

# U.S. FOREIGN POLICY A G E N D A

VOLUME 7

AN ELECTRONIC JOURNAL OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

NUMBER 3

## THE ROLE OF THINK TANKS



## IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

NOVEMBER 2002

## THE ROLE OF THINK TANKS IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY



*“Of the many influences on U.S. foreign policy formulation, the role of think tanks is among the most important and least appreciated.”*

— **Richard Haass**  
Director of Policy and Planning  
U.S. Department of State

*“There are moments in the evolution of U.S. foreign policy where think tanks have had a decisive impact in reshaping conventional wisdom and setting a new course on a key strategic issue.”*

— **Ronald D. Asmus**  
Senior Transatlantic Fellow, German Marshall  
Fund of the United States, and Adjunct Senior  
Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations

---

This issue of U.S. Foreign Policy Agenda examines the unique role played by public policy research and analysis organizations, or “think tanks,” in the formulation of U.S. foreign policy. A leading State Department official outlines the principal benefits that think tanks offer to U.S. policy-makers. Two experts review the history and evolution of think tanks’ involvement in U.S. foreign policy and cite the recent proliferation of these institutions around the world. Two think tank presidents and an executive vice president explain how a leading U.S. think tank operates, the special role of a think tank created by the U.S. Congress, and how one of the nation’s largest think tanks works with the U.S. military. Finally, three case studies show the influence of think tanks on two key policy issues and demonstrate how to establish a think tank, using Honduras as an example.

# U.S. FOREIGN POLICY A G E N D A

*An Electronic Journal of the U.S. Department of State*

## **THE ROLE OF THINK TANKS IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY**

### **CONTENTS**

#### ● **A POLICY-MAKER'S VIEW**

---

##### **THINK TANKS AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY: A POLICY-MAKER'S PERSPECTIVE** **5**

*By Richard N. Haass  
Director of Policy and Planning, Department of State*

#### ● **AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

---

##### **THINK TANKS AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY: AN HISTORICAL VIEW** **9**

*By Donald E. Abelson  
Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Western Ontario*

---

##### **THINK TANKS AND THE TRANSNATIONALIZATION OF FOREIGN POLICY** **13**

*By James G. McGann  
Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy Research Institute*

#### ● **HOW THREE THINK TANKS FUNCTION**

---

##### **THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION: HOW A THINK TANK WORKS** **19**

*By Strobe Talbott  
President, The Brookings Institution*

---

##### **RAND: HOW THINK TANKS INTERACT WITH THE MILITARY** **22**

*By Michael D. Rich  
Executive Vice President, RAND*

---

##### **THE U.S. INSTITUTE OF PEACE: A HANDS-ON APPROACH TO RESOLVING CONFLICT** **26**

*By Richard H. Solomon  
President, United States Institute of Peace*

#### ● **CASE STUDIES**

---

##### **HAVING AN IMPACT: THINK TANKS AND THE NATO ENLARGEMENT DEBATE** **29**

*By Ronald D. Asmus  
Senior Transatlantic Fellow, German Marshall Fund of the United States, and  
Adjunct Senior Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations*

---

##### **THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION: INFLUENCING THE DEBATE ON MISSILE DEFENSE** **32**

*By Baker Spring  
F.M. Kirby Research Fellow in National Security Policy, The Heritage Foundation*

*By Amy Coughenour Betancourt  
Adjunct Fellow of the Americas Program, Center for Strategic and International Studies*

☉ **FACT SHEETS**

**THE REVOLVING DOOR** **39**

**THINK TANKS IN BRIEF** **42**

☉ **A GUIDE TO ADDITIONAL READING**

**THE ROLE OF THINK TANKS IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY: BIBLIOGRAPHY** **45**

*Spotlighting other views*

**THE ROLE OF THINK TANKS IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY: A SELECTION OF INTERNET SITES** **46**

*Links to resources on related issues*

## U.S. FOREIGN POLICY A G E N D A

*The Office of International Information Programs of the U.S. Department of State provides products and services that explain U.S. policies, society, and values to foreign audiences. The Office publishes five electronic journals that examine major issues facing the United States and the international community. The journals — Economic Perspectives, Global Issues, Issues of Democracy, U.S. Foreign Policy Agenda, and U.S. Society and Values — provide statements of U.S. policy together with analysis, commentary, and background information in their thematic areas.*

*All issues appear in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish language versions, and selected issues also appear in Arabic and Russian. English-language issues appear at approximately a one-month interval. Translated versions normally follow the English original by two to four weeks.*

*The opinions expressed in the journals do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government. The U.S. Department of State assumes no responsibility for the content and continued accessibility of Internet sites linked to herein; such responsibility resides solely with the publishers of those sites. Articles may be reproduced and translated outside the United States unless the articles carry explicit copyright restrictions on such use. Potential users of credited photos are obliged to clear such use with said source.*

*Current or back issues of the journals, and the roster of upcoming journals, can be found on the Office of International Information Programs' International Home Page on the World Wide Web at <http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/journals.htm>. They are available in several electronic formats to facilitate viewing on-line, transferring, downloading, and printing.*

*Comments are welcome at your local U.S. Embassy or at the editorial offices:*

*Editor, U.S. Foreign Policy Agenda  
Political Security — IIP/T/PS  
U.S. Department of State  
301 4th Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20547  
United States of America  
E-mail: [ejforpol@pd.state.gov](mailto:ejforpol@pd.state.gov)*

*Please note that this issue of U.S. FOREIGN POLICY AGENDA can be located on the Office of International Information Programs' International Home Page on the World Wide Web at "<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itps/1102/ijpe/ijpe1102.htm>".*

PUBLISHER . . . . .	Judith S. Siegel
EDITOR . . . . .	Michael T. Scanlin
MANAGING EDITOR. . . . .	Margaret A. McKay
. . . . .	Jacquelyn S. Porth
ASSOCIATE EDITOR . . . . .	Wayne Hall
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS . . . . .	Brenda Butler
. . . . .	Ralph Dannheisser
. . . . .	David Denny
. . . . .	Margaret Kammeyer
. . . . .	Merle D. Kellerhals, Jr.
. . . . .	Jody Rose Platt
REFERENCE SPECIALISTS. . . . .	Sam Anderson
. . . . .	Camille Lyon
. . . . .	Rebecca Ford Mitchell
. . . . .	Vivian Stahl
PROGRAM ASSISTANT . . . . .	Tracy Nelson
POLITICAL SECURITY INTERN . . . . .	Jennifer Flahive
ART DIRECTOR . . . . .	Min Yao
GRAPHICS ASSISTANT . . . . .	Sylvia Scott
EDITORIAL BOARD . . . . .	James Bullock
. . . . .	George Clack
. . . . .	Judith S. Siegel

## THINK TANKS AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY: A POLICY-MAKER'S PERSPECTIVE

---

*By Richard N. Haass  
Director of Policy and Planning  
U.S. Department of State*



*From the perspective of U.S. policy-makers, today's think tanks offer five principal benefits, according to Ambassador Richard N. Haass, who is Director of Policy and Planning at the State Department. He says they generate "new thinking" among U.S. decision-makers, provide experts to serve in the administration and Congress, give policy-makers a venue in which to build shared understanding on policy options, educate U.S. citizens about the world, and provide third-party mediation for parties in conflict.*

**O**f the many influences on U.S. foreign policy formulation, the role of think tanks is among the most important and least appreciated. A distinctively American phenomenon, the independent policy research institution has shaped U.S. global engagement for nearly 100 years. But because think tanks conduct much of their work outside the media spotlight, they garner less attention than other sources of U.S. policy — like the jostling of interest groups, the maneuvering between political parties, and the rivalry among branches of government. Despite this relatively low profile, think tanks affect American foreign policy-makers in five distinct ways: by generating original ideas and options for policy, by supplying a ready pool of experts for employment in government, by offering venues for high-level discussions, by educating U.S. citizens about the world, and by supplementing official efforts to mediate and resolve conflict.

### **ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION**

Think tanks are independent institutions organized to conduct research and produce independent, policy-relevant knowledge. They fill a critical void between the academic world, on the one hand, and the realm of government, on the other. Within universities, research is frequently driven by arcane theoretical and methodological debates only distantly related to real policy dilemmas. Within government, meanwhile, officials immersed in the concrete demands of day-to-day policy-making are often too

busy to take a step back and reconsider the broader trajectory of U.S. policy. Think tanks' primary contribution, therefore, is to help bridge this gap between the worlds of ideas and action.

The rise of modern think tanks parallels the rise of the United States to global leadership. They first emerged a century ago, during the progressive era, as part of a movement to professionalize government. For the most part, their mandate was avowedly apolitical: to advance the public interest by providing government officials with impartial, policy-relevant advice. Early examples included the Institute for Government Research (1916), the forerunner of the Brookings Institution (1927). The first think tank devoted solely to foreign affairs was the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, founded in 1910 to investigate the causes of war and promote the pacific settlement of disputes. These tasks assumed urgency with the outbreak of World War I, which generated passionate debate over America's proper global role. During the winter of 1917-1918, Colonel Edward House, an adviser to President Woodrow Wilson, discretely assembled prominent scholars to explore options for the postwar peace. Known as "The Inquiry," this group advised the U.S. delegation at the Paris Peace Conference and, in 1921, joined with prominent New York bankers, lawyers, and academics to form the Council on Foreign Relations. The first generation of think tanks helped build and maintain an informed domestic constituency for global engagement, keeping the internationalist flame

flickering during the years between the American repudiation of the League of Nations and the coming of the Second World War.

A second wave of think tanks arose after 1945, when the United States assumed the mantle of superpower and (with the outbreak of the Cold War) defender of the free world. Many such institutions received direct support from the U.S. government, which devoted massive resources to defense scientists and researchers. The RAND Corporation, initially established as an independent non-profit institution with Air Force funding in 1948, launched pioneering studies of systems analysis, game theory, and strategic bargaining that continue to shape the way we analyze defense policy and deterrence decades later.

Over the last three decades, a third wave of think tanks has crested. These institutions focus as much on advocacy as research, aiming to generate timely advice that can compete in a crowded marketplace of ideas and influence policy decisions. The prototype advocacy think tank is the conservative Heritage Foundation, established in 1973. The liberal Institute for Policy Studies plays a similar role.

At the dawn of the 21st century, more than 1,200 think tanks dot the American political landscape. They are a heterogeneous lot, varying in scope, funding, mandate, and location. Some, like the Institute for International Economics (IIE), the Inter-American Dialogue, or the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, focus on particular functional areas or regions. Others, like the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), cover the foreign policy waterfront. A few think tanks, like Brookings, have large endowments and accept little or no official funding; others, like RAND, receive most of their income from contract work, whether from the government or private sector clients; and a few, like the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), are maintained almost entirely by government funds. In some instances, think tanks double as activist non-governmental organizations. The International Crisis Group, for example, deploys a network of analysts in hot spots around the world to monitor volatile political situations, formulating original, independent recommendations to build global pressure for their peaceful resolution.

## THE IDEA FACTORY

From the perspective of U.S. policy-makers, today's think tanks offer five principal benefits. Their greatest impact (as befits their name) is in generating “new thinking” that changes the way that U.S. decision-makers perceive and respond to the world. Original insights can alter conceptions of U.S. national interests, influence the ranking of priorities, provide roadmaps for action, mobilize political and bureaucratic coalitions, and shape the design of lasting institutions. It is not easy, however, to grab the attention of busy policy-makers already immersed in information. To do so, think tanks need to exploit multiple channels and marketing strategies — publishing articles, books, and occasional papers; appearing regularly on television, op-ed-pages, and in newspaper interviews; and producing reader-friendly issue briefs, fact-sheets, and web pages. Congressional hearings provide another opportunity to influence policy choices. Unencumbered by official positions, think tank scholars can afford to give candid assessments of pressing global challenges and the quality of government responses.

Certain historical junctures present exceptional opportunities to inject new thinking into the foreign policy arena. World War II offered one such instance. Following the war's outbreak, the Council on Foreign Relations launched a massive War and Peace Studies project to explore the desirable foundations of postwar peace. The participants in this effort ultimately produced 682 memoranda for the State Department on topics ranging from the occupation of Germany to the creation of the United Nations. Two years after the end of the war, the Council's marquee journal, *Foreign Affairs*, published an anonymous article on “The Sources of Soviet Conduct.” The article, which was in fact authored by U.S. diplomat George Kennan, helped establish the intellectual foundation for the containment policy the United States would pursue for the next four decades. Then in 1993 *Foreign Affairs* published Harvard political scientist Samuel P. Huntington's “The Clash of Civilizations,” a seminal contribution to the debate surrounding American foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. Since September 11, 2001, studies by CSIS, Heritage, and Brookings have all contributed to the discussions within the government over the

proper strategies and organizations needed to confront the terrorist threat at home and abroad.

Presidential campaigns and transitions are ideal occasions to set the foreign policy agenda. As Martin Anderson of the Hoover Institution explains, “It is during these times that presidential candidates solicit the advice of a vast number of intellectuals in order to establish policy positions on a host of domestic and foreign policy issues. Presidential candidates exchange ideas with policy experts and test them out on the campaign trail. It’s like a national test-marketing strategy.” The most celebrated case occurred after the 1980 election, when the Reagan administration adopted the Heritage Foundation’s publication, “Mandate for Change,” as a blueprint for governing. A more recent instance was a 1992 report by IIE and the Carnegie Endowment proposing an “economic security council.” The incoming Clinton administration implemented this proposal in creating a National Economic Council (a body that continues today).

#### **PROVIDING TALENT**

Besides generating new ideas for senior government officials, think tanks provide a steady stream of experts to serve in incoming administrations and on congressional staffs. This function is critical in the American political system. In other advanced democracies, like France or Japan, new governments can rely on the continuity provided by a large professional civil service. In the United States, each transition brings a turnover of hundreds of mid-level and senior executive branch personnel. Think tanks help presidents and cabinet secretaries fill this void. Following his election in 1976, Jimmy Carter staffed his administration with numerous individuals from the Brookings Institution and the Council on Foreign Relations. Four years later, Ronald Reagan turned to other think tanks to serve as his brain trust. During two terms in office, he drew on 150 individuals from Heritage, the Hoover Institution, and the American Enterprise Institute (AEI).

The current Bush administration has followed a similar pattern in staffing the upper echelons of its foreign policy apparatus. Within the State Department, senior officials with think tank

backgrounds include the Undersecretary for Global Affairs, Paula Dobriansky, previously senior vice-president and director of the Council on Foreign Relations’ Washington office; the Undersecretary for Arms Control and International Security, John R. Bolton, formerly vice-president of AEI; the Assistant Secretary for East Asia and the Pacific, James Kelly, previously president of the Pacific Forum of CSIS (Honolulu); and the Assistant Secretary-designate for International Organization Affairs, Kim Holmes, formerly vice-president at the Heritage Foundation. At the Pentagon, meanwhile, Peter W. Rodman assumed his position as Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs after a stint as director of national security programs at the Nixon Center.

In addition to supplying experts for incoming administrations, think tanks provide departing officials with institutional settings in which they can share insights gleaned from government service, remain engaged in pressing foreign policy debates, and constitute an informal shadow foreign affairs establishment. This “revolving door” is unique to the United States, and a source of its strength. In most other countries one finds a strict division between career government officials and outside analysts. Not so in America. Madeleine Albright, Colin Powell’s predecessor as Secretary of State, once headed the Center for National Policy. Her former deputy, Strobe Talbott, is now president of the Brookings Institution — where I previously served as vice-president and director of foreign policy studies. Having divided my career between government service and think tanks, I can testify to the insights to be gained by combining ideas and practice. Over the past quarter century, I’ve alternated stints at the National Security Council, the Defense and State Departments, and on Capitol Hill with time at Brookings, the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the Carnegie Endowment.

#### **CONVENING PROFESSIONALS**

In addition to bringing new ideas and experts into government, think tanks provide policy-makers with venues in which to build shared understanding, if not consensus, on policy options among what my former

Harvard colleague Ernest May has labeled the “foreign policy public:” the opinion makers and shapers drawn from across the professions. As a rule, no major foreign policy initiative can be sustained unless it enjoys a critical base of support within the broad foreign policy community. Among think tanks, the non-partisan Council on Foreign Relations has been most adept at this convening role, hosting hundreds of meetings annually in New York, Washington, and major cities around the country. For U.S. officials, events at major think tanks offer non-partisan settings to announce new initiatives, explain current policy, and launch trial balloons. For visiting foreign dignitaries, the opportunity to appear before prominent think tank audiences provides access to the most influential segments of the U.S. foreign policy establishment.

#### **ENGAGING THE PUBLIC**

Even as they convene elites, think tanks enrich America's broader civic culture by educating U.S. citizens about the nature of the world in which they live. The accelerating pace of globalization has made this outreach function more important than ever. As the world becomes more integrated, global events and forces are touching the lives of average Americans. Whether the issue is ensuring foreign markets for farm exports, tracking the spread of infectious diseases, protecting U.S. software from piracy abroad, ensuring the safety of American tourists overseas, or safeguarding our ports against terrorist infiltration, the U.S. public has a growing stake in foreign policy. Eighty World Affairs Councils, scattered around the United States, provide valuable forums in which millions of adults and high school students can discuss international events. But formal think tanks, too, are increasingly engaging U.S. citizens. In 1999, the Aspen Institute launched a Global Interdependence Initiative, “a 10-year effort to better

inform, and more effectively motivate, public support for forms of U.S. international engagement that are appropriate to an interdependent world.”

#### **BRIDGING DIFFERENCES**

Finally, think tanks can assume a more active foreign policy role by sponsoring sensitive dialogues and providing third-party mediation for parties in conflict. As part of its congressional mandate, the U.S. Institute of Peace has long facilitated such informal, “Track II” negotiations, as well as training U.S. officials to mediate long-running disputes. But other, more traditional think tanks have also extended their mandates to participate actively in preventive diplomacy, conflict management, and conflict resolution. Beginning in the mid-1980s, the Carnegie Endowment hosted a series of meetings in Washington, bringing together leading South African politicians, clergy, businessmen, labor representatives, academics, and exiled liberation figures, as well as members of Congress and executive branch officials. These gatherings, occurring over eight years, helped establish the first dialogue and built understanding on South Africa's future during a delicate political transition. Likewise, CSIS has launched projects to improve ethnic relations in the former Yugoslavia, to bridge religious-secular divisions in Israel, and to facilitate Greek-Turkish dialogue.

Such unofficial initiatives are delicate undertakings. But they have great potential to build peace and reconciliation in conflict-prone regions and war-torn societies, either as a complement to U.S. government efforts or as a substitute when an official American presence is impossible. In the darkest corners of the world, they can serve as the eyes, the ears, and even the conscience of the United States and the international community. ●



## THINK TANKS AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

---

*By Donald E. Abelson*

*Professor, Department of Political Science  
University of Western Ontario*



*While think tanks, in recent years, have become “a global phenomenon,” U.S. think tanks are distinguished from their counterparts in other countries by their ability “to participate directly and indirectly in policy-making” and by “the willingness of policy-makers to turn to them for policy advice,” says Donald Abelson, professor of political science at the University of Western Ontario and the author of two books on think tanks.*

As the tragic events of September 11, 2001 began to unfold, network executives and journalists in the United States scrambled to find policy experts capable of answering two critical questions: why were two of America’s greatest symbols of economic and military prowess — the World Trade Center and the Pentagon — attacked? And who ultimately was responsible for orchestrating and coordinating these heinous acts?

To provide millions of viewers with answers to these and other questions, journalists quickly flipped through their rolodexes to locate policy experts at dozens of American think tanks. Their frantic search soon paid off. Indeed, even before the initial shock of what had transpired sunk in, policy experts from some of America’s leading foreign and defense policy think tanks began to appear on the major television networks to share their insights. Over the next several weeks and months, the visibility of think tank scholars in the media continued to increase.

The willingness of think tanks to participate in the media frenzy surrounding September 11 came as no surprise to scholars who have witnessed their increasingly active involvement in the policy-making process. Since think tanks are in the business of developing, repackaging, and marketing ideas to policy-makers and the public, they could hardly pass up an opportunity to comment on one of the most tragic days in contemporary American history.

Gaining access to the media, however, is only one of the many strategies think tanks rely on to shape public opinion and public policy.

My purpose is not simply to describe the activities of think tanks in the United States, nor to speculate on the level of influence that these institutions may or may not have. Instead, I will briefly explore the evolution and proliferation of American think tanks and highlight the various strategies they rely on to contribute to foreign policy decision-making. As a result, it will become clear why think tanks in the United States have become an integral feature of the country’s political landscape and why policy-makers in Congress, the Executive Branch, and the wider federal bureaucracy often turn to them for policy advice.

### **A BRIEF HISTORY OF AMERICAN THINK TANKS**

Scholars who have studied the growth and development of American think tanks generally agree that the highly decentralized nature of the American political system, combined with the lack of strict party discipline and the large infusion of funds from philanthropic foundations, have contributed greatly to the proliferation of think tanks in the past quarter-century. Unfortunately, they cannot seem to agree on when the first think tank was created in the United States or what in fact constitutes such an entity. As a result, rather than trying to define what a think

tank is — a difficult and frustrating task given the enormous diversity of their population — scholars have resigned themselves to identifying major waves or periods of think tank growth. However, in this article, I will treat think tanks as non-profit, non-partisan (which does not mean non-ideological), research-oriented institutes among whose primary objectives is to influence public opinion and public policy.

A few observations should be made. First, although the term “think tank” was employed originally in the United States during World War II to refer to a secure room or environment where defense scientists and military planners could meet to discuss strategy, this rather narrow usage of the term has since been expanded to describe over 2,000 U.S.-based organizations that engage in policy analysis and approximately 2,500 other similar institutions worldwide. A think tank might invoke images of an organization like RAND, one of America’s premier foreign and defense policy research institutions, which has over 1,000 staff members and an annual budget in excess of \$100 million, or it may be used to describe a more modest policy shop such as the Washington-based Institute for Policy Studies, an organization with less than two dozen staff members and a budget in the \$1 million to \$2 million range.

In chronicling the history of American think tanks, particularly those engaged in the study of foreign policy, it is important to keep in mind the tremendous diversity of the think tank community. It is also necessary to recognize that while think tanks share a common desire to shape public opinion and the policy preferences and choices of decision-makers, how they seek to exercise policy influence depends on their mandate, resources, and priorities.

#### **THE FIRST GENERATION: THINK TANKS AS POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS**

The first major wave of foreign policy think tanks in the United States began to emerge in the early 1900s, largely as a result of the desire of leading philanthropists and intellectuals to create institutions where scholars and leaders from the public and private sectors could congregate to discuss and debate world issues. Three institutions in particular

began to make their presence felt in the first decades of the 20th century: the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (1910), established by Pittsburgh steel baron Andrew Carnegie; the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace (1919), created by former president Herbert Hoover; and the Council on Foreign Relations (1921), an institution which evolved from a monthly dinner club to become one of the most respected foreign affairs institutions in the world. Two other think tanks, the Institute for Government Research (1916), which later merged with two other institutes to create the Brookings Institution (1927), a Washington icon, and the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (1943), a highly respected conservative think tank, would in time begin to focus considerable attention on a wide range of foreign policy issues.

These and other think tanks created during the first decades of the 20th century were committed to applying their scientific expertise to a host of policy issues. Functioning, in the words of Brookings scholar Kent Weaver, as “universities without students,” think tanks like the Carnegie Endowment and Brookings assign the highest priority to producing quality academic research. They publish books, journals, and other material that is intended for different target audiences. Although scholars from these institutions occasionally provided advice to policy-makers when they were first established, their primary goal was not to directly influence policy decisions, but to help educate and inform policy-makers and the public about the potential consequences of pursuing a range of foreign policy options. In part, the willingness of policy research-oriented think tanks to remain detached from the political process stemmed from their commitment to preserving their intellectual and institutional independence, something many contemporary think tanks have been prepared to sacrifice.

#### **THE SECOND GENERATION: THE EMERGENCE OF GOVERNMENT CONTRACTORS**

In the aftermath of World War II, the need for independent foreign policy advice became even more critical for American policy-makers. Faced with the increased responsibilities of becoming a hegemonic

power in a bi-polar world, decision-makers in Washington required the insight and expertise of think tanks that could help them develop a coherent and sound national security policy. By 1948, policy-makers knew where to turn. The RAND Corporation was created in May 1948 to promote and protect U.S. security interests during the nuclear age.

In addition to filling a void in the external policy research community, RAND ushered in a new generation of think tanks — government contractors — policy research institutions largely funded by government departments and agencies whose research was intended to address specific concerns of policy-makers. In the ensuing years, RAND would inspire the creation of several other government contractors including the Hudson Institute (1961) and the Urban Institute (1968).

#### **THE THIRD GENERATION: THE RISE OF ADVOCACY THINK TANKS**

No other type of think tank has generated more media exposure in the last three decades than the so-called advocacy think tank. Combining policy research with aggressive marketing techniques, a function they share in common with many interest groups, advocacy-oriented think tanks have fundamentally altered the nature and role of the think tank community. Unlike think tanks in the early part of the 20th century that were reluctant to become embroiled in policy debates, advocacy think tanks including the Center for Strategic and International Studies (1962), the Heritage Foundation (1973), and the CATO Institute (1977) welcome opportunities to influence both the direction and content of foreign policy. As the U.S. think tank industry has become more competitive, most think tanks have come to realize the importance of capturing the attention of the public and the minds of policy-makers.

#### **THE FOURTH GENERATION: LEGACY-BASED THINK TANKS**

The newest type of think tank to emerge in the foreign policy-making community is what some have referred to as “legacy-based.” Legacy-based think tanks, including the Carter Center in Atlanta and the Washington, D.C.-based Nixon Center for Peace and

Freedom, are think tanks created by former presidents intent on leaving a lasting legacy on foreign and domestic policy. They produce a wide range of publications, hold seminars and workshops, and conduct research in a number of policy areas.

#### **EXERCISING POLICY INFLUENCE: THE STRATEGIES OF U.S. THINK TANKS**

Think tanks are in the business of developing and promoting ideas, and like corporations in the private sector, they devote considerable resources to marketing their product. Unlike corporations, however, think tanks measure success not by profit margins (after all, they are registered as independent non-profit organizations) but by how much influence they have in shaping public opinion and policy. In this sense, think tanks have come to resemble interest or pressure groups that compete among other non-governmental organizations for political power and prestige. Despite some notable differences between think tanks and interest groups, the distinguishing characteristics between the two have, over time, become increasingly blurred.

Think tanks vary enormously in terms of size, staff, and institutional resources, but they all rely to a certain extent on both public and private channels to exercise policy influence. Of the approximately 2,000 think tanks in the United States, close to 25 percent are considered independent or free standing. The vast majority are affiliated with university departments.

Publicly, think tanks rely on a host of strategies to convey their views to policy-makers and the public. These may include: holding public conferences and seminars to discuss various foreign policy issues; encouraging resident scholars to give lectures at universities, rotary clubs, etc.; testifying before legislative committees; enhancing their exposure in the print and electronic media; disseminating their research; and creating web pages on the Internet.

Privately, experts at think tanks may seek to become involved in foreign policy by: accepting cabinet, sub-cabinet, or other positions in the federal government (following government service, many policy-makers return to or take up residence at a think tank); serving

as advisers during presidential elections, on transition teams, and on presidential and congressional advisory boards; inviting selected policy-makers from the Department of Defense, the State Department, the National Security Council, the CIA, and other intelligence gathering agencies to participate in private workshops and seminars; and by providing policy-makers in Congress, the Executive Branch and throughout the federal government with policy briefs and relevant studies on current foreign policy issues — the trademark of the Heritage Foundation, known as the quintessential advocacy think tank.

### **ASSESSING POLICY IMPACT: ARE AMERICAN THINK TANKS INFLUENTIAL?**

Until very recently, scholars and journalists assumed that think tanks were a uniquely American phenomenon and that those situated in and around Washington, D.C. were particularly influential. Both assumptions need to be addressed. First, although the United States is home to some of the most distinguished think tanks in the world, think tanks have emerged in significant numbers in most developed and developing countries. In Canada, Great Britain, Germany, Australia, indeed in most of Eastern and Western Europe, and throughout Asia, the Middle East and Africa, think tanks have come to occupy a more visible presence in recent years. Funded by philanthropic foundations, corporations, international organizations such as the World Bank and political parties, think tanks have become a global phenomenon.

What makes think tanks in the United States unique, besides their sheer number, is the extent to which many have become actively involved in the policy-making process. In short, what distinguishes American think tanks from their counterparts in other parts of the world is not how well-financed some institutions are. Rather, it is the ability of American think tanks to participate both directly and indirectly in policy-making and the willingness of policy-makers to turn to them for policy advice that leads

some scholars to conclude that U.S. think tanks have the greatest impact on shaping public policy. Unfortunately, very few scholars have looked closely at how policy influence is achieved and the various obstacles that must be overcome to measure or assess the influence of think tanks. At the very least, it is important to recognize that think tanks exercise different types of policy influence at different stages of the policy-making cycle. While some think tanks like the American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation are effective at helping to frame particular policy debates such as the ongoing debate over missile defense, others, including RAND, are more influential in working closely with policy-makers to evaluate the costs and benefits of developing new military technologies.

As the number of think tanks in the United States and throughout the international community continue to grow, there will be a tendency to infer that their influence is on the rise. However, before such a conclusion is reached, scholars and journalists need to pay closer attention to how think tanks have contributed to specific foreign policy debates and whether policy-makers in different branches, departments, and agencies have heeded their advice. Only then can more informed observations about their role and impact be made.

Think tanks have emerged as visible and, in many respects, important players in the policy-making community. Yet, the fact that they have proliferated in great numbers tells us more about the culture, society, and politics of the United States than about the extent to which this diverse set of organizations influences the policy-making environment and specific policy decisions. There is no doubt that think tanks can and have made valuable contributions to American foreign and domestic policy. The questions that scholars continue to struggle with are how much of an impact and in what specific ways? Answers to these and other questions will go some way in providing additional insight into the role and function of these organizations and their place in the American foreign policy-making process. ●

---

---

## THINK TANKS AND THE TRANSNATIONALIZATION OF FOREIGN POLICY

---

**By James G. McGann**

*Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy Research Institute*



*Policy-makers have increasingly turned to independent public policy research organizations, commonly known as “think tanks,” for information and analysis that is timely, understandable, reliable, accessible and useful, says James G. McGann, a Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute and President of McGann Associates. The challenge for the new millennium, he says, “is to harness the vast reservoir of knowledge, information, and associational energy that exist in public policy research organizations in every region of the world.”*

We live in turbulent times where the only constant is change, where the unthinkable has become a dark reality and where the line between domestic and international politics is increasingly blurred. The promise and peril of globalization has transformed how we view international relations and opened the policy-making process to a new set of actors, agendas, and outcomes. International relations was once the exclusive domain of diplomats, bureaucrats, and states, but today’s policy-makers must consider a diverse set of international actors when formulating foreign policy that includes organizations such as CNN, al-Jazeera, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, Greenpeace, Deutsche Bank, al-Qaeda, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). While these actors were not born of globalization, they have been empowered by it. Consider the simple fact that in 1950 there were only 50 nation states and a limited number of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations operating in the world and one begins to understand the complexity and unique challenge policy-makers face when trying to fashion an effective foreign policy. The challenges for U.S. policy-makers are even more daunting given America’s superpower status, global commitments, and the range of transnational actors and issues it must confront on a daily basis.

In this increasingly complex, interdependent, and information-rich world, governments and individual policy-makers face the common problem of bringing expert knowledge to bear in governmental decision-making. Policy-makers need basic information about the world and the societies they govern, how current policies are working, possible alternatives, and their likely costs and consequences.

For policy-makers in many countries it is not a lack of information that politicians and government officials are confronted with but an avalanche of information and paper. Indeed, policy-makers are frequently besieged by more information than they can possibly use: complaints from constituents, reports from international agencies or civil society organizations, advice from bureaucrats, position papers from lobbyists and interest groups, and exposes of the problems of current government programs in the popular or elite media. The problem is that this information can be unsystematic, unreliable, and/or tainted by the interests of those who are disseminating it. Some information may be so technical that generalist policy-makers cannot understand it or use it. Some information may be politically, financially, or administratively impractical, or contrary to the interests of the policy-makers who must make decisions based on information that they often feel is less than adequate. Other information may not be useful because it differs too radically from the worldview or ideology

of those receiving it. In developing and transitional countries, the basic data needed to make informed decisions often does not exist and must be collected and analyzed and put into a form that is usable by parliamentarians and bureaucrats.

In politics, information no longer translates into power unless it is in the right form at the right time. Governments and policy-makers are often moved to seize the moment because the right social and political forces are in alignment or because a crisis compels them to take action. In either case, they often move quickly and make decisions based on available information, which does not always lead to the most informed policy. In short, policy-makers and others interested in the policy-making process require information that is timely, understandable, reliable, accessible, and useful.

There are many potential sources for this information, including: government agencies, university-based scholars, research centers, for-profit consulting firms, and international agencies. But in countries around the world, politicians and bureaucrats alike have increasingly turned to a specialized group of institutions to serve their needs. Independent public policy research and analysis organizations, commonly known as “think tanks,” have filled policy-makers insatiable need for information and systematic analysis that is policy relevant. This information imperative led to the creation of the first think tanks — Royal Institute for International Affairs (1920), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (1910), Kiel Institute for World Economics (1914), and the Brookings Institution (1916) — in the early part of the 20th century, and it continues to be the primary force behind the proliferation of public policy research organizations today. The international civil society movement has also helped to stimulate interest in think tanks as an alternative source of information on issues of international, national, and local concern and as potential critics of the policies of national governments and international organizations that can speak with an objective voice independent of government and the business community.<sup>1</sup>

For most of the 20th century, independent public policy think tanks that performed research and

provided advice on public policy were an organizational phenomenon found primarily in the United States, with a much smaller number in Canada and Western Europe. Although think tanks existed in Japan for some time they generally lacked independence, having close ties to government ministries or corporations.<sup>2</sup> There has been a veritable proliferation of “think tanks” around the world that began in the 1980s as a result of the forces of globalization, the end of the Cold War, and the emergence of transnational problems. Two-thirds of all the think tanks that exist today were established after 1970 and over half were established since 1980.

The impact of globalization on the think tank movement is most evident in regions such as Africa, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and parts of Southeast Asia, where there was a concerted effort by the international community to support the creation of independent public policy research organizations. A recent survey conducted by the Foreign Policy Research Institute’s Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program underscores the significance of this effort and documents the fact that most of the think tanks in these regions have been established in the last 10 years. Today there are over 4,500 of these institutions around the world. Many of the more established think tanks, having been created during the Cold War, are focused on international affairs, security studies, and foreign policy.

Think tanks exist in almost every country that has more than a few million inhabitants and at least a modicum of intellectual freedom. For most of the last century, the vast majority of think tanks were found in the United States, but now for the first time the number of think tanks worldwide exceeds the number in the U.S.<sup>3</sup> Think tanks now operate in a variety of political systems, engage in a range of policy-related activities, and comprise a diverse set of institutions that have varied organizational forms. And while all think tanks perform the same basic function — i.e., to bring knowledge and expertise to bear on the policy-making process — not all think tanks have the same degree of financial, intellectual and legal independence. The challenge facing all think tanks is how to achieve and sustain their independence so they can speak “truth to power.”<sup>4</sup>

Taking into consideration the comparative differences in political systems and civil societies, I have developed the following categories that attempt to

capture the full range of think tanks that can be found around the world today.

## Typology for Autonomous and Affiliated Public Policy Think Tanks

Organization	Date Established	Organizational Type
Konrad Adenauer Foundation (Germany)	1964	Political Party
Jaures Foundation (France)	1990	
Progressive Policy Institute (U.S.)	1998	
China Development Institute (PRC)	1989	Government
Institute for Political & International Studies (Iran)	1984	
Congressional Research Service (U.S.)	1914	
Institute for Strategic & International Studies (Malaysia)	1983	Quasi Governmental
Korean Development Institute (Korea)	1971	
Woodrow International Center For Scholars (U.S.)	1968	
Pakistan Institute of International Affairs (Pakistan)	1947	Autonomous & Independent
Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)	1990	
Institute for International Economics (U.S.)	1981	
European Trade Union Institute (Belgium)	1978	Quasi Independent
NLI Research Institute (Japan)	1988	
Center for Defense Information (U.S.)	1990	
Foreign Policy Institute, Hacettepe University (Turkey)	1974	University Affiliated
Institute For International Relations (Brazil)	1979	
The Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University (U.S.)	1919	

**Political Party Affiliated** — Formally affiliated with a political party.

**Government Affiliated** — A part of the structure of government.

**Autonomous and Independent** — Significant independence from any one interest group or donor and autonomous in its operation and funding from government.

**Quasi Governmental** — Funded exclusively by government grants and contracts but not a part of the formal structure of government.

**Quasi Independent** — Autonomous from government but controlled by an interest group, donor, or contracting agency that provides a majority of the funding and has significant influence over operations of the think tank.

**University Affiliated** — A policy research center at a university.

In the United States you can find every variety of public policy organization while the rest of the world tends to have think tanks of a more limited scope and variety. Think tanks outside the United States fall into three main categories — university affiliated, government affiliated, and political party affiliated — and tend not to enjoy the same degree of autonomy that their American counterparts do.

Irrespective of their structure, think tanks have become a permanent part of the political landscape, so much so that they are now an integral part of the policy process in many countries. Think tanks of various sorts have performed many different functions including:

- the carrying out of research and analysis on policy problems;
- providing advice on immediate policy concerns;
- the evaluation of government programs;
- the interpretation of policies for electronic and print media, thus facilitating public understanding of and support for policy initiatives;
- facilitating the construction of “issue networks” that involve a diverse set of policy actors who come together on an ad hoc basis around a particular policy issue or problem; and
- providing a supply of key personnel to government.

While the emergence of think tanks has not always been viewed by the political establishment as an unalloyed good, think tanks have nonetheless had more positive than negative influence on the policy process. This is particularly evident in many developing and transitional countries where think tanks have served as a catalyst for change that has helped transform the political landscape and create a vibrant civil society.

While historical and political traditions in other regions of the world differ significantly from those of the United States, and while every country has its

own specific set of policy problems and needs, some useful lessons can be distilled from the U.S. experience. The origins of think tank culture in the United States are bound up in America’s progressive-era traditions of corporate philanthropy, the sharp distinction between legislative and executive branches of government, weak political parties, the public commitment to openness and independence, and the inclination of the public and their elected officials to trust the private-sector to interface with and to provide assistance to government. These factors combine to provide very few barriers to policy analysts, ideologues, and entrepreneurs who want to enter the marketplace of ideas and contribute to the policy-making process. Finally, think tanks have grown in prominence because there is a perception 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.
- 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.

Furthermore, they aid the intellectual synthesis that comes from breaking down bureaucratic barriers because they are:

- better able than government agencies to disseminate relevant policy research within government and externally to policy elites, the media, and the public.
- better suited to deal with the cross-cutting nature of global policy issues.



- better able to convene and engage stakeholders in the policy-making process.
- better able to “telescope” the policy process — from data collection to knowledge/policy creation.
- better able to conceive the means of implementation than government bureaucracies, which may be internally segmented by department and area of specialization.

Despite the efforts of some scholars and policy-makers to question the potential transferability of U.S.-style independent think tanks to other regions and countries of the world, many policy-makers and civil society groups from around the globe have sought to create truly independent, free standing think tanks to help their governments think. So while the transferability of the Brookings Institution, RAND Corporation, or Heritage Foundation model to other countries and political cultures may be debated, the need and desire to replicate the independence and influence these institutions enjoy is unchallenged.

The transnationalization of the think tank movement has often been encouraged and funded by the international donor community and private foundations in the United States, Europe, and Japan. Along with the international flow of funds has come an internationalization of think tank staff. Programs like those run by the Brookings Institution, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, National Institute for Research Advancement, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, the German Marshall Fund, Atlas Economic Research Foundation, and other organizations provide opportunities for staff from think tanks and universities in the developing and transitional economies to come and consult with their peers so that they can exchange information and ideas about international issues and learn about best practices for how to create and sustain an independent public policy organization.

Think tanks in the United States have also been actively engaged in exporting their scholars, brands of policy analysis and organizational structures to

other countries. The Urban Institute, the Heritage Foundation, the Foreign Policy Research Institute, and Hudson Institute have actively promoted their approach to policy analysis, to groups in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union. The Urban Institute, Carnegie Endowment, and Heritage Foundation have gone so far as to establish overseas affiliates.

Advances in information systems and telecommunications have greatly expanded the scope and impact of collaboration between institutions and scholars. Bilateral and multilateral exchanges are taking place every day as technological advances allow think tank staff to communicate and operate more effectively across international borders. The Internet enables think tanks around the world to connect with each other in a way that was unthinkable just a few years ago. Global forums, conferences, and debates now take place regularly on the World Wide Web. Collaborative research projects involving researchers from 20 or more countries are now commonplace. Recently, institutions such as the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace’s Global Policy Program, the World Bank’s Global Development Network, the United Nation’s Global Public Policy Network, and the Foreign Policy Research Institute’s Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program have created partnerships with think tanks around the world in an effort to create global networks that will analyze global issues, attempt to shape foreign policies, and influence the programs and priorities of international institutions. In addition, an equal number of regional networks have been organized in Europe (Transition Policy Network, Trans European Policy Studies Association network and Partnership for Peace network), Asia (Association of Southeast Asian Nations Institute of Strategic and International Studies network), Africa (African Capacity Building Foundation network), and Latin America (Atlas Foundation network) to achieve similar objectives.

The growth of public policy research organizations over the last two decades has been nothing less than explosive. Not only have these organizations increased in number, but the scope and impact of

their work has expanded dramatically. Still, the potential of think tanks to support and sustain democratic governments and civil societies around the world is far from exhausted. The challenge for the new millennium is to harness the vast reservoir of knowledge, information, and associational energy that exist in public policy research organizations in every region of the world. It is essential that the U.S. State Department and other international agencies of the U.S. government take immediate steps to work with, and through think tanks, to help develop and sustain a global network of policy institutes that will span physical, political, and disciplinary boundaries

in the pursuit of solutions to some of the emerging and enduring policy problems of our time. ●

---

<sup>1</sup>. See James G. McGann and Kent R. Weaver, eds. *Think Tanks and Civil Societies: Catalysts for Ideas and Action*; Transaction Publications 2000. See also Jeffrey Telgarsky and Makiko Ueno, Introduction: *Think Tanks and a Changing Japan*, in Telgarsky and Ueno, eds., *Think Tanks in a Democratic Society: An Alternative Voice*, (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1996), p.3.

<sup>2</sup>. Telgarsky and Ueno, Introduction, p.2.

<sup>3</sup>. According to recent data collected by the FPRI Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program there are over 4,500 think tanks worldwide, approximately 1,500 of which are found in the United States.

<sup>4</sup>. Wildavsky, Aaron, *Speaking Truth to Power: The Art and Craft of Policy Analysis* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co. 1979)

## THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION: HOW A THINK TANK WORKS

---

*By Strobe Talbott*

*President, The Brookings Institution*



*The goal of The Brookings Institution, and all other think tanks, is "to provide the policy community with analysis and conclusions to use as the basis for developing new policies, and for modifying or retiring existing policies," says Brookings President Strobe Talbott. "One of our most challenging tasks," he says, "is to identify early on the new and important issues our nation and the world will confront in the future" and bring them to the attention of policy-makers and the public.*

The raw material that think tanks work with is ideas. Think tanks — more properly public policy research organizations — assess the validity and utility of the ideas that form the basis for policy, and they develop new ideas upon which the policies of the future might be based. James Allen Smith, an historian who has written a number of books about think tanks, has described them in the title of one of his volumes as “The Idea Brokers.”

The Brookings Institution is one of the oldest think tanks in the United States. The precursor of the present-day Brookings — the Institute for Government Research — was established in Washington in 1916 by a St. Louis businessman and philanthropist named Robert Brookings. He later set up two related organizations, the Institute for Economics and the Graduate School of Economics and Government.

Robert Brookings established these organizations because he saw that businesses in the early part of the 20th century were benefiting from the relatively new disciplines of economic research and organizational management, and he believed that government also could benefit. The three research organizations were combined in 1927 to form the Brookings Institution, which initially focused on domestic social and economic policy. International studies were not added to the Brookings research agenda until after World War Two.

Brookings is organized into three major research areas: Foreign Policy Studies, Economic Studies, and Governance Studies, though those departmental distinctions are increasingly blurred as the Institution takes on the cross-disciplinary issues that define our globalized world. Our organizational structure also includes several research centers, focused on areas such as the Middle East or functional issues such as education policy.

Robert Brookings once said, “Underlying all Brookings activities is a belief in the necessity of framing issues accurately and impartially, of presenting ideas without ideology.” Since its earliest days, Brookings has provided policy-makers and the public with timely, applied research that is aimed at finding solutions to America’s most complex policy challenges.

Over the decades, ideas emanating from Brookings played a key role in the mobilizations for World Wars One and Two; the creation of the Federal government’s budget process, civil service system, and Social Security; the development of the Marshall Plan; the imposition of price controls during World War Two; the use of sanctions to punish and influence rogue states; the organization of the National Security Council and other foreign policy and defense structures; the commitment to promote development in poorer countries; the evolution of U.S. policy toward post-Soviet Russia; and many other policies.

Since the terrorist attacks of 9-11, the research here has been refocused to concentrate more intently on generating ideas and insights that will lead to the development or revision of policies concerning relations between the West and the Islamic world; the proper balance between vigilance against terrorism and protection of civil liberties; the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians; the need to adjust traditional state-to-state diplomacy to take into account the rise of non-state players; the debate over preemptive or preventive warfare to counter threats from terrorists and terrorist-supporting states; the development of a long-term international strategy for the post-Cold War world; the future of arms control; and the case for a missile defense system.

“Think tanks remain a principal source of information and expertise for policy makers and journalists,” Andrew Rich, a political science professor who has studied think tanks, concluded in a report five years ago. “Their studies and reports are regularly relied upon to guide and/or bolster members of Congress in their legislative efforts and journalists in their reporting.”

In a survey of congressional staff members and journalists covering the Senate and House of Representatives, Rich found that more than 90% viewed think tanks as “somewhat or very influential” in contemporary American politics. Rich reported that Brookings was judged to be the “most credible” of the 30 think tanks listed in his survey.

Brookings is often referred to as “a university without students.” Many of our 75 senior scholars have advanced degrees, and quite a few come from university faculties. Their research and writing is subject to scholarly review.

Some of the Brookings Fellows are what we call “scholar practitioners.” This description applies to researchers who periodically accept positions in government where they can test their academic conclusions in real-world circumstances, and to former officials who come to Brookings after a period of public service and use their government experience to add a practical viewpoint to our academic research.

For example, more than a dozen Brookings “scholar practitioners” have served in the State Department or on the National Security Council, including James Steinberg, the Vice President and Director of the Foreign Policy Studies program at Brookings (former Deputy National Security Adviser at the White House and Director of the Policy Planning Staff at the State Department); Helmut Sonnenfeldt (National Security Council senior staff member in the Nixon administration and former director of the State Department Office of Research on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe); and Martin Indyk, Director of our Saban Center for Middle East Policy (former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs and twice U.S. ambassador to Israel). Brookings also has expertise from all the other branches of government, such as former Congressman Bill Frenzel (Republican-Minnesota), one of our resident experts on taxes, free trade, and budget policy.

The National Institute for Research Advancement in Tokyo compiled a list of 3,500 think tanks worldwide, half of them in the United States. Not all of these policy research organizations maintain a strictly academic atmosphere, or are required to be “independent and non-partisan” in their analysis, as is mandated by the Brookings mission statement. Some think tanks are more overtly political. A number focus on a single issue or a small number of related issues. Some have an ideological agenda or a clearly identifiable partisan approach, and lobby policy makers to implement their agenda.

But, whether identified with the left or right — or centrist, like Brookings — all think tanks are dedicated to disseminating their research and recommendations to the policy-makers, and to the news media, influential opinion leaders, interested organizations, and members of the public. Underlying all these activities lies the goal of Brookings and all other think tanks — to provide the policy community with analysis and conclusions to use as the basis for developing new policies, and for modifying or retiring existing policies.

Dissemination of policy analysis and recommendations from Brookings takes a number of forms. The conclusions of many research projects are presented in books and reports. However, a few

years ago, when it was realized that policy-makers and their staffs don't always have time to read books and lengthy reports, Brookings also began publishing its findings additionally in shorter, more accessible papers called Policy Briefs. Other think tanks have followed suit.

Scholars at Brookings often communicate their conclusions more directly to policy-makers through Congressional testimony, private consultations, and meetings with Congressional and executive branch staff members, and to interested non-governmental audiences through forums, roundtable discussions, and other public events.

Policy-makers are often influenced by public opinion, and public opinion is often influenced by coverage in the news media. Additionally, much of what policy-makers, their advisers, and the public know about policy issues they learn through the news media. Therefore, it's not surprising that many scholars at Brookings and other think tanks devote a good deal of effort to presenting their ideas and findings through the news media. This takes the form of interviews on television and radio and in print, opinion articles for the op-ed pages of newspapers, press briefings, public speeches, and articles for scholarly journals. More than a year ago, Brookings built its own TV and radio studio to facilitate media interviews.

Brookings and other think tanks also publish "media guides" to help reporters locate and interview scholars with specific expertise on the policy issue a journalist is writing about.

The budget to fund all this research, analysis, dissemination, and outreach — and the necessary staff — runs approximately \$40 million a year at Brookings. The money comes from an endowment which was originally established by founder Robert Brookings; from grants and donations by foundations, corporations, and individuals; and from

such revenue sources as the Brookings Institution Press, which publishes more than 50 books a year, and the Center for Public Policy Education, which runs executive education seminars for government and corporate managers.

Elaborate rules are in place to guarantee that financial providers have no influence over the design and outcome of Brookings research.

One of our most challenging tasks is to identify early on the new and important issues our nation and the world will confront in the future. Then, in the Brookings tradition, we focus our scholarship on bringing those issues to the attention of the policy-makers and the public, providing solid research and analysis, informing the debate, and offering constructive ideas and recommendations.

As the historian James Allen Smith wrote in his history of Brookings on its 75th anniversary, "...when few scholars have been available and prepared to tackle an emerging policy issue, Brookings has often worked to redirect scholarly attention and fashion new networks of expertise, whether on government finance and regulation, the economies of Asian nations, or the command and control of nuclear weapons. Indeed, the best single test of the institution's long-term success and influence resides not in its immediate impact on particular policy decisions...but on its ability to shape expert networks in ways that continue to anticipate the nation's problems even before the contours of policy debate are delineated."

Busy government policy-makers have noted the value added in Brookings' ability to combine the analysis of long-term trends with the recommendation of short-term policies. Though many issues we tackle today could hardly have been imagined by Robert Brookings in 1916, that non-partisan, policy-oriented method of inquiry has remained constant since our founding day. ©

---

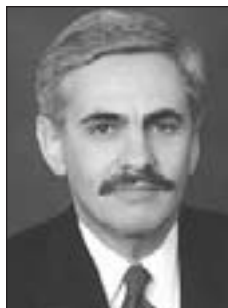
---

## RAND: HOW THINK TANKS INTERACT WITH THE MILITARY

---

*By Michael D. Rich*

*Executive Vice President, RAND*



*Think tanks that work with defense and intelligence agencies once focused exclusively on regional and functional topics, but these organizations are now also being called upon to help the military address the new challenge of terrorism and homeland security, says RAND Executive Vice President Michael D. Rich. RAND researchers, who have been studying terrorism for more than 30 years, are now helping decision-makers develop a comprehensive analytical approach to defending against terrorist attacks and, at the same time, they are doing an increasing amount of research on other issues for governments around the world.*

From the beginnings of the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), think tanks have worked closely with both the civilian and military leadership on a wide range of issues, from new technologies to military planning and operations, to help better protect American interests from ever-evolving threats.

Like the DOD civilian leadership, the uniformed military services require high-quality, objective research on geopolitical trends and the implications of different foreign policy options. Among other things, such research is necessary for realistic scenarios to guide planning and program evaluations, and to develop an understanding of probable constraints on operational flexibility.

To their credit, the military services and the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) have used and nurtured a large array of sources for that research, ranging from small institutes, such as the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and the Lexington Institute, funded primarily with corporate or individual donations, to larger policy research organizations such as the Institute for Defense Analyses under contract to the DOD. The oldest and largest of these research organizations is RAND, which was established with private capital as a non-profit corporation in 1948. About half of RAND's current work deals with national defense

while the rest deals with a wide range of domestic policy issues.

RAND operates three DOD-sponsored, federally funded research and development centers (FFRDCs). FFRDCs are research programs operated by private non-profit (non-commercial) organizations under long-term contracts. They develop and maintain essential expertise and capabilities important to their sponsors and operate in the public interest, free from real or perceived conflicts of interest.

RAND's creation enabled the Air Force to retain and extend the considerable civilian scientific contributions during World War II. As part of a larger program of research on air power at RAND, the Air Force seeded the development of a path-breaking analytical effort aimed at understanding the Soviet Union. Some of RAND's research addressed the development of Soviet strategy, doctrine, and military systems. The Air Force also requested analyses of the Soviet economy, foreign policy, science and technology programs, among many other topics.

RAND's pioneering work was so new that it required the translation of large amounts of fundamental Soviet writings and the creation or refinement of numerous analytical methods that became standard throughout the research community, including the

interviewing of emigres whose distrust of government officials made them otherwise inaccessible.

Soon the Air Force, and then the Office of the Secretary of Defense, turned to RAND for research on China, Eastern Europe, Japan, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and Western Europe. Although smaller in scale than the analyses of the Soviet Union, these studies also provided the Air Force — and through RAND’s widely-disseminated published reports, the rest of the U.S. government and the public — with an independent body of research on a broad range of topics. These included economic strength, military capabilities, insurgencies, hegemonic intentions, and leadership succession possibilities in many nations and regions around the world.

Over time, RAND developed complementary lines of research for the Army, as well as for other federal clients such as the intelligence community. And the DOD steadily increased the number and diversity of its external sources of research, also using others in the growing world of “think tanks” such as the Council on Foreign Relations, the American Enterprise Institute, and the Brookings Institution.

RAND’s federally funded research and development centers have a special role in helping to meet the research and analysis needs of their DOD sponsors. The FFRDCs are: Project AIR FORCE; the Army’s Arroyo Center; and the National Defense Research Institute (NDRI), which primarily serves the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, and the defense agencies. Each of these centers conducts a broad, integrated program of research that addresses emerging security needs and their implications for the sponsoring organizations; the development of new strategies, doctrines, tactics, and concepts of operations; the application of new technologies; and issues related to logistics, manpower, training, personnel, health care, and systems acquisition.

For each FFRDC, RAND commits to developing and maintaining a set of specified “core capabilities.” This is all done with close familiarity with the

structure, doctrine, operations, and personalities of the sponsoring organizations. Indeed, one of the strengths of FFRDCs, whether operated by RAND or other non-profit entities, is their stability and long-term, strategic, and close-in relationship with their military or OSD sponsors.

The research agenda-setting process is an iterative one that begins with the development of a long-term research plan that is revised annually. Continuous discussions between RAND research leaders and general officers or civilians of comparable rank enable RAND to develop an annual research program of individual studies, which is then approved by a high-level advisory board. In the case of Project AIR FORCE and the Arroyo Center, the advisory boards are chaired by the services’ vice chiefs of staff; in the case of NDRI, the chair is the principal deputy under secretary of defense for acquisition, technology, and logistics. Individual studies are typically commissioned by one or more senior officers or officials, who help shape the scope, phasing, and timetable of the research — providing comments, suggestions, and critiques along the way.

As an example, one such study was a multi-year Project AIR FORCE study on Chinese defense modernization and its implications for the Air Force. Although it was developed against the backdrop of extensive interactions between RAND and the senior Air Force leadership, the specific contours of the study were worked out with then-Commander of the Pacific Air Forces, General Richard Myers, and Air Force Headquarters’ Deputy Chief of Staff for Air and Space Operations, Lieutenant General John Jumper (now Air Force Chief of Staff). Both officers, as well as their successors, were active participants during the course of the analyses. The research team reached out to numerous others including experienced members of the Foreign Service and specialists in academia.

Once the study objectives were agreed upon, RAND assembled a disparate team of researchers under the leadership of Zalmay Khalilzad, a former senior official in both the Departments of State and Defense who was then at RAND. Khalilzad is now a member

of the National Security Council staff and also Presidential Envoy to Afghanistan. In addition to China specialists, there were other regional specialists, as well as experts in defense strategy, air power, intelligence, and economics.

The team was augmented by several Air Force officers serving at RAND as federal executive fellows. During the course of the research, the study team reviewed work in progress with an advisory group composed of a wide variety of current and former senior federal officials in both Democratic and Republican administrations, including former national security adviser Brent Scowcroft and three former secretaries of defense: Harold Brown, Frank Carlucci, and William Perry.

This project produced numerous interim briefings to senior Air Force officers and other DOD officials, and written products, as well as a final report and derivative issue paper that were published and circulated widely. In a manner that characterizes much of the research of FFRDCs, the project involved close and continuing interaction with the Air Force at all levels. Most important, the work was of practical value to the Air Force senior leadership and was widely read and used elsewhere in the U.S. government and in the region.

Every RAND product undergoes a rigorous quality assurance process and this report was no exception. In addition to internal peer reviews, the manuscript was reviewed before publication by I. Lewis Libby, a former principal deputy secretary of defense and State Department official, and David Shambaugh, professor of political science and international relations and director of the China Policy Program at The George Washington University.

This study is one of several done by RAND's FFRDCs during the past few years that have examined issues at the heart of U.S.-China relations. Other FFRDC studies at RAND during the same period examined critical problems involving such nations as North Korea, Indonesia, India, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Colombia. Each of these studies drew on the same RAND strengths as

the study on China: a multi-disciplinary team of researchers, extensive contacts overseas, and close working relationships with the military sponsor.

The work in and on individual countries has enabled RAND to carry out detailed analyses of security issues on a regional level in East Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, and the Persian Gulf. In fact RAND is doing an increasing amount of work for governments around the world. The pattern of detailed country studies and broader regional analyses has been especially effective in work on Europe. RAND has a substantial presence in Europe, with three offices and research programs in both defense and non-defense fields. A series of analyses of conventional arms control using advanced combat models, and of the related question of limits on air power, had substantial influence on the U.S. position and ultimately on the resulting Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty. Moreover, much of the early thinking about the rationale for alternative paths toward NATO expansion was done at RAND and other think tanks.

Think tanks are now called upon to contribute to a new challenge: the emergence of terrorism as a worldwide threat and of homeland security as a national priority of the highest order. RAND researchers have been studying terrorism for more than 30 years, and are today helping the United States government develop a comprehensive analytical approach to defend against terrorist attacks. Bigger bombs, better guns, and new weapons systems alone are not enough to defeat terrorists, who operate far from traditional battlefields. We also need a better understanding of who terrorists are, how they operate, what motivates them, and what can be done to stop them from expanding their ranks. And we need a better understanding of our nation's vulnerabilities and how to reduce those vulnerabilities. RAND's research and analysis is playing an important role in helping to improve government policy and decision-making in these vital areas.

Since the attacks on America on September 11, 2001, the RAND FFRDCs — like those of the other



FFRDCs operated by other institutions, such as the Center for Naval Analyses, that regularly assist the DOD — have been called upon by their sponsors to modify their research agendas. The legacy of past work and resulting capabilities, coupled with the flexibility of the institutional arrangements and close working relationships between sponsors and researchers, operators, and analysts, have equipped the FFRDCs for these new dimensions in the nexus of foreign policy and defense planning.

The “old” issues haven’t gone away, of course. They have simply been joined and complicated by the more recent ones. RAND’s experts on a broad range of national security issues have been helping America’s armed forces defend the nation for more than 50 years, dealing both with threats that are now part of history and with threats that will be on tomorrow’s front pages. ●

---

---

## THE U.S. INSTITUTE OF PEACE: A HANDS-ON APPROACH TO RESOLVING CONFLICT

---

*By Richard H. Solomon  
President, United States Institute of Peace*



*The approach of the United States Institute of Peace is “to go a step further” than a traditional think tank, and “climb into the trenches with those trying to bring peace to their parts of the world and work directly with them,” says USIP President Richard H. Solomon. In this endeavor, he says, the Institute — which was created by the U.S. Congress — brings with it “a growing wealth of knowledge and expertise in the techniques of managing conflict and building peace.”*

**T**he United States Institute of Peace is a unique entity in the increasingly crowded Washington foreign policy “think tank” community.

Perhaps the most obvious aspect of our uniqueness is that we are a creation of the U.S. Congress. We are an independent federal entity. However, its most salient aspect is that we take a hands-on, pro-active approach to fulfilling our mission of promoting the peaceful resolution of international conflicts. Some of our staff-members, in fact, like to refer to us as a “think-and-do tank.” I’ll come back to that idea, after a brief explanation of the origins and mission of the Institute.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s — the aftermath of the Vietnam War — there was a lively debate in the United States about the value of establishing a national “peace academy” to train professionals in the skills of peacemaking, as a complement to the educational mission of the nation’s three government-run military academies. The result of that debate was that the U.S. Congress decided in 1984 to establish “an independent non-profit, national institute to serve the people and the government through the widest possible range of education and training, basic and applied research opportunities, and peace information services on the means to promote international peace and the resolution of conflicts among the nations and peoples of the world without recourse to violence.”

Thus was born the United States Institute of Peace. Funded annually by Congress and overseen by a presidentially-appointed, bipartisan, Senate-confirmed board of directors, the Institute focuses its

efforts on education, training, policy development, and practical programs of conflict management, all in the pursuit of international peace — in the Middle East, in the Balkans, in Afghanistan, in sub-Saharan Africa — indeed in any part of the world where violent conflict threatens or rages.

While we approach our mission in some of the ways that a traditional, non-governmental think tank would — through research, studies, grant-making, public events, and publishing — we also have practical programs that are more applied than the work of a traditional think tank. As I said at the outset, we like to describe ourselves as a think-and-do tank. So, what is the “do” part of the equation?

It is, in large part, training and education. We are very active in training the peacemakers of today and educating those of tomorrow. In the training realm, for example, the Institute of Peace, through a cooperative arrangement with the U.S. State Department, trains American police officers who have volunteered to go overseas to serve as on-the-ground, specially-trained peacekeepers in post-conflict areas such as the Balkans and East Timor. There are hundreds of such civilian police now serving overseas, and many of them have passed through our Training Program before shipping out.

The Training Program operates not just in Washington, but worldwide. Its trainees include diplomats, government officials, civic leaders, non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives,

and military personnel from the United States and dozens of other countries. They are trained to handle all phases of conflict, from preventive action to post-conflict stabilization and reconciliation.

A recent example of the program's work is a two-week, interactive trust- and team-building course for about 30 young NGO leaders from Serbia and Kosovo. The program had four components: a day-long course consisting of various outdoor challenges requiring collaborative planning and teamwork; a second day of negotiation and mediation discussions and exercises; an intensive, three-day, computer-driven simulation involving negotiation and policy-making; and a day of dialogue with Washington policy-makers. During the simulation, the participants were challenged to address, in a highly-pressured environment, the problems of a fictitious country wrestling with the post-conflict challenges of ethnic tensions, high unemployment, environmental degradation, and an HIV/AIDS epidemic. In the three days, they "made policy" through a computer simulation that enabled them to track the effects of their policy decisions on the country's economy and society over a 10-year period.

Our Education Program works to prepare American youth for the difficult work of making peace in conflict-ridden countries and stimulates emerging generations of leaders to pursue careers in international conflict management. It does this by producing teaching guides and conducting workshops and seminars for American teachers at the high school and college levels who want to incorporate conflict-resolution studies into their curricula.

The program also works with educators in zones of conflict abroad, convening workshops and seminars on conflict analysis and management and the role that educators can play promoting reconciliation and tolerance in those areas. Since September 11, 2001, these efforts have been focused mainly in countries and regions with large Muslim populations.

The Education Program also works directly with American high school students by sponsoring an annual National Peace Essay Contest. All U.S. high school students are eligible — and encouraged — to participate by submitting an essay on a given peace-related subject. This year's topic is the justification

for war, i.e., is it possible to have a "just" war? Thousands of students throughout the country participate in the contest. Each state chooses a local winner who gets college scholarship money and a trip to the Institute in Washington, where three national winners are chosen and given additional scholarship support.

Our Rule of Law Program also takes a hands-on and pro-active approach to its mission. People tend to think of democracy as consisting of two elements: elections and freedom of speech, expression and thought. But a fully-functioning democracy consists of many more components, one of the most important being adherence to the rule of law. Research strongly suggests that societies that uphold the rule of law are less likely to be aggressors and more likely to contribute to international peace.

Rule of Law Program staff frequently travel to countries in transition from totalitarianism to democracy to offer guidance on implementing commonly-accepted rule of law principles. At the request of the Israeli and Palestinian ministers of justice, for example, Rule of Law Program staff have organized a special initiative on Palestinian-Israeli legal dialogue. The goal is to build professional relationships between the two legal communities and enable them to jointly explore a range of common problems — a process they had not been able to start without outside facilitation and which no other international party had undertaken. Through roundtable discussions and working groups in Israel and the Palestinian territories, members of the two legal communities and foreign experts discuss practical legal issues affecting the daily interaction of their two systems, consider relevant examples of legal relations between neighboring countries around the world, and develop proposed solutions to common problems. More than 120 members of the two legal communities have participated to date. Agenda topics range from traffic accidents between Israelis and Palestinians to intellectual property rights and representation in each other's courts.

In addition to our issues-oriented programs, we have programs that focus — again in a hands-on, pro-active fashion — on particular regions that are facing violent conflict or recovering from a period of

violence. One of those programs addresses the Balkans — an area that is well into the recovery phase after years of ethnic violence. Another focuses on a region that is larger, less easily defined, and where the conflicts are historical, current and potential — the diverse Muslim World.

The Institute's Balkans Program is deeply involved in helping the states, communities, and ethnic groups of the former Yugoslavia emerge from the wreckage of a decade of violent and deadly conflict and rebuild their societies. Its director, Daniel Serwer, has been extremely active in the region and has convened numerous workshops for Balkans community leaders and government officials in the Balkans to help them plan for the peaceful co-existence of various ethnic and religious communities that have traditionally been enemies.

Our newest program, and a vitally important one, is the Special Initiative on the Muslim World. One fact made painfully clear by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 is that Americans and other Westerners are woefully ignorant of the customs, cultures and beliefs that prevail in a large and important segment of the world's population — the more than 1 billion Muslims who populate a broad swath of geography stretching from West Africa to East Asia.

Under the direction of former U.S. Ambassador to Azerbaijan Richard Kauzlarich, the Muslim World initiative explores ways of promoting understanding and tolerance between the Western and Islamic

worlds, focusing initially on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, then on Iraq and developments in South and Southeast Asia. It also supports related Institute activities under the Rule of Law, Religion, and Peacemaking, Education, and Training programs.

While a great deal of attention has been paid to the role of religion in fomenting violent conflict, there are few think tanks that address its role in the making of peace. The Institute of Peace's Religion and Peacemaking Initiative works to enhance the capacity of faith-based communities to be forces for peace. The Initiative organizes interfaith dialogues and workshops in the Balkans, the Middle East, and the United States.

These are but some of our programs. We have others that focus on the effects of new telecommunications technologies, such as the Internet and satellite technology, on modern diplomacy, and on the more traditional think-tank functions, such as policy-oriented research and publishing. But the operational programs I've described here are the ones that make us truly unique in a growing world of foreign policy think tanks. The usual modus operandi in that world is to devise new policy options and offer them to officials and practitioners to apply at the negotiating table or in the field. Our approach is to go a step further — to climb into the trenches with those trying to bring peace to their parts of the world and work directly with them, bringing with us a growing wealth of knowledge and expertise in the techniques of managing conflict and building peace. ●

## HAVING AN IMPACT: THINK TANKS AND THE NATO ENLARGEMENT DEBATE

*By Ronald D. Asmus*

*Senior Transatlantic Fellow, German Marshall Fund of the United States  
Adjunct Senior Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations*



*U.S. think tanks played a pivotal role in the debate to expand the NATO Alliance in the early 1990s, according to Ronald D. Asmus, Senior Transatlantic Fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the United States and Adjunct Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. He says several factors were involved: there was a demand for fresh thinking on the subject from both sides of the Atlantic, elements of the U.S. government were initially divided on the subject, and think tank staff brought unique strengths and assets to the table.*

There are moments in the evolution of U.S. foreign policy where think tanks have had a decisive impact in reshaping conventional wisdom and setting a new course on a key strategic issue. The debate over NATO enlargement in the early 1990s was one of those moments. U.S. think tanks played a key role in developing and building support for the U.S. decision to enlarge NATO as part of a broader strategy of overcoming the continent's Cold War divide and building a Europe whole and free and at peace.

It was a dramatic period. The collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989, and the disintegration of the Soviet Union itself two years later, had also left in its wake a vacuum in terms of Western policy in the region. The democratic revolutions of 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe had taken the West largely by surprise. As welcome as they were, they nonetheless overturned many of the underlying assumptions that had previously guided Western thinking and policy.

Events on the ground were moving faster than the ability of many policy-makers to rethink. Governments and bureaucracies were at times behind the curve of history — and they knew it — victims, in a sense, of our own success. Having succeeded in toppling communism without a shot fired in confrontation between East and West, the West was unprepared politically and intellectually to come forth with a new vision of what kind of post-Cold

War Europe and trans-Atlantic relationship was needed for the future. What was NATO's purpose to be in a world absent communism and a Soviet threat?

These questions produced one of the most passionate and divisive foreign policy debates of the 1990s in this country. The issue was not only whether or not to enlarge NATO to Central and Eastern Europe. That was in many ways just the tip of the iceberg. Policy-makers were also battling over nothing less than what kind of Europe and U.S.-European relationship the United States should build for a new era. The result was some of the most far-reaching changes in U.S. and NATO strategy in decades. I was fortunate to have a bird's eye view of this debate — first as a RAND analyst, subsequently as a deputy assistant secretary of state in the European Bureau, and later as a Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Why did think tanks play such a key role in this debate? There were several reasons. First, in the early 1990s there was a keen demand for fresh and out-of-the-box thinking on both sides of the Atlantic and governments were often not well equipped to provide it. Coping with revolutionary change or coming up with a new intellectual paradigm are not the natural strengths of bureaucracies. This is not because people working inside the system are less gifted. But they must operate by consensus, are at times risk averse, and are simply overloaded with short-term operational issues and requirements. It is much easier to think big or out of the box when one

is on the outside and at a think tank where the incentive structure is very different. Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's remark that one should accrue one's intellectual capital before entering government because one only depletes it while working in the bureaucracy is, unfortunately, often the case.

Second, in the early 1990s the initial efforts of the U.S. government to grapple with these issues had left it seriously divided. Many actors in the U.S. government at the time turned to outsiders for additional input and analysis. In some cases this was simply further to strengthen their own cases. In others it reflected efforts to find new ways to bridge existing differences across the inter-agency process. The net result was that senior U.S. officials pro-actively increasingly reached out to think tanks and brought them into normally closed interagency deliberations.

Third, some think tanks were able to capitalize on these opportunities because they brought some unique strengths and assets to the table. In the early 1990s RAND had one of the strongest teams of European security experts outside of the U.S. government. In addition to a close working relationship with different parts of the U.S. government, it also had excellent contacts in Western and Central and Eastern Europe as well as Russia. Along with the National Defense University and The Atlantic Council, it had been among the first think tanks on the ground in the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe. Indeed, both the German as well as Central and East European governments had turned to these institutes to provide analytical support in developing new policies. This gave them access to and insights into the thinking in Washington and in both halves of Europe that few outsiders enjoyed.

But access alone was not enough. In an age where the work and analysis of some think tanks are increasingly partisan and political, it is important to underscore that institutions like RAND were successful precisely because they went that extra mile to remain analytical and objective. They were able to provide busy and overworked senior policy-makers what they often needed most — a framework and a way of thinking through a problem as well as a set of options complete with their pros and cons. In

Washington, alternative policy views are a dime a dozen. But those pieces of research that help provide a new analytic framework are few and far between.

For example, the most successful analytical work RAND produced during the NATO enlargement debate was not the op-eds or other advocacy pieces individuals wrote. Rather, it was a series of analytical briefings that explored alternative rationales for enlarging the Alliance, the practical issues of how it could be done, the costs thereof, and the implications for Russia and other countries not invited. As an institution, RAND never took an official stance pro or con on NATO enlargement. It saw its role first and foremost as assisting policy-makers in understanding the issues, options, and tradeoffs — and letting them make better-informed decisions of their own.

This did not mean that individual analysts did not have strong views. They often did. I was among the earliest and most outspoken advocates of enlargement. But many of my RAND colleagues were on the other side of the issue. Indeed, at times we ended up testifying on opposite sides before Congress. Internal RAND seminars or Board meetings at the time were as contentious and witnessed debates as passionate as any inter-agency meeting. But it was RAND's ability to frame the issues and to elucidate the trade-offs that earned it the most praise from policy-makers. Perhaps the greatest compliment I received came from a senior DOD official strongly opposed to NATO enlargement who praised a briefing my colleagues and I had done as the best piece of analysis he had seen that helped him understand the linkages and trade-offs of the issues — even though the two of us came to completely different conclusions as to what U.S. policy at the time should be.

As a result, a number of think tanks became, for a period of time, an informal but nonetheless real part of an extended inter-agency process and debate within the U.S. government on NATO's future. Their briefings and memos became an integral part of the intellectual and policy debate. Think tank analysts worked closely with, and were often invited in to brief, senior officials. They were often asked to cross the Atlantic and test-market ideas and policy options

with West European allies or Central European partners in order to provide feedback before final decisions in Washington were made.

By the mid 1990s the role of think tanks in the NATO enlargement debate was changing. The debates within the U.S. government were increasingly resolved but the broader public debate over NATO enlargement was just starting. As the enlargement issue became the focal point of an increasingly passionate debate, other think tanks stepped in to help provide a forum for broader public discussion. The Council on Foreign Relations, the Brookings Institution, and the “New Atlantic Initiative” of the American Enterprise Institute all stepped forward to create study groups and other outlets for public discourse and debate. Rarely has an issue been the subject of more attention and public policy debate as NATO enlargement was in the mid- and late 1990s.

The role of think tanks changed to reflect these new realities. They remained crucial in terms of the broader debate and public understanding and support for new policies. But they were no longer playing a quasi-insider’s role or acting as a key driver in that process. Nonetheless, many key officials from the early and mid-1990s — such as Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Richard Holbrooke — have all testified to the important role that outside think tanks played in helping them develop their own thinking on these issues.

Looking back today, what can one learn from this period and the crucial role that think tanks played in helping to develop U.S. and NATO policy? To what degree was the impact of think tanks the result of a unique phase of history where senior policy-makers were seeking outside support to come to terms with revolutionary change, coupled with entrepreneurial skills of several think tanks? Or does this experience teach us something more enduring about policy-making in the modern age?

The simple fact is that in today’s globalizing world, the pace of diplomacy is accelerating while the internal ability of governments to think long-term

and conceptually continues to decrease. This trend is further exacerbated by the long-term under-funding of the State Department. In practical terms, this has meant that whatever resources exist on paper for longer-term strategic planning are often de facto pressed into service to simply manage the day-to-day operational workload. Often there is little if any time left over for other tasks.

As a political appointee coming to government from the think tank world, I was surprised to discover how the need to manage day-to-day operational needs often crowded out efforts to devote more energy to longer-term intellectual thinking. Moreover, policy and planning staffs or cells are less and less able to play the role initially envisaged for them. The days when a veteran diplomat like George Kennan could spend weeks on a paper that would then be systematically discussed and perhaps set U.S. policy are few and far between.

This suggests that the demand from within government for creative thinking from the outside is likely to continue and may even increase. To be sure, the early 1990s in Europe were an extraordinary phase where revolutionary changes called so many previous assumptions into question. But in the future there will be other issues or parts of the world where major changes on the ground are likely to render existing policies obsolete. As long as governments suffer from a limited internal capacity to do long-term strategic planning, they will continue to reach out to the think tank world for research and ideas they can tap into and exploit.

Whether future think tanks will be able to step in to fill that need is a separate question. On the one hand, many think tanks have gotten smarter. And the market is increasingly competitive. As competition among think tanks over influencing official policy grows, it has bred a new generation of entrepreneurial analysts who assiduously cultivate their government contacts to obtain unique access. But getting in the door is only half the battle. At the end of the day the key to success is the quality of one’s work, the ability to address the needs of senior policy-makers, and the packaging of practical policy recommendations. ©

---

---

## THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION: INFLUENCING THE DEBATE ON MISSILE DEFENSE

---

*By Baker Spring*

*F.M. Kirby Research Fellow in National Security Policy  
The Heritage Foundation*



*The Heritage Foundation has employed a variety of means over the past two decades to influence the policy process in Washington on the issue of missile defense, says Baker Spring, the Foundation's F.M. Kirby Research Fellow in National Security Policy. He examines developments regarding the demise of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and pursuit of a sea-based missile defense deployment system to show how the Foundation was able to influence policy decision-making.*

Since before former President Ronald Reagan's March 1983 speech creating the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) program, missile defense has been among the top issues of concern to The Heritage Foundation. The Foundation-sponsored High Frontier study, which advocated the deployment of an effective ballistic missile defense system, was published in 1982. Since then the Heritage Foundation, as a Washington-based, non-partisan public policy research organization or "think tank," has been working to educate policy-makers about the need to deploy such a system.

Today, the United States has withdrawn from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, which barred the deployment of an effective missile defense system, and the Bush administration is pursuing a missile defense program to field an effective system as soon as possible. These welcome developments did not come about by accident. Numerous groups and individuals, both inside the U.S. government and out, played important parts in changing U.S. policy regarding missile defense.

The Heritage Foundation's educational effort employed a variety of means to influence the policy process in Washington regarding missile defense. The primary means was to publish succinct papers called Backgrounders and Executive Memoranda on narrow topics related to missile defense whenever Congress or the executive branch faced important policy decisions. The papers were designed to meet

the needs of the busy policy-maker who needed to get up to speed quickly on the issue. Other means of influence included providing public and private briefings for members of Congress and their staffs, submitting testimony for congressional hearings, giving briefings to the media, and sponsoring a variety of lectures and seminars on the topic of ballistic missile defense.

Two examples best demonstrate where The Heritage Foundation has influenced the debate in the U.S. government over the question of missile defense in recent years. The first example pertains to the ABM Treaty, while the second relates to an option for deploying missile defense systems on ships at sea.

### **BLOCKING THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY FOR PRESERVING THE ABM TREATY**

Analysts at The Heritage Foundation had believed for a long time that the ABM Treaty posed an insurmountable obstacle to the deployment of an effective missile defense system. By early 1995, these same analysts concluded that the best option was to seek the removal of the treaty, as opposed to seeking incremental changes in it. The Clinton administration, being at best skeptical about the wisdom of fielding missile defenses, sought to preserve the accord. One of the reasons Heritage analysts in 1995 opted for seeking to overturn the treaty stemmed from the Clinton administration's failure, by that time, to



resolve the issue of which states would succeed the former Soviet Union as parties.

Both opponents and proponents of the ABM Treaty recognized that the resolution of the succession issue would be necessary to the preservation of the treaty as a legally binding accord. The Clinton administration had assumed that it could resolve the issue absent the U.S. Constitution's requirement for Senate advice and consent in the making of treaties. It was prepared to argue that the resolution of the succession question required no substantive change to the treaty. Heritage Foundation analysts disagreed. Starting in 1996, they worked to convince important senators that replacing the Soviet Union as the opposite party to the ABM Treaty would necessitate substantive changes in the treaty, and therefore any agreement resolving the succession question required Senate consent.<sup>1</sup> Senate consent to the ratification of treaties requires a two-thirds majority under the U.S. Constitution.

As then-chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina came to play a key role in this issue. Senator Helms and his committee staff agreed with the findings of Heritage analysts. In 1997, Senator Helms acted. During consideration of another treaty regarding conventional military forces in Europe, he successfully attached a condition that required President Clinton to certify that he would submit any agreement resolving ABM Treaty succession to the Senate. President Clinton made the required certification on May 15, 1997.

From that point forward, the Clinton administration's effort to preserve the ABM Treaty stalled. While an agreement designating Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine as ABM Treaty successors was signed on September 26, 1997, the Clinton administration was unable to gain Senate approval and it never entered into force. If the Clinton administration had been successful in its policy of preserving the ABM Treaty, it is unlikely that President Bush, as a practical matter, would have been able to order the U.S. withdrawal from the treaty in June, 2002. This is because such a recent agreement, as a legally binding commitment to the four successor states to continue U.S. observance of the ABM Treaty, would have proven too disruptive to undo.

## **PURSUING THE SEA-BASED OPTION FOR MISSILE DEFENSE**

In addition to its interest in the arms control aspects of the missile defense issue, The Heritage Foundation has sought to educate policy-makers about the technological options for fielding an effective missile defense system. Its interest in the technological options led Heritage to form its Commission on Missile Defense in 1995. The Commission, chaired by the former director of the SDI program Ambassador Henry Cooper, consisted of some of the nation's ablest minds on the technological options for missile defense. The Heritage Foundation published the first of what would be several editions of the Commission's report later the same year.<sup>2</sup>

The Commission recommended the deployment of missile defense interceptors on the U.S. Navy's existing Aegis-class cruisers as the best near-term option for missile defense. Specifically, it recommended upgrading the technology that was already being pursued through what was then called the Navy Upper Tier program. The Commission determined that this option could deploy 650 interceptors on 22 ships in five to six years for between \$2 billion and \$3 billion. The proposal also envisioned the interceptors having access to targeting information provided by what was then called the "Brilliant Eyes" sensor satellite constellation.

Congress proved to be a receptive audience for the Commission on Missile Defense. The Fiscal Year 1996 Defense Authorization Act, an earlier version of which President Clinton had vetoed, increased funding for the Upper Tier program from a Clinton administration request of a little more than \$30 million to over \$200 million. President Clinton's action to veto an earlier version of this Defense Authorization Act was prompted in part by his opposition to ballistic missile defense.

While the Clinton administration was forced to accept higher funding figures for the Navy Upper Tier development program, it refused to manage the program in a way consistent with the recommendations of The Heritage Foundation's Commission on Missile Defense. It did so because it viewed the Heritage approach as incompatible with its policy of

preserving the ABM Treaty. Specifically, the Clinton administration did not want to allow the system to have access to satellite and other sensor data that would give it the ability to counter long-range ballistic missiles. The Clinton administration proved willing to fund the program, but only if the technology was “dumbed down.”

Congress, nevertheless, kept pressing the Clinton administration on the potential of a sea-based option for ballistic missile defense. The National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal 1998 included a requirement for the Clinton administration to report to Congress on whether the Navy’s Upper Tier system could be upgraded to provide a limited defense against long-range ballistic missiles. The Pentagon’s Ballistic Missile Defense Organization (BMDO) produced the report and a summary of its findings was released on June 1, 1999. The BMDO’s report referenced a later edition of the report by The Heritage Foundation’s Commission on Missile Defense.<sup>3</sup> More importantly, the BMDO report confirmed the Heritage findings that an upgraded version of what was by then called the Navy Theater-Wide (NTW) system would be capable of intercepting long-range missiles.

While the Clinton administration continued to drag its feet regarding development of the NTW system, progress was made. Today, the Bush administration calls the NTW program the Sea-Based Mid-course program. Twice this year a prototype of the interceptor has destroyed target ballistic missiles in flight tests. The first flight test occurred in January 2002, while the second took place in June. The successful intercept tests have served to bolster the recommendation first made in 1995 by The Heritage

Foundation’s Commission on Missile Defense favoring the option of basing missile defense interceptors at sea.

## CONCLUSION

The Heritage Foundation’s role in shaping public policy, as with other think tanks in the United States, is to educate members of Congress and other policy-makers regarding specific issues. The Foundation is neither a lobby nor a political entity. Its influence is derived from the quality of its proposals for solving public policy problems.

In the area of national security, the problem was addressing the vulnerability of both the United States and its allies to the increasing threat posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles and ballistic missile technology. The Heritage Foundation’s proposed solutions to these problems were to withdraw from the ABM Treaty and deploy an effective global missile defense system, starting with sea-based interceptors. U.S. policy-makers have accepted the first proposal and are moving in the direction of accepting the second. These actions are the direct result of the strength of the proposals themselves and the educational effort by their originators. ©

1. Baker Spring, “The Senate Should Block the White House’s End Run on ABM Treaty,” Heritage Backgrounder No. 1106, March 11, 1996.

2. The Heritage Foundation’s Commission on Missile Defense, *Defending America: A Near- and Long-Term Plan to Deploy Missile Defenses* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 1995).

3. The Heritage Foundation’s Commission on Missile Defense, *Defending America: A Plan to Meet the Urgent Missile Threat* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 1999).

---

---

## A NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON ESTABLISHING A THINK TANK: THE CASE OF HONDURAS

---

*By Amy Coughenour Betancourt  
Adjunct Fellow of the Americas Program  
Center for Strategic and International Studies*



*Think tanks can be created from watershed events in a nation's history or spawned by urgent national issues that drive the search for better policy solutions, and, in many cases, they are "the brainchild" of an individual or a small group of visionaries, says Amy Coughenour Betancourt, Adjunct Fellow of the Americas Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. In Honduras, she says, the notion was to plant the seed with a broad range of national opinion leaders taking part in a workshop and to allow natural leadership to emerge.*

When invited earlier this year to conduct a seminar with Honduran national opinion leaders on "how to establish a strategic think tank," I considered a series of issues about how to guide a country through this process. While experts on think tanks have examined a wide range of issues, including the history of these institutions and why they were founded, few, if any, have outlined practical guidelines for those interested in establishing such an institution. Furthermore, the whole concept of a "think tank" in the Honduran context needed to be examined. As a former staff member and current adjunct fellow of the Americas Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, I am familiar with the inner workings of a U.S.-style think tank operating as an independent, non-profit organization that produces research and analysis with the goal of shaping public policy. However this was not necessarily a relevant model for Honduras, given the financial limitations and lack of tradition for such institutions in that country. The approach that I ultimately selected addressed the following four key questions:

- Where would the leadership for such an establishment come from and who would its constituents be?
- What are the characteristics of think tanks, their role and function, and why do they emerge?

- What is the general context of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Latin America in which these kinds of institutions exist, and specifically, are there any institutions in Honduras now that have characteristics similar to those of a think tank?
- What kinds of resources are available for public policy institutions?

Finally, the heart of the workshop, which was sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Honduras, focused on a "visioning" exercise to identify policy issues and gaps in the Honduran context that could provide an impetus for the creation of a public policy research effort.

The purpose of organizing a workshop on think tanks in Honduras was two-fold: first, there was a perceived need for a national institution that produced high-quality research on national and international issues, particularly ones related to foreign policy. No single institution stood out as an autonomous leader in this area. Second, there was no institution that could provide a ready pool of recognized experts on national and international issues upon which national opinion leaders, the government, Congress, the foreign diplomatic corps, and others could draw for policy analysis, data, speakers, and other products and services that a think tank typically provides. What followed out of these

identified needs was an interesting “brainstorming” session about what role public policy institutions serve in political life, how and why they develop, how national policy issues are identified and prioritized, and, ultimately, how to identify the leadership to implement the establishment of such an institution in a developing country.

#### **LEADERSHIP AND CONSTITUENTS**

Identifying the players in a national discussion about establishing a new national think tank — or alternatively, strengthening existing public policy organizations — is a challenging task because it can predetermine the views and issues brought to the fore. In the case of Honduras, the diplomatic academy of the Honduran Ministry of Foreign Relations took the lead in identifying key institutions and participants to include in the planning session. Groups represented included government officials, defense college officials, the media, NGOs, international consulting firms, business and trade groups, the legal research center of the university, and the Congressional Research Center. Other potentially important players who were not at the workshop, but who could be valuable in such an effort, include stronger representation from the National University and other academic institutions, congressional members or staff, a broader range of civil society organizations, state government officials, mayors or other local government representatives, and individuals with particular expertise or scholarship in public policy.

Not only do these groups have a stake in public policy research, but they also could potentially provide some of the required intellectual leadership, financial support, or organizational components for future endeavors.

The dilemma is that, ideally, a broad range of viewpoints should be included in a national dialogue on the establishment of an institution intended to have national impact, but historically, think tanks are often formed by persons or groups with a particular agenda, set of goals, or policy imperative. They are rarely formed by a disparate group of institutions or individuals with varying missions and functions coming together by consensus.

Think tanks are often formed out of watershed events in a nation’s history or urgent national policy issues that drive the search for better policy solutions, and they are often the brainchild of one person’s vision or a small group of visionaries. For example, the Council on Foreign Relations, one of the oldest public policy institutions in the United States, was originally founded in 1921 by businessmen, bankers, and lawyers determined to keep the United States engaged in the world. This followed in the wake of World War I when many U.S. policy voices were promoting a more insular view of American policy. And in the early 1980s, several conservative think tanks, such as the Heritage Foundation, were formed out of an ideological break with the legacy of then-President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal policies.<sup>1</sup> In Honduras, however, the idea was to plant the seed with a range of groups and allow natural leadership to emerge.

#### **ROLE AND RATIONALE OF THINK TANKS**

Once the players were at the table in Tegucigalpa, the first goal was to develop a common understanding of “think tanks,” or public policy research centers, and to examine typical functions, roles, and activities of such organizations. Questions about the mission, focus, autonomy, size, budget, ideology, and other characteristics were posed and discussed using a sampling of U.S. think tanks as a backdrop for small group analysis and discussion, and later drawing upon a sampling of Latin American institutions. The U.S. institutions included CSIS, the Center for International Policy, the Brookings Institution, the Heritage Foundation, and the Council on Foreign Relations. Latin American institutions included groups like El Colegio de Mexico, Salvadoran Foundation for Economic and Social Development (FUSADES), Center for the Study of the State and Society (CEDES) in Argentina, Institute for Liberty and Democracy (ILD) in Peru, and the Getulio Vargas Foundation in Brazil.

Within the context of the role and function of think tanks, the group also discussed the reasons that think tanks emerge — an important element in understanding the political, social, cultural, and economic catalysts for creating such institutions. Comparative studies on think tanks by leading

experts in the field facilitated discussion by providing some practical input on the proliferation of public policy research institutions worldwide. The studies also provided valuable insights for understanding how a country's political structures and policy interactions translate into unique public policy research institutions.<sup>2</sup>

### **THE “THIRD SECTOR” AND THINK TANKS IN LATIN AMERICA**

One of the critical steps in the workshop was to view the emergence of public policy research centers within the context of the explosion of NGOs and other civil society groups in Latin America over the last several decades. As many scholars have observed, these burgeoning “third sector” groups — which are neither a part of the public sector (the state) nor the private, for-profit sector (the market) — have emerged from the increasingly blurring nexus of government, markets, and civil society. A growing body of literature on civil society, democracy, and changing power structures has begun to clarify the varying types of civil society organizations, their relationship to both the state and the markets, and the increasing power they wield in major societal debates in Latin America as in other parts of the world.<sup>3</sup>

A subset of NGOs are institutions devoted to policy debate, public policy research and impact, and, in some cases, advocacy for affecting social change. In Latin America, these institutions — for example, Center of Research for Development (CIDAC) and the Center for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE) in Mexico, the Center for Public Studies (CEP) in Chile, and the Institute of Peruvian Studies (IEP) in Peru — not only exist, they have been proliferating rapidly over several decades, and in some cases, are thriving. Yet, with a few notable exceptions, they are little understood in terms of the scarce research dedicated to them. While not as large and well known as those in the United States and other countries, many Latin American public policy institutes have been successful in attracting top intellectual and research talent and in playing important roles in shaping national policy debates.<sup>4</sup>

### **THE HONDURAN CONTEXT**

The workshop participants then turned to the history and current state of public policy institutions inside Honduras. How Honduran institutions were categorized in terms of whether or not they are engaged in independent, non-partisan public policy research activities was driven partly by their comparison to the U.S. think tank model. Most did not fit the U.S. model, but upon closer inspection, Honduras had an interesting history of think tank-like functions being performed by a number of institutions. Mapping these institutions, how they emerged, their funding sources, and the types of activities they undertook was key to determining any future steps toward strengthening public policy institutions and activities.<sup>5</sup>

Most of these organizations have produced national-level research on particular issues, and have held policy fora and other events. However, none of these institutions — for various reasons, including lack of autonomy, limited funding, a business sector focus, and a failure to have policy impact — would likely be considered a “classical” think tank. Yet, each had valuable expertise to contribute on a wide variety of relevant policy questions, and many had creatively built research and policy activities into their portfolios when funding was available for such pursuits.

### **RESOURCES AND FUNDING**

The question of funding is the determining factor in any discussion of institution-building. A broad range of funding mechanisms was discussed at this workshop, including foreign development funds, foundations, private sector contributions, state funds, tuition from graduate education, membership, contract research, sale of publications and services, and conference fees. Particularly evident in Latin American institutions is the need to diversify funding sources and avoid over-dependence on any one source. When the single source — in many cases, foreign aid funding — dries up or a donor's priorities change, institutions are left with little or no funding, and are therefore severely weakened, often causing them to close their doors or severely cut their budgets.

## FINDINGS

The heart of the workshop was the participants' "visioning" process to identify specific policy issues important to Hondurans, uncover policy gaps, and point to opportunities to shape policy and impact an agenda for change. They thought through the requisite policy issues and the relevant players, as well as the role that a think tank could play in the Honduran context.

Although the participants expressed very positive feelings about the outcomes of the workshop, it remains to be seen how Honduras will ultimately fare in strengthening the quality and impact of its public policy research. Consensus was achieved regarding the key priority policy issues for Honduras as well as where opportunities exist to influence these policies.<sup>6</sup> The group also agreed to form a steering committee to meet and develop a concept paper, funding strategy, and an action plan.

To date, two meetings have taken place under the leadership of the Foreign Ministry's diplomatic academy. But plans to create a "center for documentation and research" within the academy — however useful for the professionalization of the Honduran Foreign Service — will not ultimately serve the need for an autonomous, non-partisan, credible, policy-focused institution to strengthen

public policy debate in the country. The impetus for an independent think tank in Honduras — or in almost any country — that is not directly tied to business, government, the military, or other special interests, will ultimately be determined by the perceived urgency for reform, strong value placed on independent thinking in public policy debate, and a group of leaders and benefactors with a vision for shaping the future of the country through solid policy solutions. ●

1. Smith, James. 1991. *Idea Brokers: Think Tanks and the Rise of the New Policy Elite*. New York: Free Press.

2. See Stone, Diane, Andrew Denham and Mark Garnett, eds. 1998. *Think Tanks Across Nations: A Comparative Approach*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.

3. See Meyer, Carrie. 1999. *The Economics and Politics of NGOs in Latin America*. Westport: Praeger.

4. For an excellent survey of Latin American public policy centers, see Levy, Daniel, 1996. *Building the Third Sector: Latin America's Private Research Centers and Nonprofit Development*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

5. Several group members shared their knowledge of these institutions, which included the Foundation for Investment and Development of Exports (FIDE); the National Defense College; Institute for Juridical Research at the National Autonomous University; Honduran Council for Private Enterprise (COHEP); and Citizens' Forum (Foro Ciudadano), to name a few. Thanks to John Sanbrailo, Executive Director of the Pan American Development Foundation, for his insights on Honduran public policy institutions.

6. Security and corruption were the top two policy issues, followed by poverty alleviation, sustainable development, education, and the economy.

## THE REVOLVING DOOR

*“Think tanks provide a steady stream of experts to serve in incoming administrations and on congressional staffs,” a function that is “critical in the American political system,” says State Department Director of Policy and Planning Richard Haass. In addition, he says, “think tanks provide departing officials with institutional settings in which they can share insights gleaned from government service” and “remain engaged in pressing foreign policy debates.”*

*Following is a list of some prominent Americans who have served both in government and in think tanks:*

**James Baker:** Honorary Chairman of the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University in Texas

*Formerly:* Secretary of State for the first Bush Administration (1989-1992), Secretary of the Treasury and Chairman of the President’s Economic Policy Council (1985-1988).

**C. Fred Bergsten:** Director of the Institute for International Economics

*Formerly:* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (1981), Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for International Affairs (1977-1981), Senior Fellow at The Brookings Institution (1972-1976), Senior Director for International Economic Affairs at the National Security Council (1969-1971), the Council on Foreign Relations (1967-1968).

**John Bolton:** Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security

*Formerly :* Vice President of the American Enterprise Institute, and Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs (1989-1993).

**Zbigniew Brzezinski:** Counselor for the Center for Strategic and International Studies

*Formerly :* President Carter’s National Security Adviser (1977-1981).

**Paula Dobriansky:** Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs

*Formerly :* Senior Vice President and Director of the Council on Foreign Relations Washington office, Associate Director of Policy and Programs at the U.S. Information Agency, Director of European and Soviet Affairs at the National Security Council.

**Lee Feinstein:** Senior Fellow for U.S. Foreign Policy and International Law at the Council on Foreign Relations

*Formerly :* Principal Deputy Director of the State Department Policy Planning Staff in the Clinton Administration.

**Leslie Gelb:** President of the Council on Foreign Relations

*Formerly :* Senior Associate of the Carnegie Endowment (1980-1981), Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs (1977-1979), Senior Fellow at Brookings (1969-1973), Director of Policy and Planning at the State Department (1967-1969).

**Morton H. Halperin:** Senior Fellow and Director of U.S. Foreign Policy and of the Center for Democracy and Free Markets at the Council on Foreign Relations

*Formerly :* Director of the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff (1998-2001), Senior Vice President of the Century Foundation/Twentieth Century Fund (1997-1998), Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Democracy at the National Security Council (1994-1996), Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment (1992-1994), Senior Fellow at Brookings (1969-1973), Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (1967-1969).

**Richard Holbrooke:** Counselor at the Council on Foreign Relations

*Formerly* : Assistant Secretary of State for Europe (1994-1996), President Clinton's Special Envoy to Bosnia and Kosovo, President Carter's Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (1977-1981), Managing Editor of the Carnegie Endowment's quarterly journal "Foreign Policy" (1972-1976).

**Kim Holmes:** Assistant Secretary of State-designate for International Organization Affairs

*Formerly* : Vice President of The Heritage Foundation, Senior Fellow at the Fletcher School's Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis.

**Martin Indyk:** Director of the Brookings Institution's Saban Center for Middle East Policy

*Formerly* : Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs (1997-2000).

**James Kelly:** Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs

*Formerly* : President of the Pacific Forum of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Honolulu, President Reagan's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs and Senior Director for Asian Affairs at the National Security Council (1986-1989), Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (East Asia and Pacific).

**Zalmay Khalilzad:** President Bush's Special Envoy on Afghanistan and Special Assistant for Southwest Asia, Near East and North Africa for the National Security Council

*Formerly* : Director of the Strategy, Doctrine and Force Structure program for RAND's Project Air Force (1993-1999); Assistant Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and Planning (1991-1992), Senior Political Scientist at RAND (1991-1992), Special Advisor to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs on the Iran-Iraq war and the Soviet war in Afghanistan (1985-1989).

**Henry Kissinger:** Secretary of State (1973-1977) and Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs in the Nixon and Ford Administrations (1969-1975), Study Director for the Council on Foreign Relations' Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy program (1955-1956).

**Lawrence Korb:** Senior Fellow and Director of National Security Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations

*Formerly* : Assistant Secretary of Defense (1981-1985).

**Jessica Matthews:** President of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

*Formerly* : Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and Director of the CFR's Washington program (1993-1997), Deputy Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs (1993), founding Vice President and Director of Research at the World Resources Institute (1982-1993), and Director of the Office of Global Issues for the National Security Council (1977-1979).

**Richard Perle:** Resident Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, Chairman of the Defense Department's Defense Policy Board

*Formerly* : Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy (1981-1987).

**Peter Rodman:** Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs

*Formerly* : Director of National Security Programs at the Nixon Center (1995-2001), Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and National Security Council Counselor (1987-1990), Director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff (1984-1986).

**George Shultz:** Thomas W. and Susan B. Ford Distinguished Fellow at the Hoover Institution

*Formerly* : Secretary of State in the Reagan Administration (1982-1989), Chairman of President Reagan's Economic Policy Advisory Board (1981-1982), Secretary of the Treasury (1972-1974), Nixon Administration's Secretary of Labor (1969-1970).



**Richard Solomon:** President of the U.S. Institute of Peace

*Formerly* : Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (1989-1992); Director of Policy and Planning at the State Department (1986-1989); senior staffer on the National Security Council (1971-1976).

**Helmut Sonnenfeldt:** Director of the Atlantic Council of the United States and guest scholar at Brookings

*Formerly* : Counselor at the State Department (1974-1977), Nixon Administration's National Security Council senior staffer (1969-1974).

**Gene Sperling:** Senior Fellow for Economic Policy and Director of the Center on Universal Education at the Council on Foreign Relations

*Formerly* : President Clinton's National Economic Adviser and head of the National Economic Council (1996-2000)

**James Steinberg:** Vice President and Director of Foreign Policy Studies, The Brookings Institution

*Formerly* : Clinton Administration Deputy National Security Adviser (1996-2000), Director of Policy and Planning at the State Department (1994-1996), a senior analyst at RAND (1989-1993).

**Strobe Talbott:** President of The Brookings Institution

*Formerly* : Deputy Secretary of State in the Clinton Administration (1994-2001), Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Near East and South Asian Affairs on the National Security Council (1993-1995). ©

---

---

## THINK TANKS IN BRIEF

---

*The approximately 1,500 think tanks in the United States “engage in a range of policy-related activities, and comprise a diverse set of institutions that have varied organizational forms,” says James G. McGann of the Foreign Policy Research Institute.*

*The following fact sheet profiles nine U.S. think tanks, selected to show a representative range of views, with budgets ranging from \$3 million to nearly \$30 million, and staff sizes that range from 35 to about 200.*

---

### AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE

*(<http://www.aei.org>)*

**Mission:** The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, founded in 1943, is dedicated to preserving and strengthening the foundations of freedom — limited government, private enterprise, vital cultural and political institutions, and a strong foreign policy and national defense — through scholarly research, open debate, and publications. AEI is strictly nonpartisan and takes no institutional positions on pending legislation or other policy questions.

**Structure :** A 24 member Board of Trustees, composed of leading business and financial executives, governs the Institute, and its research agenda and appointments are reviewed by a Council of Academic Advisers, a group of distinguished outside scholars. President Christopher C. DeMuth guides the Institute’s daily operations. The Institute has about 50 resident scholars and fellows, and maintains a network of more than 100 adjunct scholars at American universities and policy institutes.

**Funding:** AEI is an independent, non-profit organization supported primarily by grants and contributions from foundations, corporations, and individuals. Its budget in 2000 was \$17 million.

---

### THE CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

*(<http://www.ceip.org>)*

**Mission :** The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP), founded in 1910, is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to advancing cooperation between nations and promoting active international engagement by the United States. Through research, publishing, convening, and, on occasion, creating new institutions and international networks, the Endowment’s associates shape fresh policy approaches.

**Structure:** The Board of Trustees, composed of 23 leaders of American business and public life, governs the Endowment and directs its research initiatives. President Jessica T. Matthews oversees the Endowment’s daily operations. The Washington Office supports a staff of 100, and nearly 40 Russian scholars work at the CEIP office in Moscow.

**Funding :** The Endowment has an annual budget of \$18.3 million. Most of its funding comes from contributions, rental income, and publications, including “Foreign Policy,” one of the world’s leading magazines of international politics and economics.

---

### THE CATO INSTITUTE

*(<http://www.cato.org>)*

**Mission :** The Cato Institute, founded in 1977 as a non-profit public policy research foundation, seeks to broaden the parameters of public policy debate to allow consideration of the traditional American principles of limited government, individual liberty, free markets, and peace. Toward that goal, the Institute strives to achieve greater involvement of the public in questions of policy and the proper role of government.

**Structure :** A Board of Directors, composed of 15 business professionals, governs the Institute, which has approximately 90 full-time employees, 60 adjunct scholars, and 16 fellows, plus interns. President

and founder Edward H. Crane oversees the Institute's daily operations.

**Funding** : In order to maintain its independence, the Cato Institute, which is a \$15 million a year operation, accepts no government funding or endowments. Contributors include individuals, corporations and foundations. Other revenue is generated from the sale of publications and conference fees.

---

**CENTER FOR NONPROLIFERATION STUDIES**

(<http://cns.miis.edu/>)

**Mission** : The Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS), established in 1989 by its current director, Dr. William Potter, strives to combat the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) by training the next generation of non-proliferation specialists and disseminating timely information and analysis. CNS at the Monterey Institute of International Studies is the largest non-governmental organization in the United States devoted exclusively to research and training on non-proliferation issues.

**Structure** : CNS has a full-time staff of more than 65 specialists and over 65 graduate student research assistants located in offices in Monterey, California; Washington, D.C.; and Almaty, Kazakhstan. An International Advisory Board — including U.S. and Russian legislators, former ambassadors, United Nations officials, non-proliferation experts, and corporate executives — meets twice a year to review CNS programs and activities. In addition, the Center has convened the Monterey Nonproliferation Strategy Group, an international panel of experts who meet periodically to develop policy recommendations.

**Funding** : CNS, with an annual budget of \$6.5 million, is a non-profit educational institution supported by donations from individuals, foundations and corporations. Three times a year, it publishes the journal "The Nonproliferation Review."

---

**CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (CSIS)**

(<http://www.csis.org>)

**Mission** : For four decades, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) has been dedicated

to providing world leaders with strategic insights on — and policy solutions to — current and emerging global issues. CSIS helps to develop national and international public policy by generating strategic insights, convening strategic networks, crafting policy solutions, and developing today's and tomorrow's leaders.

**Structure** : CSIS is led by President and Chief Executive Officer John J. Hamre, a former deputy secretary of defense, and is guided by a Board of Trustees chaired by former Senator Sam Nunn and consisting of prominent individuals from both the public and private sectors. CSIS employs 190 researchers and support staff.

**Funding**: Contributions from corporations, foundations, and individuals constitute 85 percent of the revenues needed to meet CSIS's budget, which in 2001 was \$17.5 million. The remaining funds come from endowment income, government contracts, and publication sales.

---

**THE COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS**

(<http://www.cfr.org>)

**Mission** : Founded in 1921, the Council on Foreign Relations is a non-partisan membership organization, research center, and publisher. It is dedicated to increasing America's understanding of the world and contributing ideas to U.S. foreign policy. The Council accomplishes this mainly by promoting constructive debates and discussion, clarifying world issues, and by publishing *Foreign Affairs*, the leading journal on global issues.

**Structure** : The Council is governed by a 31-member Board of Directors. Leslie H. Gelb is the Chief Executive officer and president. It has a staff of approximately 200, including about 75 fellows. Its membership (approximately 4,000, chosen by a nomination process) is divided almost equally among New York, Washington, D.C., and the rest of the country.

**Funding** : The Council is an independent, tax exempt organization financed by member dues and gifts, foundation and individual grants, corporate contributions, and revenues from its own endowment. The total budget for its current fiscal year is \$29.6 million.

---

**THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION**

(<http://www.heritage.org>)

**Mission** : Founded in 1973, The Heritage Foundation is a research and educational institute whose mission is to formulate and promote conservative public policies based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense. The Foundation produces research and generates solutions consistent with its beliefs that are marketed to the Congress, the Executive Branch, the news media and others.

**Structure** : A 19-member Board of Trustees governs the work of 185 Heritage employees, including some 75 experts in a wide range of domestic and foreign policy issues. President Edwin J. Feulner oversees the Foundation's daily operations.

**Funding** : The Heritage Foundation, which has an annual budget of \$28.4 million, is supported by contributions from its members, including corporations and more than 200,000 individuals across the United States.

---

**HUDSON INSTITUTE**

(<http://www.hudson.org/>)

**Mission** : The Hudson Institute, founded in 1961, produces independent, high-quality research and strives to compete boldly in the debate of policy ideas. Hudson works to counsel and guide policy change, applying its ideas whenever possible alongside other leaders in communities, business, non-profit organizations and governments alike. Its mission is to be America's premier source of applied research on enduring policy challenges.

**Structure** : In 1984, Hudson broadened its scope by securing a diverse, influential research staff. The Institute, which has a staff of 75, maintains its

headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana, while also operating an office in Washington, D.C. and satellite offices across the United States. Institute President Herbert I. London and two vice-presidents, one in Indianapolis and one in Washington, D.C., preside over the Institute, and its work is guided by a Board of Trustees.

**Funding** : Hudson Institute, with an annual budget of \$7 million, is a non-profit organization supported primarily by contributions from individuals, foundations and corporations.

---

**NEW AMERICA FOUNDATION**

(<http://www.newamerica.net/>)

**Mission** : The purpose of the New America Foundation, founded in January 1999, is to elevate new voices and ideas to the fore of the nation's public discourse. Relying on a venture capital approach, the Foundation invests in outstanding individuals and policy ideas that transcend the conventional political spectrum. New America sponsors a wide range of research, published writing, conferences, and events on the most important issues of the day.

**Structure** : The New America Foundation, which has a staff of 35, is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit public policy institute that was conceived through the collaborative work of a diverse and intergenerational group of public intellectuals, civic leaders, and business executive. New America's Board of Directors is chaired by James Fallows, and Ted Halstead is the organization's founding President and CEO.

**Funding** : The New America Foundation, with an annual budget of \$3 million, is supported primarily by grants and contributions from foundations, corporations, and individuals, and by the sale of its publications. ©

*The Role of Think Tanks in U.S. Foreign Policy*  
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Please note that the U.S. Department of State assumes no responsibility for the content and availability of the resources listed below; such responsibility resides solely with the providers.

Abelson, Donald E. AMERICAN THINK-TANKS AND THEIR ROLE IN US FOREIGN POLICY. New York: St. Martin's, 1996. 208p.

Abelson, Donald E. DO THINK TANKS MATTER?: ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTES. Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen's University, 2002. 272p.

Allen, Mike. GLOBAL PEACE GETS A PUSH FROM NEW KROC INSTITUTE (*San Diego Business Journal*, vol. 22, no. 27, July 2, 2001, pp. 3-4)

Brown, Eugene; Snow, Donald M. PUZZLE PALACES AND FOGGY BOTTOM: U.S. FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICY-MAKING IN THE 1990S. New York: St. Martin's, 1994. 281p.

C-SPAN. WASHINGTON JOURNAL: SPECIAL ON THINK TANKS. Washington: C-SPAN, August 12-15, 2002.

Center for Defense Information. AMERICA'S DEFENSE MONITOR. Washington: Center for Defense Information, Weekly Television Program.

Congressional Quarterly. PUBLIC INTEREST PROFILES, 2001-2002. Washington: Congressional Quarterly, 2000. 912p.

D'Agostino, Joseph A. CATO INSTITUTE (*Human Events*, vol. 58, no. 19, May 20, 2002, p. 14)

Deane, Claudia; Morin, Richard. THE IDEAS INDUSTRY (*The Washington Post*, Weekly Newspaper Column)

Delgado, Richard; Stefancic, Jean; Tushnet, Mark. NO MERCY: HOW CONSERVATIVE THINK TANKS AND FOUNDATIONS CHANGED AMERICA'S SOCIAL AGENDA. Philadelphia: Temple University, 1996. 208p.

Garnett, Mark; Stone, Diane. THINK TANKS OF THE WORLD: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON IDEAS, POLICY AND GOVERNANCE. New York: St. Martin's, 1998. 240p.

Higgott, Richard; Stone, Diane. THE LIMITS OF INFLUENCE: FOREIGN POLICY THINK TANKS IN BRITAIN AND THE USA (*Review of International Studies*, vol. 20, no. 1, January 1994, pp. 15-34)

Kitfield, James. CSIS EMBRACES OLD MISSION WITH NEW FACES (*National Journal*, vol. 32, no. 37, September 9, 2000, pp. 2807-2808)

McGann, James G.; Weaver, R. Kent, eds. THINK TANKS AND CIVIL SOCIETIES: CATALYSTS FOR IDEAS AND ACTION. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2002. 617p.

Newsom, David D. THE PUBLIC DIMENSION OF FOREIGN POLICY. Bloomington: Indiana University, 1996. 287p.

Public Broadcasting Service. THINK TANK. Alexandria, VA: Public Broadcasting Service, Weekly Television Program.

Ricci, David M. THE TRANSFORMATION OF AMERICAN POLITICS: THE NEW WASHINGTON AND THE RISE OF THINK TANKS. New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1994. 310p.

Rich, Andrew; Weaver, R. Kent. THINK TANKS IN THE U.S. MEDIA (*The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, vol. 5, no. 4, Fall 2000, pp. 81-103)

Robin, Ron. THE MAKING OF THE COLD WAR ENEMY: CULTURE AND POLITICS IN THE MILITARY-INTELLECTUAL COMPLEX. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2001. 256p.

Smith, James A. THE IDEA BROKERS: THINK TANKS AND THE RISE OF THE NEW POLICY ELITE. New York: Free Press, 1993. 356p. ◎

---

---

## *The Role of Think Tanks in U.S. Foreign Policy* A SELECTION OF INTERNET SITES

---

*There are approximately 1,500 think tanks in the United States. The list below, far from inclusive, is intended to give a representative sampling or cross section of think tanks that deal with U.S. foreign policy issues. For a more comprehensive view, use the last two Internet references or URL's, which provide many more links to think tanks. Please note that the U.S. Department of State assumes no responsibility for the content and availability of the resources listed below; such responsibility resides solely with the providers.*

American Enterprise Institute  
<http://www.aei.org/>

Aspen Institute  
<http://www.aspeninst.org/>

Atlantic Council of the United States  
<http://www.acus.org/>

Brookings Institution: Foreign Policy Studies  
[http://www.brook.edu/dybdocroot/fp/fp\\_hp.htm](http://www.brook.edu/dybdocroot/fp/fp_hp.htm)

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace  
<http://www.ceip.org/>

Cato Institute: Foreign Policy  
<http://www.cato.org/foreignpolicy/index.html>

Center for Strategic and International Studies  
<http://www.csis.org/>

Council on Foreign Relations  
<http://www.cfr.org/>

Foreign Policy Research Institute  
<http://www.fpri.org/>

Heritage Foundation  
<http://www.heritage.org/>

Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace,  
Stanford University  
<http://www-hoover.stanford.edu/>

Hudson Institute  
<http://www.hudson.org/>

Institute for Defense Analyses  
<http://www.ida.org/>

The Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis  
<http://www.ifpa.org/>

Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy  
<http://www.imtd.org/>

John F. Kennedy School of Government,  
Harvard University  
<http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/kennedy.shtml>

National Defense University  
<http://www.ndu.edu/>

New America Foundation  
<http://www.newamerica.net/>

RAND: Foreign and Security Policy  
[http://www.rand.org/interp0l\\_area/forsec/](http://www.rand.org/interp0l_area/forsec/)

Stimson Center  
<http://www.stimson.org/>

U.S. Institute of Peace  
<http://www.usip.org/>

Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars  
<http://wwics.si.edu/>

Lehman Social Sciences Library, Columba University  
<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/lehman/guides/ttanks.html>

University of North Carolina  
<http://www.ibiblio.org/ucis/Nonprofit.html>



# U.S. FOREIGN POLICY A G E N D A

VOLUME 7

AN ELECTRONIC JOURNAL OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

NUMBER 3

## THE ROLE OF THINK TANKS



## IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

NOVEMBER 2002