

Think Tanks and Policy-Making in the US

Academics, Advisors and Advocates

James G. McGann, Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia, USA

This volume chronicles and analyzes the development of think tanks and public policy research organizations, while exploring the impact think tanks have on politics, public policies and governance in the US.

Since the early twentieth century, think tanks have played a major role in framing policy issues and providing analysis, but in the last twenty years, there has been a veritable think tank proliferation. The book examines a range of environmental forces: partisan politics; growth of liberal and conservative advocacy groups; restrictive funding policies of donors; growth of specialized think tanks; narrow and short-term orientation of Congress and the White House; tyranny of myopic academic disciplines; and the 24/7 cable news networks, which have impacted the ability of think tanks to provide independent analysis and advice. After providing an overview of the American think tank landscape and discussing the current challenges to the industry, the contributors suggest several ways to help think tanks ensure their usefulness and maintain their privileged position in policy debate. The organizational, financial and political analysis of these institutions is complimented by fifteen essays by think tank executives that will examine the role, value and impact of these organizations.

Twenty essays by the Presidents of some of the leading think tanks in the US are featured in this work by McGann, including: Strobe Talbott, President of The Brookings Institution; Richard N. Haass, President of the Council on Foreign Relations; Edwin Feulner, President of the Heritage Foundation; C. Fred Bergsten, Director of the Institute for International Economics; and James Thomson, President of the Rand Corporation.

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