global Development Network) for the World Bank.

Provided a series of consultations, presentations and speeches on the role of think tanks in the policy making process for the Soros Foundation. Meetings and consultations were held with the prime ministers, parliamentarians and civil society representatives in Latvia and Estonia.

Helped to successfully reengineer and/or reposition think tanks in the United States, Canada, Germany, France, Italy, Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

Developed the strategies and plans for the first think tank in Ethiopia for the Prime Minister with funding from the World Bank.

### **SELECTED LIST OF PUBLICATIONS:**

Ideas and Influence: Think Tanks, Politics and Public Policy, (Forthcoming Spring 2005), Edward Elgar Publishing, Inc.

*Scholars, Dollars and Policy Advice*, Foreign Policy Research Institute, September 2004

Responding to 9/11: Are US Think Tanks Thinking Outside Box? Foreign Policy Research Institute July 2003.

Think Tanks and Civil Societies: Catalysts for Ideas and Action, co-edited by James G. McGann, Ph.D., Foreign Policy Research Institute and R. Kent Weaver, Ph.D. of The Brookings Institution; Transaction Publications 2000.

An International Survey of Think Tanks, Foreign Policy Research Institute, August 1999.

The Competition for Dollars, Scholars and Influence in the Public Policy Research Industry. University Press of America, November 1994.

*Think Tanks and the Transnationalization of Foreign Policy*, November 2002, "US Foreign Policy Agenda," An electronic journal of the US Department of State (<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals>). This article was reprinted and distributed by the Foreign Policy Research Institute as an Enote, December 2002 and by the Foreign Policy Association as a Global Views feature article, January 9, 2003.

*How Think Tanks Are Coping With the Future*, November-December 2000. The Futurist.

*Thinking About the Future of Think Tanks*, Foreign Policy Research Institute, August 1999.

*Catalysts for Ideas and Action*, Foreign Policy, Spring 1998.

*Think Tanks and the Power of the Purse*, Foreign Policy Research Institute, October 1997.

*Are Development Agencies Becoming an Endangered Species?* published in *InterAction Monday Developments*, November 1995; Also published in *Middle East Economic Research Forum*, May 1998

*Public Policy Research Organizations In The United States*, Think Tank Landscapes: Germany And The United States, German Academic Exchange Service, (DAAD), 1993.

*Academics to Ideologues: A Brief History of the Public Policy Research Industry.*  
*Published in APSA Political Science and Politics*, December 1992

## **Foreign Policy Research Institute A Catalyst for Ideas and Action Since 1955**

The Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI) is a non-profit, nonpartisan think tank dedicated to bringing scholarly insights and analysis to bear on US foreign policy. Since 1955, the Institute has provided timely analysis and concrete solutions to issues that are in the national and international interest. The Institute anticipates emerging issues and problems so it can provide ideas and policy options that inform and shape public debate. As one of the oldest and most respected foreign policy think tanks in the United States, FPRI is viewed as an indispensable resource by members of Congress, the Executive Branch, the media, the business community and government officials at the local, national and international level. While FPRI's principal audience is in the United States, its programs and publications reach over 20,000 world leaders in 85 countries.

### **Think Tank and Civil Societies Program**

The Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP) at the Foreign Policy Research Institute examines the role policy institutes play in governments and in civil societies around the world. Often referred to as the 'think tank's think tank,' TTCSP examines the evolving role and character of public policy research organizations. The Program is directed by James G. McGann, Ph.D. a Senior Fellow at FPRI and President of McGann Associates, a program and management consulting firm specializing in the challenges facing think tanks, international organizations and philanthropic institutions. Over the last 10 years the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program has laid the foundation for a global initiative that will help bridge the gap between knowledge and policy in critical policy areas such as international peace and security, globalization and governance, international economics, environment, information and society, poverty alleviation and health. This international collaborative effort is designed to establish regional and international networks of policy institutes and communities that will improve policy making and strengthen democratic institutions and civil societies around the world. The Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program works with some of the leading scholars and practitioners from think tanks and universities to collaborate on this program.

### **Program Objectives**

The TTCSP collects data and conducts research on think tanks and policy communities around the globe and then disseminates the findings as widely as possible. In addition, TTCSP develops and implements strategies that will increase the capacity of think tanks so that they can better serve policy makers and the public. The TTCSP works with think tanks, knowledge communities, policy makers and civil society representatives to:

- Develop strategies that will improve the performance and effectiveness of think tanks in the creation, dissemination and utilization of policy-relevant proposals and will engage policy makers and civil society representatives in the policy making process.
- Create a virtual global think tank that will foster collaboration, information sharing and the transfer of innovative policies and proposals from one institution or policy community to another.
- Promote a constructive dialogue and collaborative research and analysis on policy issues through the creation of global issue networks that build on existing local and regional networks wherever possible.



- Identify, test and disseminate strategies and technologies that will facilitate collaborative research and information sharing among public policy research organizations and other policy and knowledge based institutions around the world.
- Promote an on-going interdisciplinary global dialogue among think tanks, policy makers and civil society representatives that will explore the critical role think tanks play in civil societies and how these institutions can be sustained over time.

This program is designed to identify and disseminate innovative technologies and best practices developed by think tanks both in the US and abroad. Those technologies and strategies that have been successfully employed by institutions have been documented and shared via conferences, newsletters, the Internet and manuals. Failed strategies, programs and policy initiatives will also be analyzed. Over the last 10 the TTCSP has been working to help develop:

- Imaginative organizational designs for think tanks.
- Creative approaches to the research and analysis of policy problems.
- Effective use of knowledge and issue networks to facilitate the creation, dissemination and utilization of policy relevant information and ideas.
- Innovative strategies for engaging the press, policy makers and the public
- Successful resource development and sustainability strategies.
- Creative approaches for recruiting, motivating and retaining key personnel for think tanks.
- Enterprising use of technologies, products and programs that increase policy impacts.

In recent years we have become concerned about the lack of attention that has been given to assuring the long-term vitality of these institutions. In an effort to help improve the effectiveness and sustainability of established and fledgling think tanks, the project will actively promote innovative approaches to fundraising, management, public engagement and policy analysis and research.

### **Current Research Agenda for TTCSP**

Comparative Think Tanks, Politics and Public Policy (Fall 2005 Edward Elgar)  
 Think Tanks and Civil Societies: Catalysts for Ideas and Action (2000 Transaction Publishers)  
 Responding to 9/11: Are US Think Tanks Thinking Outside the Box?  
 Scholars, Dollars and Policy Advice  
 Thinking About the Future of Think Tanks  
 Democratization and Market Reform in Latin America  
 Think Tanks, Political Parties and Policy Advice in Mexico  
 Think Tanks and the Political Transformation of Germany  
 Think Tanks in Britain and US  
 The Rise of the Euro Tank  
 Think Tanks and Transnational Security Threats  
 Think Tanks and Transnationalization of US Foreign Policy  
 Thinking About the Future of Think Tanks