CHAPTER ONE

Think Tanks and Governance in the United States

What exactly is a think tank, and how is it different from other organizations? Defining the concept is not as easy as it may seem. The broadest definition posits that think tanks are "institutions that provide public policy research, analysis, and advice."[1] That definition casts a wide net and qualifies several different types of both nongovernmental and governmental groups as think tanks. For example, many interest groups, university research centers, and other civil society organizations conduct policy research and provide advice as components of their primary activities. Similarly, many government agencies, such as the Interstate Commerce Commission, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Environmental Protection Agency, are required to conduct policy research and provide advice to the public.

Broad Definitions

Scholars who attempt to define the concept of a think tank agree that establishing a clear definition is problematic.[2] According to Thomas Medvetz, the term *think tank* "is a murky, fuzzy concept that cannot be nailed down precisely."[3] Scholars such as Andrew Rich and Hartwig Pautz agree that while achieving a clear definition is problematic, it is also necessary.[4]

Refining the definition is the point at which many scholars diverge. Most describe think tanks as nonprofit, independent public policy research organizations. Some add that they are private organizations. Others also describe them as nonpartisan and tax-exempt. Several scholars, however, point out the complications that arise when using these characteristics to define think tanks.

Defining think tanks as independent excludes many of the world's institutions typically characterized as think tanks.[5] According to Diane Stone, "The notion that a think tank requires independence or autonomy from the state and private interests in order to be 'free-thinking' is a peculiarly Anglo-American predilection that does not travel well into other countries."[6] James Allen Smith's statement that think tanks are "those quintessentially American planning and advisory institutions" would seem to support this argument.[7] In many parts of the world, think tanks are not independent. In Germany and the Netherlands, for example, they often have close political and financial ties to political parties. In some countries, the law requires that think tanks have the sponsorship of a government ministry.

Scholars such as Paul Dickson and I claim that think tanks can be either affiliated or independent, as long as they are permanent and not ad hoc institutions.[8] Stone adds that they can operate within a government, be independent, nonprofit organizations, or be attached to a profit-making corporate entity. Pautz argue that the autonomy of think tanks is relative because they cannot be completely independent and still influence policy. He maintains that three types of relative independence are necessary: legal, financial, and scholarly.[9] I would sharpen this by suggesting that true independence can only be achieved if the following conditions exist: 1) there are laws that recognize and protect the space for civil society organizations; 2) there are regulations that enable civil society organizations to raise funds from a diverse set of domestic and international sources; 3) society recognizes the value and importance of civil society and independent policy analysis; and 4) public policy research organizations value and respect independent analysis and adhere to basic principles of scientific inquiry.

Another reason nailing down a precise definition is so difficult is because think tanks vary drastically in a variety of dimensions. According to Donald Abelson, they are dissimilar in terms of "size, financial resources, staff composition, ideological orientation, areas of specialization, and research programs."[10] They further differ significantly concerning the degree of importance they place on research. Smith argues that they also vary in terms of "the constituencies they choose to serve, the balance they strike between research and advocacy,

and the breadth of the policy questions they address."[11] Many scholars, such as Dickson, stress the role that think tanks also play as a bridge between knowledge and power and between science and technology and policymaking. And Howard Wiarda broadly describes all the different functions of think tank fellows, including thinking, writing, publishing, appearing on television, giving congressional testimony, attending White House briefings, and advising the State and Defense Departments and other departments, among others.[12]

The role that think tanks play is essential to clearly defining the concept. Think tanks are formed in response to the need to analyze and organize information in a coherent and relevant way. As I point out, the problem is not that there is a shortage of information but rather that there is too much information, and it is impossible for policymakers to sift through it all and determine what is relevant. I define think tanks as "organizations that generate policy-oriented research, analysis, and advice on domestic and international issues that enable policymakers and the public to make informed decisions about public policy issues."[13]

Narrow Definitions

Aside from the broad classification, several scholars have attempted to classify the various different think tanks into categories. Kent Weaver breaks them down into three categories: universities without students, the contract researcher, and advocacy think tanks.[14] McGann, Pautz, and Abelson add a fourth category: vanity think tanks. Universities without students rely heavily on academics, as researchers receive the majority of their funding from the private sector and produce primarily book-length studies. As Christopher DeMuth points out, think tanks are different from universities in that they do not produce research for its own sake but rather because they want to affect change in public policy. For this reason, they try to produce and promote interesting and accessible literature. They also try to secure features in newspapers' op-ed pages and to promote their books and magazines "much more aggressively than a university would feel comfortable with."[15]

Contract researchers, like universities without students, rely heavily on academics and emphasize objective analysis. Their research agendas are largely determined by the government agencies that contract their studies. The think tanks' principal products, unlike those of the first category, are usually shorter reports intended for the specific government agencies that initiated the contract. As such, many of the studies produced by these think tanks are not available to the general public except at the discretion of the agencies.

Advocacy think tanks differ from the first two categories in several ways. First, they do not carry out original research. Instead they "synthesize and put a distinctive 'spin' on existing research."[16] Further, they are characterized by a strong policy, partisan, or ideological orientation, which they combine with "aggressive salesmanship and an effort to influence current policy debates."[17] As a result, these think tanks often enjoy a much more influential relationship with policymakers.

Vanity think tanks, which are also called legacy-based think tanks, are created by important individuals, such as former presidents, who seek to leave a lasting legacy on foreign and domestic policy. According to Abelson, "They produce a wide range of publications, hold seminars and workshops, and conduct research in a number of policy areas."[18]

Other Definitions

Other scholars have also attempted to classify think tanks into categories. I have broken them down into four categories or models based on the most influential think tank in each: the Brookings Institution, the RAND Corporation, the Urban Institute, and the Heritage Foundation. The Brookings model "attempts to bring the knowledge and expertise of academics to bear on public policy."[19] These think tanks are staffed by "recognized scholars who engage in empirical, scholarly, and objective analysis of public policy issues in the social sciences."[20] The RAND model is "based on the research and development center model and [is] guided by a systems approach to problem solving."[21] The Urban Institute model focuses mainly on urban and social issues. Finally, the Heritage Foundation model was the last to emerge and is characterized by the politicization of think tanks.

Medvetz offers a different way of defining think tanks altogether. In his view, they are not organizations per se but rather organizational devices used for "gathering and assembling authority conferred by the more established institutions of academics, politics, business, and the media."[22] Medvetz describes them as the "structurally hybrid offspring of the more established institutions of academics, politics, business, and journalism."[23] He calls his definition a relational mode of analysis that overcomes the fallacies that follow from narrowly constructivist and structuralist definitions. Diane Stone, too, promotes a looser definition in *Think Tank Traditions: Policy Research and the Politics of Ideas*, which holds that *think tank* is often used to refer to a function or practice rather than an organizational structure.[24]

The only consensus in the literature on the definition of think tanks is that there is no consensus. The term is difficult to define because the broad definition encompasses other similar non-think-tank organizations, and any attempt to narrow the definition excludes organizations that are commonly accepted as think tanks. Think tanks are most certainly public policy research institutions, but the debate continues as to whether they can be more narrowly defined as private, nonprofit, independent, or nonpartisan. In contrast to lobbyists and columnists, who mainly play an advocacy role, think tanks also play a unique scholarly role in the process of policy formulation, placing them in a category of advocacy separate from others. This perspective sets think tanks in their own place in society, their own separate Fifth Estate.

Challenging the Traditional Definitions

Academic writing has traditionally defined think tanks in the United States as policy research organizations that are independent of government and universities and that operate on a not-for-profit basis. This definition, however, is too narrow on two counts.

First, RAND and many other organizations to which the think tank label is routinely applied are almost totally dependent on government contracts for their revenues and thus are not fully autonomous. They are, however, think tanks, regardless of their financial dependence on the government. Historically they have been considered as such because of their role in conducting original research with the ultimate goal of influencing and affecting public policy. Although active support by the government or a university can be perceived as providing a financial incentive that obliges them to support the donors' own politicized agendas, it does not necessarily distort the research function fundamental to the purpose and the performance of think tanks. The quality of research depends on the culture and working relationships that have developed over time, and on the nature of the subjects being investigated.

Furthermore, in some European countries, notably Germany and the Netherlands, think tanks maintain close financial and personal ties with political parties. Despite this affiliation, their status as research institutions remains both legitimate and untainted by political preferences. In some parts of the world, sponsorship by a government ministry is legally required for a think tank to exist. Moreover, in regions where resources for policy research are extremely scarce, financial support from universities or contracting relationships with the private sector benefit think tanks in that they provide the means to pay core

personnel and facilities costs, which is crucial to the functioning of the think tank. Excluding such affiliated organizations from the official definition of think tanks would convey the illusion that certain countries do not have any.

A compromise between a broad definition and a more specific academic definition is therefore the most logical way to define the term. Think tanks are policy research organizations that serve as key civil society actors, also known as the "third sector." The third sector refers to an aspect of the public domain that is significantly autonomous from the government (the first sector), as well as from the corporate world (the second sector). *Autonomy*, however, is a relative, rather than an absolute, term. While some think tanks may make a profit, their main interest in accruing money is based on a desire to generate policy-oriented research, analysis, and advice on domestic and international issues that enable policymakers and the public to make informed decisions about public policy. In the past, think tanks have been referred to as "brain boxes," "idea factories," and "thinking cells"—all of which imply a shared characteristic of contemplation and analysis.

Is there a definition of think tanks that has the flexibility and utility we need for the purposes of this study? Yes, this:

> Think tanks are public policy research, analysis, and engagement institutions that generate policy-oriented research, analysis, and advice on domestic and international issues that enable policymakers and the public to make informed decisions about public policy issues. Think tanks may be affiliated with a political party, a university, or a government; they are independent institutions that are structured as permanent bodies, not ad hoc commissions.

With this definition, we can further sharpen our understanding of the importance of think tanks in governance. These institutions often act as bridges of knowledge between the academic and policymaking communities. They seek to serve the public interest as independent voices that translate applied and basic research into a language and form that is understandable, reliable, and accessible to policymakers and the public. Think tanks perform a variety of critical roles in the policymaking process by offering original research and analysis, as well as generating new information; providing policy advice; evaluating public policies and programs; identifying and training policy analysts; providing a home for public figures who are out of office or planning to assume key positions in future administrations; providing a neutral territory for the conduct of informal diplomacy

or to float trial policy balloons;[25] convening experts both inside and outside government to float policy proposals and build consensus; and educating and engaging policymakers, the media, and the public.[26] Think tanks share one common element unconditionally: "the individuals in them attempt to make academic theories and scientific paradigms policy relevant."[27] The ability of think tanks to offer insights into policy formation that are based on research separates them from those organizations whose primary nature is advocacy, who generally lobby governments but who are absent from informing policy research, and it places research institutions in their own unique Fifth Estate position in society.

In the aptly named Information Age, U.S. decisionmakers find themselves besieged by a surplus of data, much of which is irrelevant.[28] The Heritage Foundation's Helle Dale likens policymakers' search for information to drinking water from a fire hose.[29] In response, U.S. politicians and bureaucrats have increasingly turned to think tanks to provide research and systematic analysis that are reliable, policy relevant, and, above all, useful.[30] In fact, Tuğrul Keskingoren and Patrick Halpern argue that think tanks have grown to the point where they are "the intellectual epicenter of the policy planning process" and "provide the research and early policy proposals that eventually find a home on Capitol Hill."[31] The significant role of think tanks in providing relevant information for the public and for public policy represents only the first few ways that think tanks represent a Fifth Estate on their own.

The increase in the numbers and influence of independent public policy research organizations has been noted by a growing number of scholars, donors, and practitioners in the United States and abroad. Regional and global intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and NATO have recently recognized the crucial role that think tanks play in the policymaking process. These organizations have organized nascent think tank networks to help develop and assess policies and programs and to serve as a link to civil society groups on the national, regional, and global levels.

Types of Think Tanks

Think tanks can be classified in two ways: by their strategies and by their sources of funding. The combination of these characteristics results in seven types of think tanks: autonomous and independent, quasi-independent, university affiliated, political party affiliated, government affiliated, quasi-governmental, and for-profit.[32]

An autonomous and independent institution maintains independence from any one donor and from the government of its home country. Therefore, few restrictions are imposed on the research areas it pursues and the positions it takes regarding policy issues. U.S. organizations such as the Peterson Institute for International Economics, the Heritage Foundation, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace are all examples of such institutions.[33] It is important to recognize that *autonomous* does not necessarily denote objectivity or nonpartisanship; that is, as a strategic choice, an organization can be autonomous without being objective or nonpartisan.

A quasi-independent institution is autonomous from the government, but an interest group, donor, or contracting agency provides a majority of its funding and exercises significant influence over its operations. The Center for Defense Information and the research arm of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) in the United States are quasi-independent in nature.[34]

A university-affiliated think tank is a policy research institute situated under the structure and governance of a postsecondary education institution. As previously stated, more than half of all think tanks are university affiliated, which is especially common outside the United States.[35] These institutions have become prevalent because they are able to take advantage of the academic climate and the vast resources that universities offer. Two leading examples of university-affiliated think tanks within the United States are the Hoover Institution, affiliated with Stanford University in California, and the Baker Institute for Public Policy at Rice University in Texas. A political party–affiliated think tank has an overt, formal association with a political party, such as France's Jean Juares Foundation or the Progressive Policy Institute in the United States, the policy arm of the Democratic Leadership Council. A government-affiliated think tank is part of the formal structure of a government and therefore functions under the government's authority. The leading example is the Congressional Research Service (CRS), which is under the purview of U.S. Congress.[36] CRS staff members work exclusively and directly for members of Congress and their committees and staff to provide confidential public policy research and analysis at all stages of the legislative process. For this reason, it is often referred to as "Congress's think tank."

Quasi-governmental think tanks are funded exclusively by government grants and contracts but are not part of the formal structure of the government. Government agencies commission the research these think tanks carry out and provide the lion's share of their funding, but the institutions are not part of the

TABLE 1-1. Categories of Think Tank Affiliations

Category	Definition
Autonomous and independent	Significant independence from any one interest group or donor and autonomous in its operation and funding from 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
Government affiliated	Part of the formal structure of government
Quasi-governmental	Funded exclusively by government grants and contracts but not a part of the formal structure of government
University affiliated	Policy research center at a university
Political party affiliated	Formally affiliated with a political party
Corporate (for profit)	For-profit public policy research organization, affiliated with a corporation or merely operating on a for-profit basis

official structure of government. The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in the United States and the Korea Development Institute are examples of such think tanks.[37]

For-profit think tanks are organized on a business model and often take the form and characteristics of for-profit consulting firms. They respond to clients' demands, and they tend to drift outside the purely political world occupied by most other types of think tanks (see table 1-1). Good examples include the Kissinger Group, the McKinsey Global Institute, and A. T. Kearney's Global Business Policy Council.

These ideal categories of think tanks have served both as models for newly established organizations and as points of departure for existing institutions that seek to reinvent themselves. But most think tanks do not fit neatly into any one category, and the distinctions among them are becoming increasingly blurred. Hybrids between think tanks and organizational siblings that have some similarities but exist outside the official definition are increasingly common. University research centers mirror academic think tanks; for-profit consulting

agencies mirror government research organizations; temporary government commissions mirror some contract researchers; interest groups and public interest lobbies mirror advocacy tanks; and party research departments mirror party think tanks.

Structures of Think Tanks

I have written extensively with Kent Weaver of the Brookings Institution on the strategy and structure of think tanks.[38] Over the last several decades, distinctive organizational forms of think tanks have come into being that differ substantially from their predecessors in operating styles, recruitment patterns, and aspirations to standards of objectivity and completeness in research. Weaver and I agree that all public policy research organizations in the United States can be divided into three broader categories of think tanks: academic, contract research, and advocacy (see table 1-2).

Academic think tanks, or "universities without students," employ staff members with strong academic credentials. They focus on a wide range of issues and seek long-term changes in policy direction.[39] Weaver and I further agree that organizations with comprehensive agendas, such as the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), the Hoover Institution, and the Council on Foreign Relations, fall into this category.

The second category, contract researchers, conducts research and analysis under contract and often develops close relationships with a few government agencies. With a reputation for objective research, these institutions provide a useful external voice to supplement their clients' own work. As contract researchers typically are funded by the government agencies that contract their services, the funding agencies usually play a large role in setting the think tanks' agendas. Output generally takes the form of reports to those agencies rather than publicly circulated books and articles. The best examples of this brand are RAND and the Urban Institute. In my global typology of think tanks, I include political party–affiliated and government-affiliated think tanks, which are more commonly found outside the United States. My recent research suggests that newly established think tanks have blurred the lines between these separate categories, borrowing characteristics from media and marketing organizations to create a new hybrid category.[40]

The first two types, academic and contract research think tanks, have many similarities. Both tend to recruit staff with strong academic credentials (for example, PhDs from prestigious universities), and both tend to emphasize the use

TABLE 1-2. A Typology of Think Tanks

Think tank types	Major characteristics and products				Subtypes	Facilitating conditions	Examples
	Staffing	Financing	Agenda setting	Products and product style			
Academic/ university without students	Focus on staff with strong academic credentials and muted ideology	Primarily foundations, corporations, individuals	Agenda set primarily by researchers and foundations	Academic monographs and journal articles in objective and nonpartisan style	Elite policy club; specialized academic think tank	Culture and philanthropic tradition that support idea of nonpartisan experts	Brookings Institution; Institute for International Economics (U.S.)
Contract researcher	Focus on staff with strong academic credentials, muted ideology, and objective, nonpartisan research	Primarily government agencies	Agenda set primarily by contracting agency	Reports for government agencies and other clients in objective and nonpartisan style	Specialized contract researcher	Government support available for policy research	RAND and Urban Institute (U.S.)
Advocacy tank	Focus on staff with political or philosophical/ ideological credentials	Primarily foundations, corporations, individuals	Agenda set by organization leaders	Brief papers typically focused on currently topical issues	Specialized advocacy tank; vanity and legacy think tanks	Foundation, business and group support available	Centre for Policy Studies (U.K.)
Party think tank	Focus on party members and party loyalty	Primarily party and government subsidies	Agenda closely tied to party platform	Varies	. . .	Government funding available for political party research	Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (Germany)

of rigorous social science methods so that their research will be perceived as objective and credible by a broad audience. However, they differ largely in their sources of funding, research agendas, and output.

Academic think tanks are typically funded by foundations, corporations, and individuals. Their agendas are usually set internally, in part through a bottom-up process in which the researchers themselves play an important role, although funders are increasingly active in the agenda-setting process. Reflecting the academic training and orientation of their staffs, the research output of academic think tanks most often takes the form of academic monographs and journal articles. These think tanks present a sharp contrast to contract research think tanks, which are funded by the government and whose reports are written for the specific funding agency.

Advocacy think tanks either possess extremely strong ideologies or focus on persuading policymakers and the public on short-term, specific policy debates. Advocacy think tanks, while maintaining formal independence, are linked to particular ideological groupings or interests. They tend to view their role in the policymaking process as winning the war of ideas rather than disinterestedly searching for the best policies. Advocacy think tanks frequently draw their resources disproportionately from sources linked to specific interests (often corporations fund conservative think tanks, and labor unions fund liberal ones, for example). Their staffs, in comparison, are typically drawn more heavily from government, political parties, and interest groups than from university faculties and may be less credentialed in terms of social science expertise, although this is not always the case. The products of their research tend to be policy briefs or white papers that advocate a particular policy rather than the tomes associated with academic think tanks.

The Heritage Foundation and the Heartland Institute on the political right and the Center for American Progress (CAP) on the political left are two examples of advocacy-oriented think tanks. Since policymakers simply do not have the requisite time to sift through lengthy scholarly books and journal articles that are frequently laced with academic theories and jargon, concise policy briefs that clearly illustrate various policy implications and options developed by think tanks such as the Heartland Institute and CAP have proved useful. In this sense, these organizations are better able to influence policy and disseminate information among policymakers than are think tanks that rely solely on academic papers, which are less likely to be read by the time-limited policy world.[41] In addition to the Heartland Institute, Weaver and I place the Economic Policy Institute in this category.[42]

Each of type of think tank—academic, contract, and advocacy—has its relative advantages and disadvantages. Because academic think tanks emphasize scholarly objectivity and the scientific credentials of their staff, a strong tension exists between the goals of scholarly objectivity and the completeness and policy relevance of the reports. Academics generally favor the former, while policymakers prefer findings that are brief, clear, and free of the qualifications and ambivalence with which scholars frequently temper their conclusions.

Contract researchers have an advantage over academic think tanks in terms of policy relevance since policymakers often outline in fairly specific terms the questions they want answered. The tension for contract think tanks is primarily between the goals of scholarly objectivity and the policy preferences of their clients, especially if contract researchers are heavily dependent on a particular client. When clients outline their preferences, they are attempting to influence the final results, or the clients refuse to release research that does not abide by those preferences. At the very least, this tension may pose a threat to the perceived objectivity of that research. Sometimes the threat is made explicit. In 1995 the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) sponsored a joint research project between a U.S. think tank and a think tank in South Africa to assess the impact of its programs on civil society in postapartheid South Africa. One conclusion of the study revealed that USAID programs deferred too frequently to the ruling African National Congress in South Africa and were thus stunting the growth of civil society and pluralism in South Africa. In response, USAID refused to release the study until that conclusion was excised.

Advocacy tanks, which adhere to strong values and often take institution-wide positions on particular policy issues, face tension between maintaining consistent value positions and perceptions of objectivity and completeness. As a consequence, messages perceived to reflect inflexible values rather than "objective" analysis may simply be ignored by a large part of the audience they seek to reach. Similarly, the party affiliation of think tanks limits their objectivity, credibility, and independence; when their party is not in power, their access to and influence on policymakers is limited.

The think tank environment continues to be quite dynamic, requiring further elaboration and expansion of the think tank typology. The most recent trend in this ever-changing system is a hybrid that includes features of one or more of the dominant types of think tanks. Table 1-3 highlights the many types and organizational forms and includes some examples of each.

Diverging from Weaver's and my classifications, Yale political scientist David Ricci divides the agendas of think tanks into two groups: short-term

TABLE 1-3. Sample Classification of Think Tanks Worldwide

	Date established
Political party	
Konrad Adenauer Foundation (Germany)	1955
Jaures Foundation (France)	1992
Progressive Policy Institute (United States)	1989
Government	
China Development Institute (PRC)	1989
Institute for Political and International Studies (Iran)	1983
Congressional Research Service (United States)	1914
Quasi-governmental	
Institute for Strategic and International Studies (Malaysia)	1983
Korea Development Institute (Korea)	1971
Woodrow International Center for Scholars (United States)	1968
Autonomous and independent	
Pakistan Institute of International Affairs (Pakistan)	1948
Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)	1991
Peterson Institute for International Economics (United States)	1981
Quasi-independent	
European Trade Union Institute (Belgium)	1978
NLI Research Institute (Japan)	1988
Center for Defense Information (United States)	1971
University affiliated	
Foreign Policy Institute, Hacettepe University (Turkey)	1974
Institute For International Relations (Brazil)	1979
Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University (United States)	1919

mobilization and long-term mobilization.[43] Short-term mobilization agendas include activities such as participating in television talk shows and news programs; writing editorials or regular columns for newspapers and magazines; and sponsoring a wide variety of meetings, symposia, and conferences. Other short-term activities may include testifying before congressional committees,

serving on advisory commissions, and providing informal sources of information for congressional staff members. Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), an expert who is often interviewed and cited by broadcast media, is a short-term mobilizer. In contrast, the concept of long-term mobilization consists of writing journal articles, monographs, and books so as to "disseminate scholarly analysis to thoughtful readers on a variety of issues . . . [serving] as important conduits for the more fundamental research that is performed at universities."[44] A specific example of long-term mobilization is reflected in the mission statement of Resources for the Future (RFF), which is to improve environmental and natural resource policymaking worldwide through objective social science research of the highest caliber. This is accomplished by producing academic, peer-reviewed journal articles, monographs, books, *Resources* (a free magazine in publication for more than fifty years), public events, and conferences.

How Think Tanks Are Funded

The variety of sources that fund think tanks is just as diverse a categorization as that of think tanks. Philanthropists such as Robert Brookings and Andrew Carnegie played a crucial role in the birth of think tanks, and individuals, businesses, and foundations continue to provide the bulk of their financial support.[45] Some think tanks, such as the Brookings Institution, are financed through large endowments. Others receive portions of their funding through revenue derived from the sales of publications, such as the *National Interest*, published by the Center for the National Interest (formerly the Nixon Center). Many think tanks, including RAND, bring in revenue through contract work from private or government clients. Institutions that come under the authority of governments or universities, such as the Congressional Research Service and the Center for International and Security Studies at the University of Maryland, derive much of their funding from their parent organizations. Typically, think tanks rely on a combination of these funding sources along with generous contributions from private donors, individuals, corporations, and foundations.

An institution's independence may well be determined by the diversification of its funding base because a think tank with an expanded donor base is not beholden to a single donor and its interests. This principle of diversification of funding is demonstrated well by many of the largest and most prominent think tanks in the United States. The Cato Institute and the Heritage Foundation, for instance, rely mainly on individual contributions, receiving 83 percent

and 59 percent, respectively, of their income from such donations. AEI receives 58 percent of its funds from individual and corporate sponsors, and CSIS receives 63 percent from foundations and corporations. Most notably, Brookings has historically drawn about 20 percent of total revenue from its endowment, which is its largest single source of revenue.

Institutes that have traditionally relied on government contracts are now broadening their funding bases as well. For example, James Thomson, RAND president emeritus, explained that the institution uses "a whole set of fundraising functions, because [it needs] to get more people involved with RAND to have a broader reach."[46] The perception that RAND's funding is largely or exclusively based on defense-related grants and contracts is no longer true, and the organization's fundraising and research programs reflect this new reality.

Nevertheless, diversification of funding has become more difficult because of a new trend in think tank funding. A great deal of funding is now project specific, creating the potential for a wealthy partisan donor to determine a think tank's research agenda.[47] Because of the recent growth in the number and range of think tanks, funding has emerged as a serious issue. In response, many think tanks are now highly specialized, focusing on specific issues or ideologies.[48]

According to some scholars, right-wing think tanks have benefited strongly from a proactive approach to collectivizing and organizing their search for funding.[49] Conversely, left-wing think tanks have suffered because, historically, progressive individuals and foundations have been more reluctant to provide financial support for policy research. Further, conservative donations have been more integrated than progressive donations, simultaneously supporting conservative think tanks, academic programs that sponsor conservative thinkers, conservative-friendly media, powerful lobbies, and a strong Republican Party. These various elements work together successfully to implement conservative policy. In the wake of this widespread success, conservative funding strategists now face their biggest challenge in combating a sense of complacency among conservative donors.

Given the 2008 financial crisis, some scholars, such as Peter Singer, a former Brookings fellow, wonder if conservative think tanks have begun to feel financial strain.[50] AEI has been a frequent target of speculation about its fragile financial condition, since it relies heavily on donations instead of an endowment and is one of the few major think tanks in Washington, D.C., that has not owned its own building for most of its history. (In 2007, however, it launched a capital campaign and will move into a newly renovated building in 2016 on "think tank row" on Massachusetts Ave in Washington, D.C.) The General

Motors Foundation was recently required to cut its regular contributions to AEI because of the ongoing financial crisis and the competitive issues facing the automobile industry in the United States. This exemplifies the volatility facing conservative think tanks that depend on large donations from corporate foundations and philanthropists. Nevertheless, the sheer number of donors and the integrated nature of the conservative funding network will likely soften any blow to the budget of think tanks. Furthermore, the Heritage Foundation has proved that an aggressive marketing campaign, featuring tactics such as direct mail, can financially sustain conservative think tanks. Such a strategy secures small donations from hundreds of thousands of American citizens instead of relying exclusively on larger donations from fewer sources.[51]

The progressive funding strategy, in contrast, was weak until the first decade of the twenty-first century. In 2005 Rob Stein founded the Democracy Alliance to serve as a financial clearinghouse for liberal donors. The alliance of eighty critical donors, which includes George Soros and Tim Gill, seeks to establish a long-term and cohesive financial strategy to fund progressive policy advocacy. Soon after its establishment, the Democracy Alliance received pledges for more than $80 million in contributions over a five-year period.[52] The donations have been used to fund organizations that are endorsed by the alliance and "that are building a more robust, coherent progressive movement at the local, state, and national level."[53] It remains to be seen how this strategy will affect the future financial stability of liberal think tanks and advocacy groups.

Establishing a long-term commitment from a set of core donors is crucial to funding. As previously noted, this strategy can, however, reduce a think tank's independence if relied on too heavily. RAND's Silvia Montoya and Rachel Swanger caution that think tanks must "strive to find the right balance" between their joint objectives of developing close relationships with policymakers and "maintaining adequate independence to preserve integrity (real and perceived) of the research" they generate.[54] This is a particularly troublesome situation for conservative think tanks such as the Cato Institute, which at one time received more than 50 percent of its budget from various Koch family foundations. Although this has changed over the years, Koch is still a major contributor to Cato as evidenced by the much publicized battle between Cato founder Ed Crane and the Koch brothers for control of the organization. Ultimately, diversification through small and midsize donors is a more sustainable and healthy way of receiving funding. Nevertheless, as the Cato Institute demonstrates, the desire for diversification is still overshadowed by the strong focus on large foundations.

The History of Think Tanks

To govern well, governments need information, knowledge, and the means of implementation to connect informed policy to the relevant theater of social operations. Information should be distinguished from knowledge. While information is data collected from the world, knowledge comes from the integration of information into an inherited cognitive framework meaningful to human beings. Means of implementation are often unaddressed by the academics and policy intellectuals generating research and are instead the domain of government officials. Without the necessary administrative, budgetary, and legal means to implement a policy, nothing is accomplished. The "theater" in which information and knowledge need to be translated into real-world policy implementation may concern the economy, defense and foreign policy, environmental issues, public health, and any number of other public policy domains. Think tanks partially evolved over time to fill the gaps between information and knowledge and policy generation and implementation.

For all practical purposes, the first think tanks were largely a product of the Progressive Era in the United States (1890–1920), during which these institutions gained prominence as important players in U.S. policymaking. While several think tanks existed before the onset of World War II, the United States and Western Europe saw an explosion both in the number and activities of their think tanks during the 1960s and 1970s. These think tanks recommended policy pertaining to the Cold War, foreign aid, and domestic issues such as the health of the economy. They became increasingly specialized and influential in the policymaking process. This specialization increased after the end of the Cold War in 1990, and think tanks began to research and recommend policy on a variety of highly technical and specialized issues. Their growing prominence in different fields of research has contributed greatly to the decision-making process by allowing policymakers and the public to offer expert advice on key policy issues. While the activity and presence of think tanks have grown immensely, the study of think tanks as important actors in the policymaking process is rather new, having started in the 1980s.[55]

Before the twentieth century, institutions that are similar to today's think tanks existed in the United States. One of the earliest meetings that shared characteristics similar to modern think tanks occurred in 1865, when a group of roughly one hundred people from a variety of professions—including various government officials—converged in the Massachusetts State House in Boston to discuss a plan of national recovery following the Civil War.[56] During that

meeting, a number of Progressives interested in issues such as unemployment and public health discussed and analyzed the problems facing the war-ravaged nation. Several professional organizations, such as the American Political Science Association and the National Conference on Charities and Correction, trace their origins to that meeting. Although not a think tank meeting per se, the event in Boston signified one of the first recorded instances of policy experts' assembling in one place to discuss contemporary issues.[57]

Some scholars believe that the government's reliance on expert assistance began even earlier in the nineteenth century. Paul Dickson asserts that the adviser-advisee relationship began in 1832, when the secretary of the treasury contracted the Franklin Institute of Philadelphia to solve technical issues American steamboats. Although these scholars were not yet conscious of the significance of their work, Dickson argues that the Franklin Institute was the first functional think tank. But because of Dickson's lack of documentation, academics like Donald Abelson doubt that the institute was the first to interact with government actors to solve governmental or societal issues.[58] Rather than focusing on the ambiguity regarding the creation of think tanks, it is arguably more relevant to track their continued progress and their relationship with the executive and legislative branches.

The influence of think tanks on government administrations and policymaking was substantial by the early twentieth century. According to James Smith, the weight of experts had grown so great by the turn of the century that President Woodrow Wilson began to harbor "distrust" of experts by 1912. Wilson, a graduate of the University of Virginia and Johns Hopkins University and onetime president of Princeton University, saw the role of experts as a potential threat to democratic institutions and the people's responsibility to govern themselves. White House officials, former presidents, and government administrators had begun to rely informally on the expertise of scholars in specialized fields such as economics and statistics. The way experts were consulted during this period is markedly different from the way they are consulted now. Presidents and policymakers customarily called on these experts only for private meetings, instead of requesting publicized testimonies, which is the norm today. Even President Wilson eventually put his mistrust aside, using think tanks' professional expertise during World War I.[59] The historical distrust of big government placed severe constraints on the size of the federal bureaucracy and the civil service. As the demands on the government increased and the number and complexity of policy problems grew, policymakers increasingly turned to scientists and outside experts to help them manage the domestic and foreign policy challenges they faced.

Think tanks attempted to meld the realms of social science and politics. The Progressive belief that the social sciences could solve the public policy problems of the time helped shape the notion that think tanks were created to help "government think." Neither ideological nor promotional, "the new think tanks had missions consistent with the scientific, knowledge-based movement toward efficient government."[60]

In a period highlighted by scandals involving corporations and politicians, think tanks were hypersensitive about accepting any funding that could potentially lead to a loss of independence and credibility. It is, however, ironic that the major philanthropists of the time were captains of industry who created the leading foundations and think tanks in the United States. Think tanks derived most of their funding from the Second Industrial Revolution, but, more specifically, they received financial support from industrial-era businessmen such as John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, and J. P. Morgan. These businessmen were driven by enlightened self-interest and were primarily concerned with promoting a more professional, business-oriented facet of government—one capable of both addressing the social problems that accompanied industrialization and easing the growing discontent of their workers. Big business, in other words, had its own agenda. Nonetheless, the fact that the businessmen trusted the private sector more than the public sector helped engender a healthy, balanced relationship between the newly founded think tanks and their funders.

The generosity of private philanthropists helped create many of the leading think tanks that exist in the United States today. The donors and reformers shared a common goal of bringing knowledge to bear on public policy. Their goal was to fight corruption and promote efficiency within government, or, as some have suggested, to "help government think." Throughout the early twentieth century, social science experts were relied on for their unbiased counsel. These experts demonstrated the value of distinguished, independent voices, which contributed to the rise of think tanks such as the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, established in 1910, and the Brookings Institution, whose origins date back to 1916.[61] These institutions filtered information to key stakeholders in the United States to keep them informed on the government's wide-reaching actions. The outbreak of World War I energized these institutions, allowing them to become leading voices in the passionate debates concerning the proper role of the United States in a rapidly changing world. The mission and purpose of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, for example, were clearly positive and intended to benefit the United States as

well as those states that had suffered the violence and ravages of World War I. Andrew Carnegie's $10 million founding donation demonstrated his (and the think tank's) commitment to "hasten the abolition of international war, the foulest blot upon our civilization."[62] The Great Depression and the government's response to this domestic crisis catalyzed the establishment of a group of now well-established think tanks.

While several think tanks were born out of the Great Depression, the survival of those that predated the financial crisis (despite the loss of their absolute neutrality and independence) attested to the stability of think tanks more broadly. Andrew Bird argues that "with the onset of the Great Depression, faith in purely scientific analysis and detached administrative solutions to social problems diminished." In the severely depressed U.S. economic and political environments, the impact of think tanks withered. The development of knowledge became superfluous when the basic necessities of survival—food, water, and shelter—were threatened. Bird explains that "direct expert intervention in political decisionmaking became more common," however, because the extreme circumstances of the Great Depression enabled the experts, who had established themselves up to that point, to play a vital role in the process of policy formulation. Because of the extent of the crisis and the need for immediate action, they abandoned their traditional role as advisers and were directly engaged in shaping and helping implement key policies and programs. Bird concludes that "think tanks had become effectively established in American politics, but intellectual and ideological currents were changing."[63] Think tanks were evolving in response to major historical events.

As the United States took on a greater role in global leadership, early think tanks sought "to advance the public interest by providing government officials with impartial, policy-relevant advice."[64] During the later postwar isolationist period of the 1920s and 1930s, think tanks kept the discussion of world affairs alive within U.S. intellectual and policy circles.[65] In many ways, Andrew Carnegie's philanthropic legacy made this financially possible. A Carnegie Corporation grant of $1.65 million in 1922 laid the groundwork for a 1927 merger of the Institute for Government Research, founded by Robert Brookings, and its two sister organizations, the Institute of Economics and a graduate school, to form the modern-day Brookings Institution.[66] Rather than taking on the task of lobbying, however, this period's new institutions concerned themselves with enhancing and sharing their nonpartisan policy expertise. Their research found a wide-ranging audience and helped solidify think tanks' relationships with government decisionmakers.[67]

By the mid-twentieth century, Congress began to reorganize the structure of various governmental departments, placing greater emphasis on specialized research. The 1947 reformation, by revamping the legislative committees, extended the staff capacity and research resources of the General Accounting Office as well as the CRS within the Library of Congress. During the 1970s Congress created the Congressional Budget Office and the Office of Technology Assessment and equipped each with modest staffs. The executive and legislative branches were simultaneously maintaining "contractual relationships" with universities and independent research institutions, including RAND and the Urban Institute.[68]

Three Waves of Think Tanks

As previously mentioned, the term *think tank* was introduced in the United States during World War II to describe the protected state in which military and civilian experts were situated so that they could develop invasion plans and other military strategies. The end of World War II ushered in a new understanding of international relations, and thus a new wave of think tanks emerged outside the realm of military policy and strategy. Institutionalized policy advising became a permanent feature of U.S. politics.[69] Scholars of social, environmental, domestic, and foreign policy became more readily available to presidents, cabinet members, the legislature, and one another. Government departments such as the Department of Defense hired organizations to conduct research that addressed specific concerns of policymakers and others in the government.[70] The organizations became "government contractors" and, by serving as consultants to policymakers, influenced government policies and programs from the inside. Perhaps the best example of one of these government-contractor think tanks is RAND. Established first as "Project RAND" by the United States Army Air Forces under a contract to the Douglas Aircraft Company, RAND separated from Douglas in 1948 to become the independent, nonprofit organization it is today.

A second wave of think tanks emerged following World War II and the beginning of the Cold War. After World War II, a variety of new, specialized, nongovernment contractor think tanks began to appear in response to the growing public sector and the establishment of the United States as a global superpower. In 1952 RFF received initial funding from the Ford Foundation for the study of conservation, development, and the use of natural resources. The Mid-Century Conference on RFF in 1953, sponsored by a wide variety of

private organizations, provided an open forum for President Dwight Eisenhower, RFF, conservationists, businesspeople, and policymakers to discuss new approaches to environmental policy in the next generation. The conference spearheaded RFF's name as the first premier think tank with an environmental focus.[71]

After the war, the term still mainly applied to contract researchers such as RAND that performed a mixture of deep thinking and program evaluation for the military. The use of the term was expanded in the 1960s to describe other groups of experts who formulated policy recommendations, including some research institutes concerned with the study of international relations and strategic questions. Other examples of "government contractors" include the Hudson Institute and the Urban Institute, founded in 1961 and 1968, respectively. Think tanks established during this era were often characterized by a "typically long bureaucratic birth," as was the case for the Urban Institute, whose foundations stretch back to the Kennedy administration, but who was not brought into being until the domestic troubles of the 1960s.[72] President Lyndon Johnson was an outspoken advocate for think tanks, noting their growing value and saluting Brookings for influencing his own Great Society reforms. Johnson named Brookings as a "national institution, so important to . . . the Congress and the country . . . that if [it] did not exist, we would have to ask someone to create [it]." [73] By the 1970s, the term *think tank* was applied to those institutions focusing not only on foreign policy and defense strategy but also on current political, economic, and social issues.

According to Donald Abelson, a combination of several factors explains the proliferation of think tanks after World War II, as well as the increasing diversity of their interests. The United States becoming a superpower and accepting its new status, with all the new global responsibilities that it entails, brought foreign policy—and thus the need for foreign policy advice—to the forefront. The expansion of the federal bureaucracy provided experts with more avenues to share their input. The antiwar and civil rights movements broadened the public's consciousness of social issues and generated several liberal think tanks. Simultaneously, conservative backlash against the perceived liberal bias within U.S. universities in the late 1960s and early 1970s created a demand for a friendlier environment in which conservative scholars could pursue their research.[74] The moderate conservative movement gained popularity following Richard Nixon's election to the presidency in 1968. William Simon, secretary of the treasury for Presidents Nixon and Ford, was an advocate of the movement calling for "a radical rethinking of conservative principles."[75]

The conservative movement further matured during President Ronald Reagan's years in office.[76] Reagan, a Hollywood actor turned politician, relied extensively on the research and advice of conservative think tanks during both his governorship in California and his presidency in the 1980s. The Hoover Institution even named Reagan a distinguished fellow of the organization.[77] Reagan also looked to these conservative think tanks for affiliated individuals to fill seats in his campaign organization and in his administration. James Smith points out that experts like Richard V. Allen, who served as a foreign policy adviser during the campaign and the national security adviser, and Martin Anderson, a conservative economist educated at MIT and Columbia University and a senior fellow employed at the Hoover Institution, were indispensable to both Reagan's campaign and his grasp of domestic and foreign policy. In addition to his work on Reagan's presidential election in 1976, Anderson was engaged in Barry Goldwater's presidential campaign in 1964 and Nixon's election in 1968. Anderson personally presided over twenty-five domestic and economic policy task forces and twenty-three foreign policy and national security projects. Moreover, more than 450 policy experts in total were involved in Reagan's election campaign as surrogates, advisers, briefers, and speechwriters.[78] Evidently, the guidance of thinks tanks was crucial to Reagan's formation of his own version of U.S. conservatism during the so-called Reagan Revolution.

In this new political environment, a third wave of think tanks—advocacy think tanks—began to dot the policy research landscape.[79] Unlike their contract-driven predecessors, advocacy think tanks actively sought to involve themselves in policy debates and influence "the direction and content of foreign and domestic policy."[80] This influence is achieved in part through "aggressive marketing techniques" that promote the think tank's specific interests among policymakers and the general public.[81] Richard Haas describes the Heritage Foundation, founded in 1973, as the prototypical advocacy think tank. Other examples include the liberal Institute for Policy Studies (IPS), founded in 1963, and the libertarian Cato Institute (or Cato), founded in 1977. IPS played an active role in the civil rights movement, the women's movement, and, most notably, the anti–Vietnam War movement. IPS's *Vietnam Reader* became "a kind of text-book for anti-war teach-ins," according to Lee Michael Katz.[82] While Haass may describe Heritage as the prototypical advocacy think tank, IPS is the original one. According to a 1986 *Washington Post* piece by Sidney Blumenthal, "The Heritage Foundation . . . was modeled directly on IPS."[83]

A more recent arrival on the advocacy think tank scene is CAP.[84] Just as Heritage followed the precedent set by IPS, CAP followed the precedent set by

Heritage, searching for a more "muscular political influence" that was missing on the political left. CAP's strategy and structure was modeled after Heritage's and was consciously designed to be policy and advocacy oriented, as well as to serve as a progressive counterweight to Heritage. Its establishment by "Clinton administration refugees" in 2003 demonstrates CAP's prolific relationship with the Obama administration. Katz describes CAP as "the zenith" of the pinnacle of the recent rise of think tanks. While CAP's stock has skyrocketed with the number of its officials appointed to the Obama administration, this surge in appointments could also be "a death knell" if too many of the organization's scholars leave for government posts.[85]

"Legacy-based think tanks" are considered by some scholars to be the fourth wave of policy research institutions. These are usually established by former officeholders who actively seek to impart their legacy on domestic and foreign policy. Perhaps the best example is the Carter Center, which was started by President Jimmy Carter in 1982 to continue his work on the advancement of human rights. Another such think tank is the Center for the National Interest, formerly the Nixon Center for Peace and Freedom, founded by President Nixon in 1994, which is committed to "developing new guiding principles for United States global engagement in a dramatically new international environment."[86] In a previous publication, I labeled legacy-based institutions as "vanity think tanks" and defined them as institutions that bear the name of the individual who serves as the driving and defining force behind the institution and its research agenda. While some institutions that were created and led by former presidents manage to be sustained after their deaths, many of these "vanity tanks" prove short-lived.[87] Senator Bob Dole's Better America Foundation is a prime example.[88] Although the Better America Foundation was initially established as a charitable organization in 1993, it acted increasingly as a think tank to advocate for Republican positions, including those of Senator Dole. After the foundation spent one million dollars on a Dole television campaign in 1994, numerous Democrats complained that the foundation was serving the purpose of supporting Dole's bid for the presidential election, prompting Dole to close it down in 1995.[89]

A Change in the Kinds of Issues Faced by Think Tanks

While think tanks have taken on a variety of roles over the course of their evolution during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they certainly have not been immune to problems upon inheriting their new broadened range

of responsibilities. Think tanks were forced to compensate for having been historically more subdued and often unaccredited for their work. It was not until the 1960s that think tanks took on their higher profile as actors in the policymaking process. Previously, their research was "not intended to grab headlines but rather to become infused into the political lexicon over time. This low profile [had] contributed to their attracting little scholarly attention." During the following two decades, literature appeared that denounced interest groups and their biases; however, it did not consider the ideas and the expertise supplied by think tanks or the inevitable ideological cleavages that existed in the policymaking process that had to be taken into account. As time progressed, think tanks were forced to adapt to the competitive environment in which policy is formulated and implemented. Unlike interest groups, they did not have a constituency to represent them before policymakers; instead they were forced to compensate by means of research, self-promotion, and conformity with the existing system of policymaking. According to Andrew Rich, "As think tanks have themselves become more often ideological . . . and aggressively promotional, think tanks and their products have come to warrant greater attention."[90]

The nature of think tanks, however, became less grounded in rationality toward the end of the twentieth century. As the spectrum of think tanks and their varying characteristics grew, so did the discrepancies among the institutions, which in turn fueled a more competitive atmosphere. Rich states that today "many experts now behave like advocates. They are not just visible but highly contentious as well. They more actively market their work than conventional views of experts would suggest; their work, in turn, often represents preformed points of view rather than . . . rational analysis."[91] By the beginning of the twenty-first century, policy experts within the think tank infrastructure had become staunch advocates for their fields of research, further emphasizing the chasm between the acts of providing neutral political advice and imposing a specific ideology. Rich elaborates, explaining that "many contemporary policy experts do seek an active and direct role in ongoing political debates. Far from maintaining a detached neutrality, policy experts are frequently aggressive advocates for ideas and ideologies; they even become brokers of political compromise."[92] The think tank industry has become more multifaceted in its attempts to adapt to the changing times, in terms of both its function and its sources of funding.

On the one hand, some think tanks became more concerned with visibility—raising funds and media attention—in the late twentieth century, thus accentuating their loss of impartiality as they compete for limited resources and the attention of the public and policymakers. Placing more emphasis on the numbers

of mass media appearances, legislative testimonies, and news coverage citations, these institutions have devoted more resources to ensuring name recognition than in previous decades. In exchange, fewer resources were allocated for generating new policy solutions. On the other hand, increased communication between think tanks has contributed to the effective utilization of professional resources. Staff members from different institutes often cooperate, pooling their resources and participating in joint research projects. Such collaborative work further promotes name recognition and overall credibility within think tank circles.

Think Tanks from the Late Twentieth Century to Today

As think tanks have become more visible, they have also become more global. Although think tanks abroad are not an entirely new phenomenon and have arguably been around longer than their U.S. counterparts, they only began to take on a true global presence in the 1990s as they were established around the world at an exponentially increasing rate. Globalization, the growing needs of the Information Age, and the extraordinary complexity of global public policy problems have made it possible for think tanks and scholars to scan the world for bigger and better ideas. In particular, the increase in globalization has corresponded to an increase in the worldwide spread of think tanks. From 1991 to 2000, the think tank proliferation phenomenon peaked with an astounding number of new institutions arising each year. Beginning around the year 2000, the forum of public policy research expanded globally and gave rise to global think tanks, which have formed networks or physically expanded across the world. In addition to its primary staff, a global think tank has a large number of collaborators who come from a myriad of sectors such as international organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), corporations, and academia and who assist the institution in its various functions. Furthermore, growth in structurally independent public policy networks has shown similar characteristics, arguably surpassing even the global think tank phenomenon and providing an influential alternative and complement to the traditional one-headquarter think tank.

The sharp spikes in the establishment of think tanks between 1991 and 2000 can be largely attributed to the democratization of formerly closed societies after the conclusion of the Cold War, increased trade liberalization, and the expansion of both market-based economies and globalization.[93] As noted, before

1991, most think tanks were located in the United States and Canada. The democratization and liberalization that occurred during the 1990s in effect created a more hospitable atmosphere for the rise of independent think tanks in other regions of the world.

In contrast, North America experienced a gradual decrease in the number of new think tanks established in the decade following the peak in the 1980s, and then a sharp decline in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Think tank proliferation in Western Europe followed another path entirely: whereas most regions witnessed a marked increase in the number of think tanks at least until the 1990s, Western Europe experienced two peaks of expansion followed by sharp declines in the 1960s and 1990s. The recent declines in the number of think tanks forming in these two regions have called into question the direction think tanks will take in the future.

As the number of international think tanks saw an upsurge in the 1990s, domestic institutions faced their own challenges within the United States. Domestic think tanks tackled various controversial problems throughout the decade, including welfare reform and the health care debate. Legislators and Clinton administration officials frequently relied on the work and guidance of experts from the leading think tanks in and around Washington, D.C., for fresh approaches to these problems. In addition to bringing an academic dimension to the welfare debate, the analysis provided by these esteemed researchers contributed constructive, practical critiques of the cash-assistance system during the process of welfare reform. However, in the case of President Bill Clinton's health care reform proposal, the variation in the research results, the lack of agreement among experts on the recommended course of action, and the complications caused by special interests and party politics led to the eventual defeat of the proposal in 1994.

Following Clinton's tenure in office, the George W. Bush administration provided numerous opportunities for think tanks to influence policy, particularly those institutions with a more conservative tendency. In contrast to the problems faced by the Clinton administration, Bush encountered success in invoking the advice of policy experts and ultimately enacting it into law.

Controversial topics such as health care and tax reform were at the heart of many scholars' research agendas as Bush came to office. The fight over tax cuts and tax reform began before Bush's election and continued after it. Experts from various institutions made their years of research expertise available to advise both sides of the debate. Although their combined knowledge failed to establish concurrence among policymakers, think tanks, and specifically the

Hoover Institution, played a vital role in advising the executive branch during this dispute. Bush's primary adviser (and thus an essential member of his administration), Lawrence Lindsey, was a Federal Reserve Board governor and a fellow at AEI. Lindsey solicited advice from various universities and think tanks on the economic implications of the proposed tax cut (President Bush pushed for a $1.35 billion tax cut following his inauguration). On the basis of the Congressional Budget Office's estimated $5.6 trillion budget surplus over a ten-year span, the House of Representatives passed the tax cut on March 8, 2001, and the Senate followed suit on May 18, 2001. The tax cut was officially signed into law on June 7, 2001.[94]

In sum, experts are involved in more than just the agenda-setting process. According to Rich, they are also indispensable during policy deliberation, enactment, and implementation. Experts may play radically different roles at different stages of the policymaking process. Consequently, they often become the virtual backbone during policy debates. The significance of policy research and the functional dimension of scholarly expertise have become widely respected domestically and internationally.

Today, the United States, Canada, and Western Europe host nearly 60 percent of the world's think tanks. Historically, the political and institutional environment in these regions has differed from that of Latin America, central and eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union. Nations that experience authoritarian regimes and military dictatorships—as have been nearly ubiquitous in the latter group of regions—have a tendency to stifle "the voicing of independent opinions and any form of political or policy dissent."[95] As such, the evolution of knowledge and its dissemination throughout the public sphere has suffered under such political systems. As Weaver and I have said, "It is certainly no accident that the rapid growth of think tank activity in Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union coincided with the decline of military government in Latin America and the fall of communism."[96] Although the 1940s saw a gradual increase in the number of think tanks worldwide, the period of largest growth occurred from 1991 to 2000. This explosion was particularly observable in Africa, the Middle East, and eastern Europe, where governments were in transition and civil society was asserting its potential as a legitimate actor in both national and world politics. Starting around 2005, a dramatic change occurred, and countries such as Russia, China, and Zimbabwe began to engage in what I describe as NGO "pushback," which was a systematic effort to limit the number, role, and influence of think tankd in countries around the world.[97]

As this brief history shows, think tanks rose from humble beginnings about one hundred years ago to gain important international visibility as players in civil society and the policymaking community today. While the direction and role that think tanks will take in the years ahead remains uncertain, it is certain that think tanks have proven themselves to be irreplaceable and active participants in civil society and governance in the United States and worldwide.

Think Tanks in the World Today: The United States and the European Union

Although the United States and Europe have close economic, historic, and cultural ties, the role of think tanks as policymaking organizations differs greatly between the two regions. On the one hand, think tank activity in the United States is more centralized. Although think tanks can be found in almost every state, all the major think tanks in the United States are located in either Washington, D.C., or New York City, with RAND, the National Bureau of Economic Research, and the Hoover Institution notable exceptions. Activity of think tanks in the European Union, on the other hand, exists across several capital and noncapital cities, and they are often located near major universities. Brussels is specifically trying to become a hub for those think tanks that concentrate mainly or solely on the European Union. These think tanks will be given specific consideration later in the book.

European and U.S. think tanks also differ in organizational structure, sources of funding, and degree of policy orientation. In part this reflects the differences that distinguish the political environments within each region, such as number of political parties and types of parliamentary system. The individual scholars who work at U.S. and European think tanks therefore have different degrees of job security and move between academia and government to varying degrees. This can be partially explained by the much stronger presence of the revolving door phenomenon in the United States, in which scholars and policymakers move freely between government jobs and positions in the think tank sector. Additionally, think tanks in the United States are much more visible in the media than those in Europe and consciously use the media to advance their ideas and policy proposals.

Given that the European Union and the United States share common political systems, cultural backgrounds, and levels of economic development—as well as a common history of think tanks and other civil society organizations—they lend themselves naturally to a comparative study. However, a comparison

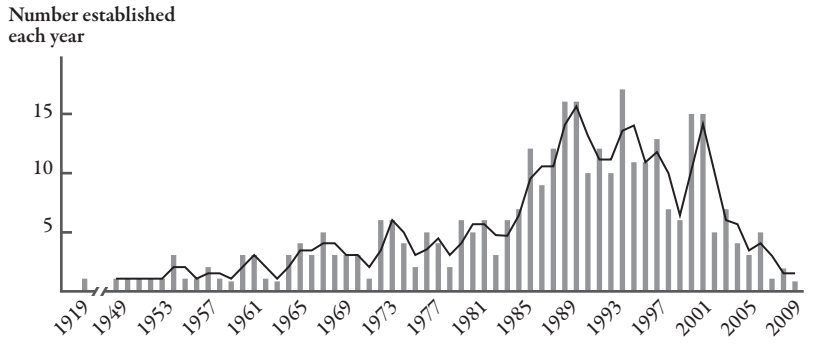
of single member states within the European Union with the United States would prove more problematic. This study seeks to compare think tanks in the United States and the European Union on several aspects. This is a macrolevel look at think tanks and is not focused on any specific institutions. Thus, both the opinions of experts in the field as well as empirical research data from the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program's report *2007 Survey of Think Tanks* and Notre Europe's survey of EU member states will be used to gain a comprehensive understanding of the two regions.[98] As part of the research for this book, a study of a small but representative group of European think tanks was also conducted to capture some of the more recent trends. European research organizations were asked a set of fourteen questions, and the responses were compiled and analyzed (see appendixes for survey). It should be noted that trends can be deduced from the data and research, but not every think tank will follow the pattern. Indeed, as dynamic institutions, think tanks change and act on their own accord.

Current Literature on the Global State of Think Tanks

Think tanks now operate in a variety of political systems, engage in a range of policy-related activities, and include a diverse set of institutions that have varied organizational forms. While their organizational structure, modes of operation, audience or market, and means of support may vary from institution to institution and from country to country, most think tanks share the common goal of producing high-quality research and analysis that are combined with a form of public engagement.

All think tanks face the same challenge: how to achieve and sustain their independence so that they can speak "truth to power" or simply bring knowledge, evidence, and expertise to bear on the policymaking process. Unfortunately, not all think tanks have the financial, intellectual, and legal independence to enable them to be truly independent and operate as strong, effective, and constructive institutions that can assess policies and inform public policymaking. This problem is most acute in developing and transitional countries where the means of financial support for think tanks is limited, the legal space in which these organizations operate is poorly defined, and the channels for influencing public policy are narrow. It is these characteristics that distinguish think tanks in the Northern and Western Hemispheres from their counterparts in developing and transitional countries.

FIGURE 1-1. Worldwide Growth of Think Tanks, 1919–2009



Source: Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program database, 2010.

Although the number and overall impact of policy research organizations have been growing and spreading (see figure 1-1), data from the 2006–07 *Global Think Tank Trends Survey* indicate that the rate of establishment of new think tanks may be declining for the first time in twenty years. The reasons for this trend will require greater research and analysis, but the decline may be the result of a combination of complex factors: shifts in funding, lack of start-up grants and capital, and unfavorable government regulations that attempt to limit the number and influence of think tanks. While think tanks are one of the many civil society actors in a country, they often serve as catalysts for political and economic reform. The indigenous think tank sector can also function as a key indicator for the state of the civil society in that country. If analysts and critics associated with think tanks are allowed to operate freely, so too can the rest of civil society.

There has been an increasing amount of research highlighting the rise of broad European think tanks, as well as a sizable amount of criticism on the current state of EU think tanks.[99] The notion that there is disunity within the European Union and that the European community needs to find one voice or a set of coherent voices that effectively advance the interests of Europe has been a continuing topic of discussion. This is particularly important for the European Union, which wants to strengthen its role on the world stage. In the absence of a single voice, the European Union would be overshadowed or overlooked as an important player in the international arena.

There have been few significant scholarly projects on the specific topic of EU think tanks, but some efforts do stand out in recent years. A Notre Europe

report, *Europe and Its Think Tanks: A Promise to Be Fulfilled*, is one of the more extensive discussions to date. In the report, Stephen Boucher outlines the current state of EU think tanks and their involvement in EU policymaking. Boucher states that there is general agreement on three categories for European think tanks: national, European specific (concerned with only European issues), and European oriented (addressing European issues among others). A growing number of think tanks follow the Anglo-American think tank model, which is more advocacy focused; the remaining number of European think tanks are predominantly academic-type research institutions. According to the Notre Europe report, EU think tanks want to be a part of the policy-initiation stage, when they are most likely to have the greatest impact. There is a focus on public debates, discussions, conferences, academic research, and publications, which are all employed to amass support and enhance visibility. With competition growing as more think tanks enter the arena, there is a need to be seen as relevant, which for some requires developing a niche market. Think tanks achieve this objective by specializing in a particular issue area or developing a political or philosophical brand. Notre Europe recommends five strategies for think tanks to maintain their relevance and effectiveness in the future:

- Strategically and actively cultivate private sources of funding.
- Develop performance measurement tools.
- Welcome new entrants and develop synergies through networks and cooperation.
- Consider greater focus and, perhaps, further specialization.
- Develop a better awareness of potential audiences.

Much of the other noteworthy research on the subject is found in discussions of the think tank world in general. *Think Tanks and Civil Societies: Catalysts for Ideas and Action* contains a number of relevant chapters on think tanks in Spain, Portugal, and France, as well as those in central and eastern Europe.[100] Alan Day gives an overview of think tanks in which he notes a trend toward advocacy think tanks and an increasing focus on issues that affect the European Union. Jonathon Kimball offers a comparison of think tank activity in Albania, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Bulgaria. He notes that think tanks in central and eastern Europe face similar challenges to those in the rest of Europe: the search for influence, independence, and sustainability. In *Comparative Think Tanks, Politics and Public Policy*, the authors note that despite increasing European integration, there still exist profound ethnic, economic, and political divisions.[101] Despite these issues, the authors note that Europe is able to provide "a relatively

healthy and stable environment for independent analysis and advice."[102] They focus their analysis on Russia, Germany, and Hungary, identifying a number of indicators that have affected the think tank communities in these countries: the existence of strong higher education systems, economic strength, and political and press freedom. Last, *Think Tank Traditions: Policy Research and the Politics of Ideas* devotes chapters to holistic European Union think tanks, as well as to think tanks in Germany, Italy, France, and eastern Europe.[103] In the book Heidi Ullrich gives a broad typology of EU think tanks and discusses the positive effect of think tank networks, while also mentioning that little collaboration and competition exists among Brussels-based think tanks. A distinction is also made between German think tanks, which are mostly academic and have been established by the government, and French think tanks, which do not have as much of a foothold in French civil society.

Much of the current literature on EU think tanks finds that their financial transparency and sources of funding are seriously inadequate. For example, Open Europe suggests that the European Union funds think tanks to justify its own existence and cement the European Commission's view that continued European integration is the best, or even the only, future path for progress.[104] At the other extreme, Stephen Boucher and Martine Royo mention the risk of some think tanks becoming "submarines of private interests."[105] Both can be viewed as an overreaction because most think tanks are organized to serve the public interest and are designed to support the public policy process. In general, too close of a relationship to any sector, whether it is government, business, or unions, can affect the independence and effectiveness of a think tank. This was perhaps a concern when, at a conference, members of the European Policy Institutes Network and several other think tank representatives concluded that there is a need for think tanks to develop a code of conduct, to clarify where their researchers come from, and to reveal the sources of funding.[106] According to the members, there is a distinction between European think tanks, which have a limited set of rules that regulate their operations, and U.S. think tanks, which often must comply with a complex set of regulations to maintain their nonprofit status and must provide annual tax returns to the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. While these regulations are cumbersome and time-consuming, they provide a great deal of transparency and tax advantages for nonprofits in the United States as individuals are encouraged to support think tanks by receiving a tax credit for making contributions to a nonprofit organization.

The intended focus of literature on EU think tanks, however, is on the ability of think tanks to help deal with current and future challenges for government

and civil society. Despite the challenges of European integration, or perhaps in response to it, there exists a clear need for European think tanks with a truly regional perspective, whose programs are exclusively focused on issues surrounding European-level policymaking and the issues confronting Europe.

Think Tanks North, South, East, and West Today

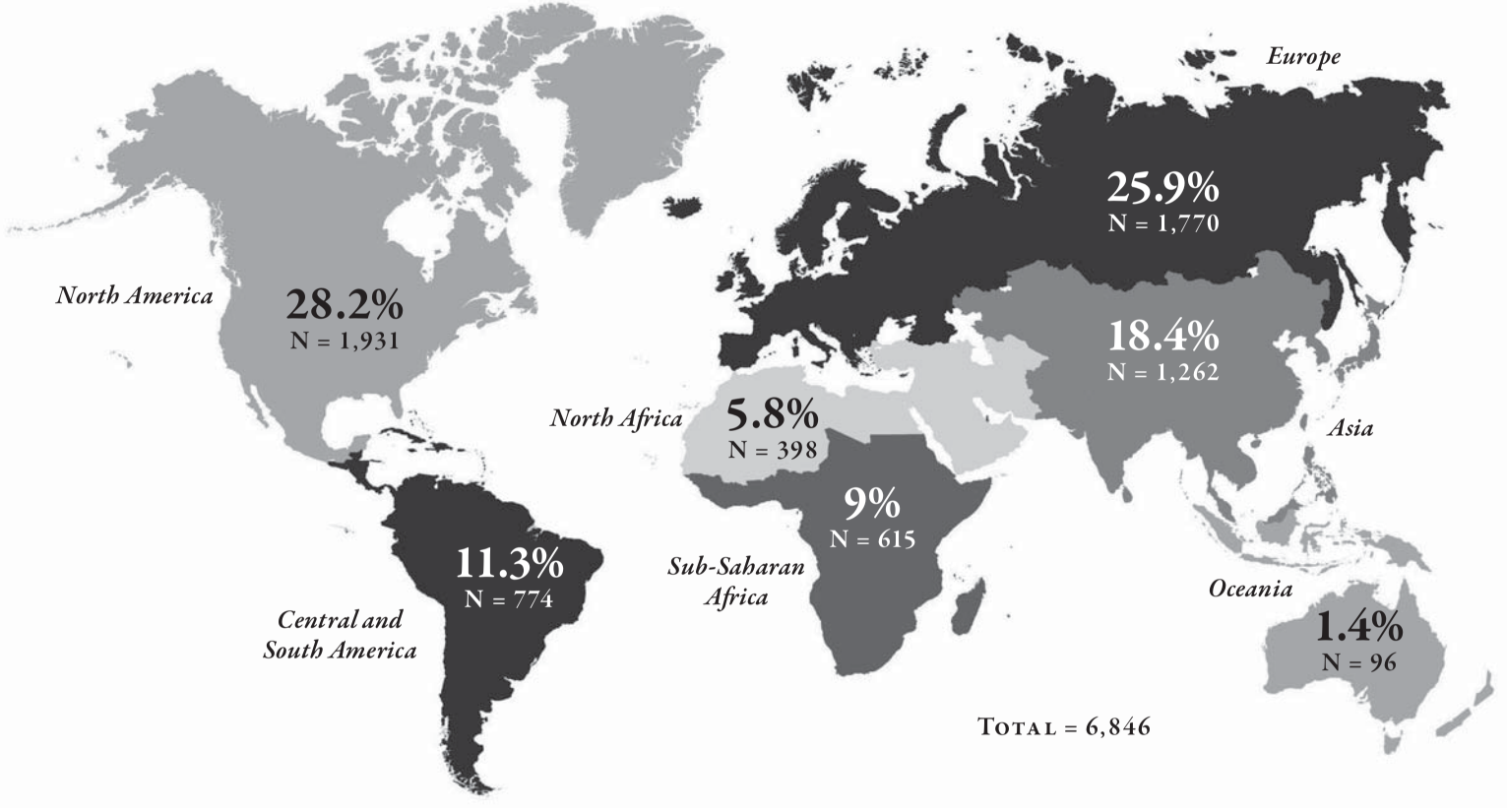
The Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program at the University of Pennsylvania catalogues and maintains the most comprehensive database of think tanks worldwide, which consists of 6,846 think tanks from 206 countries. It features specialized global databases of think tanks in areas such as development, environment, security, and international affairs. Information in the database can be sorted by geographic region, subregion, country, and subnational entity (for the United States and Canada). As of August 31, 2015, of the 6,846 global think tanks: 615 were located in Africa; 1,262 in Asia; 1,770 in Europe; 774 in Central and South America; 398 in the Middle East and North Africa; 1,931 in North America (with 1,839 located in the United States); and 96 in Oceania (see figures 1-2 and 1-3).

Policy research organizations have been growing in numbers and impact in recent years. A survey of think tanks conducted in 1999 found that two-thirds of all public policy research and analysis organizations in the world were established after 1970, and half have been established since 1980. Data from the 2006–07 *Global Think Tank Trends Survey* indicate that the number of think tanks in the United States may be declining for the first time in twenty years, as previously mentioned. Discovering the specific drivers of this trend will require further research and analysis. It is likely, however, that the result of a combination of complex factors—shifts in funding, underdeveloped institutional capacity, and unfavorable government regulations—will act to further limit the number and influence of think tanks. While think tanks are only one of the many civil society actors in any given country, they often serve as catalysts for political and economic reform.

Policy research centers have been growing rapidly in developing and transitional countries in sub-Saharan Africa; eastern and central Europe; and East, South, and Southeast Asia, which are regions where the majority of these institutions were established in the last ten to fifteen years. Similar centers have also appeared throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, where their operations began as early as the 1960s and 1970s.

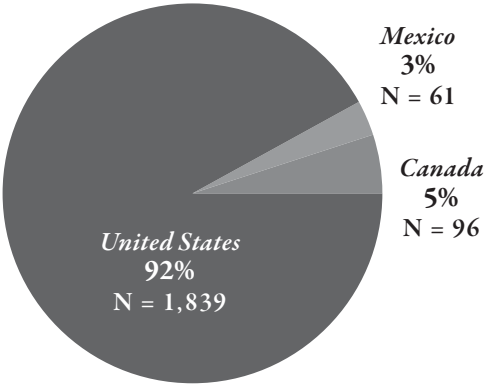
Think tanks in developing countries, however, are currently faced with a unique challenge. As systems of communication have become more comprehensive

FIGURE 1-2. Global Distribution of Think Tanks, 2015



Source: Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program database, 2015.

FIGURE 1-3. North America Think Tank Distribution, 2014



TOTAL = 1,996

Source: Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program database, 2015.

owing to technological advancements, salient issues that nations seek to resolve are more accessible to the stronger, older external think tanks that have established themselves as respectable and efficient international actors when compared with the fledgling, indigenous think tanks. In short, the latter are potentially overlooked when it comes to resolving conflicts and solving problems in their home countries. A certain degree of competitiveness between sprouting indigenous think tanks and more advanced, industrial ones is therefore instilled and reinforced by globalization.[107]

Table 1-4 lists the countries with the largest number of think tanks—those with ten or more; not included are the countries that do not have any think tanks currently in operation. Countries without think tanks include Antigua and Barbuda, Brunei, Comoros, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kiribati, Macao, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Monaco, Myanmar, Nauru, Oman, Palau, San Marino, São Tomé and Príncipe, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. For a more complete picture of the global distribution of think tanks by country, consult appendix C.

The Think Tank Environment

Think tanks are not islands in a sea; rather, they are born within a larger socioeconomic framework and must remain responsive to any changes within the greater society to stay relevant. An analysis of the environments in which think

TABLE 1-4. Global Distribution of Think Tanks by Country

Sub-Saharan Africa

Angola	4	Gabon	2	Nigeria	48
Benin	15	Gambia	6	Rwanda	7
Botswana	13	Ghana	37	Senegal	16
Burkina Faso	16	Guinea	2	Seychelles	3
Burundi	5	Guinea-Bissau	1	Sierra Leone	1
Cameroon	21	Kenya	53	Somalia	6
Cape Verde	2	Lesotho	4	South Africa	86
Central African Republic	2	Liberia	3	South Sudan	5
Chad	3	Madagascar	5	Swaziland	4
Congo	3	Malawi	15	Tanzania	15
Congo, Democratic Republic of	7	Mali	12	Togo	4
Côte d'Ivoire	12	Mauritania	2	Uganda	28
Eritrea	5	Mauritius	8	Zambia	13
Ethiopia	25	Mozambique	4	Zimbabwe	26
		Namibia	15		
		Niger	4		

Asia

Afghanistan	6	Indonesia	27	Pakistan	20
Armenia	14	Japan	109	Philippines	21
Azerbaijan	13	Kazakhstan	8	Singapore	12
Bangladesh	35	Kyrgyzstan	10	South Korea	35
Bhutan	9	Laos	3	Sri Lanka	14
Brunei	1	Macao	1	Taiwan	52
Cambodia	10	Malaysia	18	Tajikistan	7
China	435	Maldives	6	Thailand	8
Georgia	14	Mongolia	7	Turkmenistan	1
Hong Kong	30	Nepal	12	Uzbekistan	8
India	280	North Korea	2	Vietnam	10

Central and Eastern Europe

Albania	14	Bosnia and Herzegovina	14	Bulgaria	35
Belarus	21			Croatia	11

Czech Republic	27	Lithuania	19	Russia	122
Estonia	17	Macedonia	18	Serbia	24
Finland	28	Moldova	9	Slovakia	18
Hungary	42	Montenegro	4	Slovenia	19
Kosovo	3	Poland	42	Ukraine	47
Latvia	11	Romania	54		

Western Europe

Andorra	2	Ireland	14	Portugal	21
Austria	40	Italy	97	San Marino	1
Belgium	53	Liechtenstein	2	Spain	55
Denmark	41	Luxembourg	6	Sweden	77
France	180	Malta	4	Switzerland	73
Germany	195	Monaco	2	United Kingdom	288
Greece	35	Netherlands	58	Vatican City	1
Iceland	7	Norway	15		

Central and South America

Anguilla	1	Cuba	19	Panama	12
Antigua and Barbuda	2	Dominica	3	Paraguay	27
Argentina	138	Dominican Republic	31	Peru	33
Aruba	1	Ecuador	18	Puerto Rico	6
Bahamas	2	El Salvador	13	St. Kitts and Nevis	1
Barbados	9	French Guiana	1	St. Lucia	3
Belize	4	Grenada	1	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	1
Bermuda	3	Guadeloupe	5	Suriname	3
Bolivia	59	Guatemala	12	Trinidad and Tobago	12
Brazil	89	Guyana	4	Turks and Caicos Islands	1
British Virgin Islands	1	Haiti	2	U.S. Virgin Islands	1
Cayman Islands	1	Honduras	9	Uruguay	21
Chile	44	Jamaica	6	Venezuela	20
Colombia	40	Martinique	2		
Costa Rica	37	Montserrat	1		
		Nicaragua	10		

(*continued*)

TABLE 1-4. (*continued*)

Middle East and North Africa

Algeria	9	Kuwait	14	Sudan	5
Bahrain	4	Lebanon	19	Syria	6
Cyprus	6	Libya	2	Tunisia	18
Egypt	35	Morocco	15	Turkey	32
Iran	59	Oman	3	United Arab Emirates	7
Iraq	31	Palestine	28	Yemen	22
Israel	58	Qatar	7		
Jordan	21	Saudi Arabia	4		

North America

Canada	99	Mexico	61	United States	1,835

Oceania

Australia	63	New Zealand	5	Samoa	1
Fiji	1	Papua-New Guinea	1	Vanuatu	1

tanks operate is crucial toward understanding their influence on policy. This includes studying the movement of scholars within think tanks and the government, as well as recent trends within the think tank community. This comparison is an expansion on a section in one of my earlier works, "National Interest vs. Regional Governance: Think Tanks, Policy Advice and the Future of the EU."

Think tanks in the United States have held an extremely influential position in the policymaking process for at least fifty years. Most notably, the 1960s and 1970s saw an influx of think tanks fulfilling crucial roles in government processes as social, environmental, and economic departments of government expanded or were created. As time went on, these institutions became larger, more complex, and more dynamic than ever before. They exist in ever greater numbers, and even institutions founded more recently have garnered successes. Today, think tanks interact with both the public and the government to ensure that their policy recommendations are adopted. Think tanks in the United States are an important part of civil society and are independent from the government, work in the public interest, and offer policymakers practical and effective policy recommendations.

While the vast majority of think tanks in the United States are focused on foreign relations and economic affairs, there is truly a think tank for every issue

area. As more than mere advocacy groups, they unite scholars and policymakers so that they can discuss and debate pressing issues to create relevant and applicable policies for the government to adopt.

Some top U.S. think tanks are very well funded relative to those in other regions of the world. This is in part due to the many philanthropic organizations in the nation that seek to influence policy and participate in the political system. Institutions such as the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Hewlett Foundation, Ford Foundation, and the Pew Charitable Trusts made and continue to make important and lasting funding contributions. However, while many philanthropists hope to simply create a better world by giving to organizations that strive for the public good, others give money so think tanks can produce research and analysis that advances a particular agenda. As a result, partisan politics have at times narrowed the space in which think tanks operate in the United States by limiting the range of policy choices that they might consider. While some think tanks do not like to be branded, most of them can be characterized as favoring a singular political ideology.[108] The large number of think tanks and the diversity that exists among them helps guard against any one institution from undue influence on the president or on Congress.

A defining characteristic of American think tanks is that they often serve as a source of qualified staff for key positions when there is a change in administrations in Washington. This was the case most recently with both George W. Bush and Barack Obama, both of whom relied on the help and expertise of think tanks such as the conservative AEI and the progressive CAP, respectively. These think tanks helped shape the ideas and policy of the administration in power.[109] Indeed, many government officials participate in the "revolving door" and move between positions within the government and in the think tank community, usually depending on which party is in power in the White House and in both houses of Congress. This movement is not new, either; the "revolving door" phenomenon has helped form "governments-in-waiting" since 1961.[110]

The ease of entry between the government sector and think tanks allows scholars and public officials to maintain a healthy balance between hectic, purely policy-focused work and more abstract, scholarly pursuits. Lee Hamilton, a former member of Congress who now directs the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, contends, "Many of the think tanks are developing talent for a new administration. You will see a large number of people leaving the think tanks to go into the Obama administration."[111] Indeed, Phillip J. Crowley, formerly of CAP and former assistant secretary of state for public affairs, explains, "There's a lot more sanity in the think tank world than there is in

government. You're not on the treadmill as much. . . . It is a chance to step back, to actually think. If you're in government, you're dealing with those boundaries that have already been set. In a think tank, you start with a blank piece of paper."[112] This ends up benefiting the policymaking process as a whole. In their own words, academics who straddle the academic and policy worlds can attest to the importance of the "revolving door": "One of the most effective transmission belts for ideas to travel from the academy to government might be called 'embedded capital' in the minds of 'in and outers' . . . As Henry Kissinger once pointed out, the pressure on time that bears upon policymakers means that they rely on ideas and intellectual capital created before they entered the maelstrom."[113]

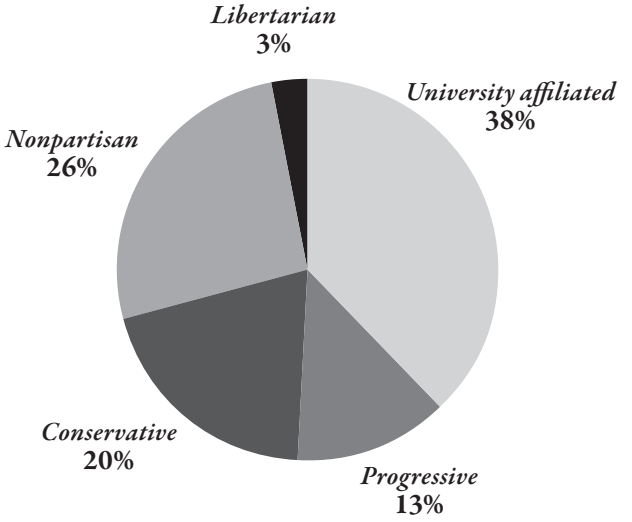
Despite increasing competition for outreach, several think tanks hold high profiles in the media, and some can even become household names. To assert better control over their public images, many think tanks deal directly with the public and media. While many prominent journalists serve as fellows for various think tanks, institutions such as the Heritage Foundation, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and CSIS even maintain their own television studios. The Peterson Institute inaugurated its media center in 2008.

Financial transparency is a major feature of U.S. think tanks, as briefly mentioned before. Partly because the U.S. Internal Revenue Service requires that all nonprofits, including think tanks, to submit financial reports each year to maintain their nonprofit status, U.S. think tanks are often very forthcoming about their main sources of funding, and the records of many institutions are available to the public through the Internet. Overall, the U.S. public and media generally demand a greater degree of transparency and accountability than do their European counterparts.[114] Many think tanks even have their own public relations representatives, and websites often provide public access to the leaders of these organizations and enable them to engage with the scholars on staff. With the ability to scrutinize these political intermediaries, the public has grown to believe that think tanks are working in the public interest.

Partisan U.S. Think Tanks

As was discussed earlier in the history of think tanks, not all think tanks are nonpartisan. Some represent nearly every possible position on the political spectrum, with four main categories encompassing most U.S. think tanks:

FIGURE 1-4. Ideological Breakdown in U.S. Think Tanks



Source: Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program database, 2015.

conservative, libertarian, centrist, and progressive. In addition, a large number of think tanks classify themselves as "university affiliated" and self-identify as nonpartisan (see figure 1-4).

Over the last decade, right-of-center think tanks have had a commanding presence and influence in Washington. This influence was in part due to their superior funding advantage and to the effectiveness of conservative organizations such as the Heritage Foundation and Cato.[115] Recently, however, liberal-leaning donors, most notably George Soros, have helped even out the partisan imbalance with the creation of organizations such as CAP, which has a close relationship with the Obama administration. John Podesta, the chair and counselor of CAP, made clear "his plan for what he likes to call a 'think tank on steroids.'" The objective was to create more advocacy oriented think that that focused on policy products with a quicker response time, shorter in length and clear and direct position on key policy issues. "Emulating those conservative institutions," he said "a message-oriented war room will send out a daily briefing to refute the positions and arguments of the right. An aggressive media department will book liberal thinkers on cable TV. There will be an 'edgy Web site' [thinkprogress.org] and a policy shop to formulate strong

positions on foreign and domestic issues."[116] The reemergence of liberal think tanks has brought about a balance of power in Washington's partisan playing field.

Another characteristic of U.S. think tanks is the well-developed national networks of progressive and conservative think tanks, such as the U.S. Public Interest Research Group (U.S. PIRG) and HI. For example, established in the 1970s as an outgrowth of the consumer movement spearheaded by Ralph Nader, U.S. PIRG is now a nationwide movement of state-based think tanks, primarily concerned with environmental issues, consumer protection, and political and social justice. Nonetheless, U.S. PIRG differs from other think tanks in that it was founded as a student group and still remains one today. Indeed, most of its members and financial resources come from student-driven organizations. It often employs grassroots methods to get its voice heard, which other think tanks might not find effective.[117]

The conservative HI was established in Chicago in 1984. According to its website, it received 71 percent of its income from foundations, 16 percent from corporations, and 11 percent from individuals in 2007. No corporate donor gave more than 5 percent of its annual budget. HI maintains a network of 125 academics and professional economists serving as policy advisers to it, including members of the faculties of Harvard University, University of Chicago, and Northwestern University.

Finally, another characteristic of U.S. think tanks is their geographical distribution and the variety of topics they cover. While there are 398 think tanks in Washington, D.C., alone, every single state in the United States, with the exception of Wyoming, which is the least populous state, has at least one think tank (see table 1-5). Although commonly thought of as national institutions, think tanks also research topics pertaining to state and local issues. Indeed, power has increased in the hands of the states in recent decades, and it is often up to the states to balance large and complex budgets and administer complex programs. As with national policy, think tanks research and debate issues to make recommendations to policymakers at the state and local levels. Although think tanks operating at the local level do not operate in as competitive an environment as those working on national issues do, these think tanks work just as hard to convey their messages.[118] Generally, think tanks have played an important role in the policymaking process in the United States, influencing the activities and policies of the government, yet remaining responsive to issues of the public.

TABLE 1-5. U.S. Think Tanks by State and the District of Columbia, 2014

State/D.C.	Number	State/D.C.	Number
District of Columbia	398	Kansas	17
Massachusetts	177	Alabama	16
California	169	Oregon	16
New York	144	New Hampshire	13
Virginia	105	Hawaii	12
Illinois	62	Kentucky	11
Maryland	50	Oklahoma	11
Texas	47	Iowa	10
Connecticut	44	Louisiana	10
Pennsylvania	42	Mississippi	10
New Jersey	36	Arkansas	8
Colorado	31	Montana	8
Florida	31	Nebraska	7
Michigan	31	New Mexico	7
Georgia	29	Utah	7
Washington	27	South Carolina	6
Ohio	25	West Virginia	6
Minnesota	23	South Dakota	5
North Carolina	23	Vermont	5
Wisconsin	22	Idaho	4
Arizona	21	Nevada	4
Indiana	21	North Dakota	4
Maine	21	Alaska	3
Rhode Island	20	Delaware	3
Tennessee	19		
Missouri	18	**Total**	**1,839**

Comparative Think Tanks, Politics, and Public Policy in the United States and Europe

A comparison of think tanks in the United States with those in Europe brings into focus the unique elements of U.S. politics, political culture, and institutions. It is precisely these characteristics that help explain why there are more think tanks in the United States than in any other country in the world. It also explains why

Americans have a proclivity for advice that is independent of government and why think tanks play such an important role in policy debates and policymaking.

U.S. think tanks hold a unique role in U.S. society as independent institutions that is unmatched by comparative think tanks in Western Europe. Why do they have greater independence, influence, and resources than European think tanks do? The political culture in the United States differs from what is found in Europe in the following ways:

Porous and highly decentralized system of government
- Separation of powers (legislative, executive, and judiciary).
- Federal, state, and local governments.
- Fear of an imperial Congress or president.

Weak civil service and strong reliance on independent advice
- "The government that governs best, governs least."
- Desire to avoid centralized power and giving too much power to unelected bureaucrats.

Strong two-party system but weak party discipline
- Members of Congress elected by popular vote.
- No viable third party—Democrats and Republicans dominate.
- Personal attributes, power base, and financial support matter more than party affiliation.
- Candidates use party label but are not defined by or bound to the party.

President's candidacy not tied to a party
- President elected by popular election, not by the majority party.
- Primary elections are open for all candidates for president and members of Congress, attracting a wide range of candidates.

Hyperpluralistic and individualistic society
- Most religiously and ethnically diverse country in the world.
- Every interest has a group to represent it.

Highly developed philanthropic culture
- Individuals, private corporations, private foundations, unions, and other interest groups fund and support nongovernmental organizations.
- More wealthy donors in the United States, examples include Bill Gates ($48 billion) and George Soros ($7.6 billion).
- Well-established legal and tax rules and public support for independent, nongovernmental organizations.

Think tanks in the United States have been carving out their own Fifth Estate for at least seventy-five years, playing increasingly crucial roles in the policymaking process. Notably, the 1970s saw an influx of think tanks fulfilling crucial roles in government processes. As time progressed, think tanks became larger, more complex, and more dynamic. Today, think tanks exist in ever-greater numbers and have garnered successes in influencing public policy; they interact with both the public and the government, ensuring the adoption of their policy recommendations. Largely independent from the government, working primarily in the public interest, and offering policymakers practical and effective policy recommendations, think tanks in the United States are an essential component of U.S. civil society.

How did think tanks rise from the maelstrom of World War I to achieve their prominent perch in American foreign policy formulation? Since 1945 the promise of think tanks as a means of ameliorating the shortcomings of the government's ability to adapt and to plan in policy domains has been largely borne out. It is not that think tanks are immune to error, theoretical cul-de-sacs, bias, and fads, but rather that they have successfully integrated themselves into the preexisting political arena and became integral to the way that the U.S. government functions. The reasons, however, are not all obvious, and the implications are not fully understood even by the participants in the arena of think tanks. Nevertheless, it is known that the U.S. political environment has enabled the influx of think tanks in the United States.

There are institutional reasons for the strength of U.S. civil society and the national environment's conduciveness to think tanks. In contrast to authoritarian regimes, where power is consolidated in the hands of a single individual or an exclusive group of individuals, the United States was founded on a system of separated and fragmented powers, including the fragmentation of power within the legislative branch. As a result, policymakers frequently consult organizations charged with creating knowledge relevant to policy formulation—that is, think tanks. I explain that "each member of Congress is concerned with building a record of legislative accomplishment and position taking," which spurs legislators to consult heavily with think tanks before making policy decisions. This relationship between think tanks and the legislative branch is distinct from that found in most parliamentary systems. Typically in a parliamentary system, governmental departments are relied on more systematically than other sources of policy advice (including think tanks).[119] Coupled with the nature of political parties, the U.S. government structure provides a prime environment for civil society organizations.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND GOVERNANCE

Civil society is made up of a range of associations that occupy the space between a government and its citizens. As objective, independent producers of policy and analysis, representing neither the public nor the private sector, think tanks are an important feature of a strong civil society. This is significant when one considers the generally accepted notion that a strong and vibrant civil society is an essential component of any healthy democracy. The organizations that constitute civil society can span sports teams, labor unions, and policy research organizations. While civil society ideally touts itself as a force separate from the state, it rarely enjoys complete independence from the state.[a]

Naturally, the extent to which states interfere with the operation of civil society depends on the legal, political, social, and economic contexts, as well as the type of civil institution concerned. It is no surprise that given their proximity to government and the nature of policy advice, think tanks are often targets for government intervention in countries where there are authoritarian, corrupt, or nontransparent governments. Moreover, it is vital to recognize that the conditions that enable think tanks to operate as an effective counterweight to the state and the market are not necessarily present in every civil society.

Within civil society, significant trust is invested in the research produced by universities and think tanks, as these institutions influence policymaking and directly affect the population. According to Andrew Rich, "The role of experts tends to be greater in debates that take on a high public profile, that move at a relatively slow pace, and that do not elicit the mobilization of organized interests with much to lose in the decisions under consideration."[b] The success, visibility, and funding of these institutions directly correlates with the concerns of their constituents. The think tanks' research and counsel to the legislative and executive branches are intended to reflect the prerogatives of the public and provide a voice to civil society. However, this constitutes only one element of the relationship between think tanks and civil society.

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a. As Kent Weaver and I have noted, "Although it may be an area of organized activity, civil society is bound to be liable to state intervention even in democracies." See James McGann, *Democratization and Market Reform in Developing and Transitional Countries: Think Tanks as Catalysts* (London: Routledge, 2010).

b. Andrew Rich, *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 107.

The extent of political parties' control over policy decisions varies according to the political system in place. The power of political parties in the United States, for example, is not comparable with that of parties common in countries such as Germany and the Netherlands, where party-funded think tanks play a prominent role in civil society. Because think tanks in these countries rely

heavily on political parties, the results of elections are sufficient to affect their influence and funding. In contrast, political parties in the United States are relatively weak. They "function primarily as campaign vehicles and party platforms [that] often vary considerably over time depending on the positions taken by the party's presidential candidates." Because they do little to fund think tanks and other such organization, parties do not significantly influence the policymaking process postelection; their priorities are constantly shifting with various party nominees, rendering their research transient in comparison with that of U.S. think tanks.[120]

Think tanks occupy an important position in the policymaking process because they offer comprehensive advisory services to the legislative and executive branches of the U.S. government. America's long-standing tradition of trusting the private sector to assist the government, coupled with its equally long-standing tradition of distrusting the government, have contributed to the prominent role that think tanks hold in policymaking. Most recently, reliance on think tanks for policy research and analysis has gained prominence because of their demonstrated efficiency, independence, relevance, and access to key government officials.

Another factor that has increased U.S. reliance on think tanks is their proven efficacy in the policy research they conduct. Think tanks can produce sound analyses of policy problems faster than their counterparts in the public sector, who must contend with the distraction of political maneuvering and a bureaucratic culture that strives to maintain the status quo. Think tanks are often more efficient than government bureaucracies at collecting, synthesizing, and analyzing information. Think tanks are free to be forward-looking, because they do not reward the creative disruptions otherwise known as bureaucratic politics. As they are mostly unencumbered by political constraints, they tend to produce bolder reconfigurations of policy agendas than their public sector counterparts are able to achieve.

Another structural benefit is the wide reach of think tanks, which enables them to engage relevant policymakers better than government agencies can. These agencies are often laden with specific concerns, and the inherent hierarchy that exists within an agency can sometimes swallow information rather than disseminate it efficiently. In contrast, think tanks are independent of the executive and legislative bureaucracies. This allows them more freedom to design their own agendas, adapt to the needs of their clients, and increase collaboration both within and among institutions inside and outside government. Their broad scope empowers think tanks to conceive of policy implementation better

than the government bureaucracies that are limited by specialization and segmentation can.[121] The breadth of their influence coupled with their independence from executive and legislative bureaucracies assures skeptical policymakers and citizens alike that think tanks' findings are legitimate.

Additionally, the independence of think tanks from the U.S. government renders them capable of expanding their data sources. Think tanks use data provided by government agencies, but they also draw on resources such as journalistic outlets and NGOs and intergovernmental organizations such as NATO and the World Bank. According to the Heritage Foundation's Helle Dale, a think tank's independence from governmental interference enables it to incorporate as many credible and well-established sources as possible.[122] Moreover, the independent nature of think tanks allows them, as Richard Haass explains, to "give candid assessments of pressing global challenges and the quality of government responses [to them]."[123] Unlike government agencies, think tanks are not formally hindered by official positions or conflicts of interest. Therefore, they are consulted frequently by the public and private sectors for objective judgments and alternative policy options. Yet, despite attempts to court members of Congress with particular policy ideas, think tanks remain independent from the U.S. government.

As suggested, Congress frequently uses think tanks to inform policymaking. Under the legislative system, each member of Congress is responsible for casting one vote on each piece of proposed legislation. Therefore, policy advisers, often from think tanks, are provided an opportunity to personally influence legislators. As Donald Abelson explains, "Think tanks have employed several strategies to attract attention, ranging from testifying before congressional committees and delivering by hand concise summaries of key policy issues to members of Congress to inviting representatives and senators, as well as their staff, to participate in seminars and workshops."[124] Because members of Congress are not held accountable to a specific party, their financial and ideological support of particular think tanks does not "undermine party cohesion," making them open to policy advice.[125]

Think tank culture offers the opportunity to circumvent governmental inertia for six reasons:

1. They are often are more future oriented than government research functionaries, who work in an environment in which efforts at creative disruption are rarely rewarded, if tolerated at all.

2. They are more likely to generate new policy agendas, while bureaucracies thrive on the security of standard operating procedures.
3. They are 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.
4. They promote the intellectual synthesis that comes from breaking down bureaucratic barriers.
5. They can better disseminate relevant policy research within government than can government agencies themselves, which are subject to bureaucratic politics and turf wars.
6. They can often telescope the policy function from data collection to formation of knowledge to conceiving a means of implementation better than government bureaucracies, which may be segmented along functional lines, can.

Think tanks hold a unique position in political and civic life in America as evidenced by their prominent role and profile in the print and electronic media, in the halls of Congress, and in the briefing rooms of the executive branch. Deeply ingrained in the political and civic culture is a desire for weak bureaucracy and government where powers are divided and decentralized ("a government that governs best, governs least"). All of these characteristics stand in stark contrast to our European counterparts and help explain why think tanks are the Fifth Estate.

Additionally, state and federal tax credits and tax deductions encourage private and corporate support and a policy environment that accommodates their flourishing.[126] In contrast, funding differences and alternate affiliation patterns in Europe have resulted in a strong focus on academic research rather than on policy creation in European think tanks. As opposed to U.S. think tanks, there is no real "revolving door" or personnel exchange back and forth from think tanks to government.[127] Moreover, think tanks in Europe are not as visible in the media, thus highlighting the unique position U.S. think tanks play in bridging the divide between civil society and government.

Scholars have pointed out that think tanks in the United States have more of an impact on public policy compared with their counterparts in other countries. The nature and structure of the American political system creates an open system where there are many points of access to policymakers and the policymaking process. This porous system creates a fertile environment where think tanks, special interest advocacy groups, lobbyists, and other policy actions can

operate. What distinguishes think tanks from for-profit corporations are their missions, which are designed to serve the public interest; they are governed by independent boards that are charged with serving the public interests; and their activities and financing are required by federal law to be in the public interest.

While commonly thought of as national institutions, think tanks also research topics pertaining to state and local issues. Just as with national policy, these think tanks research and debate issues in order to make recommendations to policymakers on the local level. While the environment they operate in is not as competitive as that of national think tanks, state-focused think tanks work just as hard to convey their recommendations.[128]

The varied abilities of U.S. think tanks to focus on global, national, and local issues make them a powerful tool in the nation's policymaking process and places them in a position to influence policy while bridging the divide between government and civil society. Because of U.S. think tanks' unique focus on policy research, their overlap with governmental organizations, and their high profile in media, they separate themselves from their European counterparts and have created a position in society as a linkage between government and civil society. Unlike the European think tank model that renders research institutions as an appendage of a political party, this position carves out an independent niche or a separate estate in society that differs from other civil society actors such as the media or lobbyists.

Duties in the Public and Private Spheres

As the use of think tanks has grown, so too has the range of their duties. As think tanks have begun to serve increasingly diversified roles, Donald Abelson has divided the work of think tanks into two spheres of influence: public and private. Think tanks are influential in the public sphere through such venues as public conferences, seminars, and published media, all of which are strategically carried out to draw the attention of policymakers, academics, and the public to the institutions and their experts.

Diane Stone asserts that today's think tanks play active roles in training government officials, sponsoring conferences and seminars, and providing expert testimony. Additionally, many institutions regularly produce books, journals, newsletters, newspaper articles, and online blogs in an effort to disseminate their ideas and improve public education and advocacy. Many think tank scholars have even become regular media pundits who share their experiences with television and radio audiences. *Foreign Affairs* is the journal produced and

published by the Council on Foreign Relations, which is itself, among other things, a powerful think tank with offices in New York and Washington, D.C. The *National Interest* does not belong to a large institution or perform research functions, but its editor and executive editor have worked at think tanks and served in government positions. *The Journal* gets many of its articles from former, present, and future think tank scholars as well. *Orbis* is published by the Foreign Policy Research Institute, a Philadelphia-based think tank that increasingly disseminates its research in abridged form over the Internet. As a result of these new developments, the people affected by think tanks "are just as varied as their services and products."[129]

Despite increasing competition in their outreach efforts, several think tanks have high profiles in the media to retain control over their public images. Some think tank scholars have even become household names: Michael O'Hanlon (Brookings Institution), Richard Haass (Council on Foreign Relations), Steven Clemmons (New America Foundation), Norman Ornstein (AEI), and C. Fred Bergsten (Peterson Institute for International Economics) are quoted frequently in the press and are regulars on the nightly news and 24-7 cable news networks. Many prominent journalists serve as fellows for various think tanks, and, as previously mentioned, many institutions maintain their own television studios. Still, as think tanks have become increasingly focused in their efforts to ensure visibility, questions have surfaced pertaining to the reliability and credibility of published and publicized work.

The demand for accessible information online has pressured think tanks to develop technologically. According to Kathleen McNutt and Gregory Marchildon, "Web-based impact refers to the visibility (popularity) and relevance of an organizational or individual website or web page, and it is usually measured by analyzing hyperlinks."[130] This becomes problematic when organizations compromise the quality of materials published online to increase the quantity. Popularity, in turn, is often misconstrued as validity. To measure efficiently the impact of think tanks, "the correlations between an institute's research or recommendations and particular policy outcomes" should be considered first and foremost; they constitute the most valid evidence of a think tank's legitimacy.[131]

As think tanks have become increasingly concerned with their visibility, they have coincidentally served as a vehicle for public relations for government actors as well, having modified their traditional role of providing government officials with policy ideas. Kent Weaver has noted that think tanks have recently been employed by government officials and political figures to promote revolutionary ideas that, for political reasons, they do not want to publicly

advocate themselves. Examples include the Heritage Foundation's early calls for widespread privatization of various government agencies and services as well as propositions to deregulate the U.S. transport industry in the late twentieth century, an issue championed by AEI, Hoover, and Brookings.[132]

U.S. Reliance on Think Tanks

As previously mentioned, a unique characteristic of U.S. civil society is its strong skepticism of government entities. Citizens and public officials are inclined to trust the private sector to assist the government. This willingness to go outside official channels for solutions makes it easy for private policy analysts, ideologues, entrepreneurs, or those with a strong interest in policy formation to influence government decisionmaking.[133] An early notable example occurred during the post–World War I peace conference in Paris. Colonel Edward House, a top adviser to President Woodrow Wilson, assembled a group of ex officio advisers from academia to explore the implications of any potential peace treaty. By 1921, this ad hoc corps of consultants became the Council on Foreign Relations—an organization that continues to influence U.S. foreign policy today.[134]

Another example of America's willingness to rely on think tanks is the Department of Defense's ongoing relationship with RAND. The organization's founding enabled the U.S. Air Force to replicate the cadre of civilian researchers who were recruited during World War II so that they could continue to provide objective views and expertise during the growing chill of relations with the Soviet Union. Since its foundation, RAND has expanded its agenda to include non-defense-related issues such as health care and education.[135] In the mid-1990s, RAND further strengthened its domestic activities, which had existed since 1965 or earlier, as defense funding continued to shrink.[136] Today, half of RAND's work is focused on domestic, nonmilitary issues.

U.S. think tanks nurture the government's willingness to rely on the private sector by playing an active role in advising government officials in both the executive and legislative branches. Think tanks rapidly provide foreign policy information to members of Congress and their staffers, helping those who may lack prior experience in domestic and international issues.[137] For example, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) has played a crucial role in educating legislators. Hugh Gusterson of George Mason University explains:

> Many Congressional leaders complained that they could not participate in any meaningful way in debates about nuclear arms reductions

> without knowing the details of the [Single Integrated Operational Plan] SIOP, since they knew neither how many weapons were required for the various attack options war planners have built into the SIOP nor the strategic logic of the various menus within the SIOP. One of the primary purposes of the NRDC study was to produce a briefing on an NRDC simulation of the SIOP that could be offered to members of Congress as a way of inciting more informed debate about nuclear arms reductions and about Congressional appropriations for nuclear weapons.[138]

The relationship between the policy scholars of think tanks and the legislative actors responsible for enacting those policies serves the agendas of both entities simultaneously. Anthony Bertelli and Jeffery Wenger speculate on the chain of command between think tanks and Congress today, advancing the claim that "the nature of debate in legislative committees drives a demand for strategic information, and the benefactors of think tanks, seeing a market opportunity, create and maintain the organizations which supply that information."[139] As policymakers in the legislative branch contemplate new policy trends and the political climate of today, they are bound to seek consultation from experts and ensure that they have perpetual access to such information. Bertelli and Wenger continue, "Think tanks are specialist, expert suppliers of information that target legislators who are unlikely to substitute support for the think tank's policy position with an opposing stance. Such legislators are the think tank's ideological 'allies.'" Richard Hall and Alan Deardorff predict that "legislators who share the same policy objective' will receive free information-based resources from groups because 'allies will use resources to work toward progress on [an issue], not against it.'"[140] By creating alliances, both think tanks and legislative policymakers maintain a certain degree of solidarity in the face of opposing political ideologies. In a sense, the particular relationship mimics that of a market—a market of knowledge. The demand for think tanks' policy research is driven by the legislative demand for relevant information regarding the debate at the time; to satisfy this demand, political entrepreneurs have increasingly pegged the market by founding think tanks.[141]

Many think tanks have become highly skilled at providing information and analysis in the right form—concise reports or policy briefs—when the legislative agenda is being developed or a critical piece of legislation is being considered. It is at these times that think tanks are most effective.[142] In addition, they maintain a corps of experts who remain ready and willing to testify in congressional hearings and to share their expertise with legislators and the general

public on a wide range of topics in foreign policy.[143] Foreign policy think tanks often testify in congressional hearings, as do experts from RFF, whose fellows are often called on to give expert testimony for Senate committees and to brief House representatives and Capitol Hill staffers on a wide range of energy, health, and environmental policies.

Think tanks often work outside government to educate and persuade policymakers through their publications, testimony, and appearances in the print and electronic media to adopt or shift the course of a policy—to "help government think." Meanwhile, they work behind the scenes to draft reports and recommendations that often translate directly to public policy.[144] The case study titled "The Buy America Provision in the 2009 Stimulus Package," discussed later in this book, showcases the response of the Peterson Institute for International Economics to what C. Fred Bergsten described as blatantly protectionist legislation. This case study highlights the think tanks' ability to respond quickly and succinctly to a vote.

The importance of think tanks lies in their ability to provide expertise on a particular item in a policy agenda. Through their work, "issue networks" are established between government officials in the public sector and policy actors from the think tank community.[145] Think tanks become, in the words of French researcher Robert Ranquet, "the places where [government officials] find the opportunity to formulate, elaborate, confront, enrich, validate, and finally diffuse their ideas through their collaboration with the regular scholars that constitute the permanent core of the organizations."[146] Thus, by providing expertise and in-depth scholarly research to governments from an independent position, think tanks position themselves separately from advocacy-based organizations that lobby for their beliefs but are not party to direct policy creation.

The most fundamental element in explaining the continued influence of think tanks in U.S. political culture is the relationship maintained between civil society actors and government actors; the process of recruiting retired political officials as consultants in think tanks and recruiting think tank scholars for positions in the government has become a norm in U.S. political culture. The United States has a less exclusive governing class than do many other political systems and places a premium on independent advice. As a result, former politicians are more likely to indulge in the realm of public policy research and the culture of think tanks than they are in institutions in other regions of the world. Numerous scholars have noted the new role of think tanks as a source of government personnel for incoming administrations. Experts from think tanks increasingly fill empty positions available in government. Their specialized knowledge

and reputation regarding specific issues greatly assist their incoming policymaker colleagues. Richard Haass refers to this as the "revolving door" effect found in the U.S. policymaking environment.[147] Haass links the success of think tanks to the fact that many policymakers serve multiple tours of duty in think tanks and government throughout their careers. Their circular career track means that those in the private sector have access to government officials, and those officials know who to turn to for critical information. Haass has highlighted the high turnover rate of staff members at all levels between congressional and presidential terms.[148] Similarly, Weaver notes that think tanks can serve as holding tanks for outgoing officials seeking to maintain policy influence until they are able to reenter government service.[149] The personal and professional connections and insider's perspective of certain agencies and policies that former government officials can bring to these institutions raise the profile and influence of the institutions themselves. The effects of the "revolving door" are further discussed in chapter 2.

In short, greater efficiency, independence, and connections all contribute to the continued success of think tanks as a Fifth Estate that addresses issues in U.S. politics and civil society from a far-reaching, in-depth perspective.