

# Think Tank Funding – An Overview of Current Debates

Transparify, Tbilisi (Georgia), March 2014

- **What sources of think tank funding are there?**
- **How does funding affect think tanks' work?**
- **What are the key debates?**

Some highlights:

- **Accountability concerns are not limited to funding from corporate sources.** While commentators usually focus on the influence of 'big money' on the policy landscape, government bodies (Chris Snowdon 2012) and trade unions also have vested interests that may limit their grantees' scope of enquiry (Jeffery Chen 2012), and may directly influence policy recommendations (Guy Bentley 2012). In extreme cases, governments may form proxy "phantom think tanks" (James G. McGann 2011) that are independent only in name. Meanwhile, accepting money from foundations may also skew think tank accountability in negative ways (David Dyssegaard Kallick 2002).
- **The influence funders have on think tanks' policy recommendations is subject to some speculation.** Troy Tevi (2012) thinks that "bought and paid for" research is less of a problem than self-censorship by individuals. Jim Lakely (2013) points out that apparent conflicts of interest bedevil US think tanks on both sides of the partisan divide, but argues that these may not be particularly salient as donors can simply choose to support think tanks that hold views similar to their own.
- **Political finance regulators in the US and UK are beginning to target think tanks.** Over the past year, both the American IRS (Kim Barker 2013, Adam Meyerson 2013) and the British parliament (BBC 2013) have been struggling to distinguish between legitimate policy research and hidden partisan political financing or clandestine lobbying (Barbara Misztal 2012). Their efforts are complicated by the fact that think-tanks in both countries are usually registered as non-profits and therefore legally indistinguishable from other NGOs. In contrast, think tanks in Central and Eastern Europe are often registered as for-profit companies (Enrique Mendizabal 2013).
- **Think tank funding from foreign sources is an especially sensitive topic.** Two US think tanks recently came under fire for accepting money from Taiwan (Eli Clifton 2013) and Qatar, raising legal as well as ethical questions (Dylan Byers 2013). In India, government approval is already required to accept money from abroad (Cordelia Jenkins 2013), and legislators have considered further restricting foreign funding for think tanks (Prashant Reddy 2013). Foreign donors appear to figure prominently in the portfolios of think tanks in Latin America (Adrián Lauer 2012), post-communist Europe (Ivan Krastev), Asia and Africa (Miguel Braun et al. 2006), causing some observers to doubt their independence (Bidushi Adhikari 2013).

This annotated bibliography was compiled by Ms Taylor Braun-Dorrell. Transparify will release a total of four bibliographies on think tanks in the course of 2014, and updated versions in 2015. Please register for updates at [www.transparify.org](http://www.transparify.org) or follow us on twitter [@Transparify](https://twitter.com/Transparify).

Abelson, Donald and Carberry, Christine. 1998. **Following Suit or Falling behind? A Comparative Analysis of Think Tanks in Canada and the United States.** Canadian Journal of Political Science  
<http://bit.ly/1hHuUox>

Journal article. Notes the differences between *Canadian* and American think tanks. Highlights the different funding mechanisms: American think tanks are typically privately funded and Canadian think tanks are typically publically funded. Notes that Canadian think tanks receive public funding through government contracts, which “may or may not be renewed,” making it difficult for think tanks to plan for long-term projects. This hurts think tanks’ efforts to become more “relevant” in the policy-making process.

Adhikari, Bidushi. 2013. **Thinking about Nepal’s Think Tanks.** New Spotlight News Magazine.  
<http://bit.ly/1aYfWJm>

Article. Explains that most *Nepalese* think tanks are dependent on outside, mainly international, donors, which means that think tanks sometimes “find themselves compromising their goals in order to keep donors.” Quotes one observer as saying that “think tanks are so heavily dependent on their donors that their objective can waver from their initial goals.”

Barker, Kim. 2013. **The IRS moves to limit dark money – but enforcement still a question.** The Institute for Southern Studies.  
<http://bit.ly/19FskQ2>

Article. Discusses the IRS and Treasury Department announcement of “proposed guidelines clarifying the definition of political activities” for non-profits in an effort to disrupt the flow of ‘dark money’ for elections. Claims that the real test for these guidelines is enforcement, which the IRS has been slow at. Non-profits are able to exploit loopholes when donating to campaigns, which allow anonymous donors to give unlimited amounts of money through partisan non-profits with no accountability or transparency.

BBC. 2013. **Lobbying bill sinister and partisan, says Labour.**  
<http://bbc.in/1eST1AQ>

Article. Discusses legislation in the UK that would set a spending cap of GBP 390,000 for organisations to spend on campaigns during elections. The Leader of the House, Andrew Lansley, is quoted as saying that “we should not seek to prevent lobbying but to make it transparent about who is lobbying whom and for what.” Notes that several British nonprofits voiced concern over the bill, citing its complexity.

Bentley, Guy. 2012. **The state funding swindle: how left wing think-tanks are pulling taxpayer-funded wool over our eyes.** The Commentator.  
<http://bit.ly/1dlQKcG>

Opinion Piece. Argues that “left wing” think tanks in the UK that call themselves transparent are receiving “questionable” funds from “interest groups” such as unions and public bodies. Discusses several think tanks that receive funds from local, national, and supranational government bodies and then provide policy analyses that “preach the virtues of the public sector.” Claims that while many people question the neutrality of conservative think tanks that receive funding from the private sector, no one questions the independence of think tanks receiving government funding.

Bennett, Laurie. 2013. **Bitcoins, think tanks and the Koch brothers**. Muckety.

<http://bit.ly/1ntbswT>

Article. Notes that the The Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty will begin to accept Bitcoins, or internet currency, for donations. Notes that this can add a new “layer of secrecy” for donors.

Bogardus, Kevin. 2013. **CAP Offered Access to Clinton for \$250,000**. The Hill.

<http://bit.ly/1if9KkR>

Article. Alleges that the Center for American Progress promised donors who gave contributions of more than USD 250,000 that they would have the opportunity to meet Secretary of State Clinton at a CAP event where she was the keynote speaker.

Bourge, Christian. 2002. **Think tanks at risk for corruption**.

<http://bit.ly/1mhNp3m>

Article. Reports that think tanks are at risk of becoming lobbying organisations for their funders. Recounts incidences in which think tanks considered supporting, or actually did support, certain opinions in exchange for financial support.

Braun, Miguel et al. 2006. **A Comparative Study of Policy Research Institutes in Developing Countries**. Center for the Implementation of Policies Promoting Equity and Growth.

<http://bit.ly/1gt5f6g>

Report. Compares policy research institutes in *Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Latin America* and suggests improvements. Discusses the importance of diversification of funds and institutional funding. Includes 18 case studies.

Brown Chisolm, Laura. 1990. **Sinking the Think Tanks Upstream: The Use and Misuse of Tax Exemption Law to Address the Use and Misuse of Tax-Exempt Organizations By Politicians**. The University of Pittsburgh Law Review.

<http://bit.ly/1kNxHlb>

Academic paper. Discusses the US tax exemption laws for think tanks. Notes the potential political misuse of these organisations by politicians.

Bulle, Robert J. 2013. **Institutionalizing delay: foundation funding and the creation of U.S. climate change counter-movement organizations**. Drexel University.

<http://bit.ly/1aDo6Dl>

Academic paper. Explores US Internal Revenue Service data on think tanks and other organisations to analyse donations to the “climate change countermovement” (CCCM). Discusses the different legal classifications of the think tanks included in the report: 501(c)(3) non-profits that can receive tax-deductible donations but are limited in advocacy activities, 501(c)(4) social welfare organisations that cannot receive tax-deductible donations but are able to advocate in political campaigns, and 501(c)(5) and 501(c)(6) bodies that are trade associations. Claims to observe a shift in CCCM funding: Exxon Mobile and the Koch brothers no longer publically fund CCCM organisations, but there is an increasing amount coming from undisclosed funding sources, which provided USD 78 million to CCCMs from 2003 to 2010.

Buldioski, Goran. 2010. **Think Tanks in Central and Eastern Europe and the Quality of Their Policy Research**.

<http://bit.ly/1didLqe>

Academic paper. Analyses six think tanks in the CEE region and suggests that think tanks develop a standard set of “quality standards for policy research and dissemination.” Notes

that donors often have a specific theme that they will fund, which means that donors rather than think tanks are setting the agenda for policy debates. Includes case studies and suggestions for future development.

Byers, Dylan. 2013. **Goldberg slams Brookings, via Qatar**. Politico.

<http://politi.co/1mtxKRz>

Blog. Notes that the Brookings Institute has a centre in Doha and receives anywhere between USD 2.5 and 5 million from the Qatari government. A critic charged that Brookings “shouldn’t be taking money from despotic Middle Eastern regimes”. The think tank responded that its positive relations with the government of **Qatar** allow it to raise serious questions with officials, do not threaten its “integrity and independence”, and that it “is fortunate to have funders from a variety of sectors”.

Cannon, Michael F. 2012. **Letter Correcting Politico Article re: States & ObamaCare Exchanges**.

Think Tank West.

<http://bit.ly/1ojZxom>

Letter to the Editor. Claims a Politico article made mistakes when labelling the author and Cato Institute as “conservative” when they are both “libertarian”. Refutes the claim made in the article that Cato Institute receives funding from the Koch brothers and claims that their past funding had “no bearing on the article” because they are not currently funded by the Koch brothers. Alleges that Politico failed to mention a Cato critic’s state government contracts for healthcare exchanges.

Celestine, Avinash. 2012. **Why India's think-tank community fails in raising funds from Indian entrepreneurs**. The Economic Times.

<http://bit.ly/1bbE48g>

Article. Discusses think tank funding for **Indian** think tanks and for international think tanks opening offices in India. Includes funding information for top Indian think tanks and top global think tanks. Discusses the problems that Indian think tanks face. Quotes an official from a funded agency as saying that “one of the conditions imposed by some Indian donors on foreign institutions they have agreed to fund is that the money they give should not be used for research involving Indian entities.” Points to the importance of fundraising for think tank sustainability.

Center for Media and Democracy. 2013. **Portal: State Policy Network**.

<http://bit.ly/1dlmONC>

Website. A collection of pieces about the State Policy Network, a group of think tanks, including items on its funding.

Chen, Jeffery. 2012. **The Chinese Landscape of Foreign Policy Think Tanks**.

<http://bit.ly/LCfGAF>

Article. Claims that the “power of government funding” of **Chinese** think tanks puts a limit on what think tanks can research. Questions the effectiveness of Chinese think tanks in the foreign policy field.

Clemons, Steven C. 2003. **The Corruption of Think Tanks**. Japan Policy Research Institute.

<http://bit.ly/1mhNGUb>

Opinion piece. Claims that American think tanks are becoming corrupt by advocating for policies based on their donors’ preferences. Argues that donors sponsor applied research and policy suggestions rather than pure research. Argues that transparency is the solution, though “satisfactory methods” to attain transparency are lacking. The author notes that he

helped draft legislation that would force non-profits to disclose if they received more than USD 10,000 from a foreign government, but this failed to pass in the US House of Representatives.

Clifton, Eli. 2013. **The Secret Foreign Donor Behind the American Enterprise Institute.** The Nation.

<http://bit.ly/1gpyjM9>

Article. Claims that the American Enterprise Institute, a US think tank, received an undisclosed donation of USD 550,000 from the government of *Taiwan* while publishing reports and op-eds in favour of increasing military aid to the country. Discusses the legal and ethical implications of receiving money from foreign governments. Notes an America law, the Foreign Agent Registration Act, that would have been broken if AEI “took direction” from the government of Taiwan or “honored requests” after receiving the funds.

CPA [Center for Political Accountability]. 2013. **New CPA-Zicklin Index Reveals Surge in Number of Top Companies with Strong Political Disclosure Policies.**

<http://bit.ly/1aBynQT>

Report summary. Discusses and rates transparency in the corporate sector. Reports that more than a third of major companies disclosed their payments to, or had a policy against giving to, non-profit 501(c)(4) groups, which are labelled “dark money” conduits when they make independent expenditures without disclosing their donors. Suggests that corporations are becoming more transparent about who they donate their money to. Includes link to full report.

DePillis, Lydia. 2013. **At the Bipartisan Policy Center, is cash the real divide?** The Washington Post.

<http://wapo.st/1dKeSWg>

Blog. Reviews attacks on the Bipartisan Policy Center’s corporate donations and its allegedly “biased” reports.

Dolny, Michael. 1998. **What's in a Label?** Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting.

<http://bit.ly/1iffB9S>

Article. Discusses the most cited think tanks in the US mainstream media and how often the citations were accompanied with a description such as left leaning, right leaning or centrist. Uses the type of donor as one factor to identify the ideological leanings of think tanks.

Ducoté, Nicolás. 2006. **El desarrollo de algunas capacidades internas críticas para la incidencia efectiva de los think tanks en políticas públicas.** In Garcé, Adolfo y Uña, Gerardo. Think tanks y políticas públicas en Latinoamérica: Dinámicas Globales y realidades regionales. Prometeo Libros.

<http://bit.ly/1bxGjmv>

Book chapter. Explores think tanks’ influence on policy in *Latin America*. Identifies financial stability as one of the main issues facing think tanks. Suggests that think tanks design a long-term financial strategy that will allow donors to become investors. Also notes the importance of diversifying funding sources.

Dyssegaard Kallick, David. 2002. **Progressive Think Tanks: What Exists, What’s Missing?** Open Society Institute.

<http://osf.to/1bqmDRI>

Report. Discusses the history and work of a number of “progressive” think tanks. Notes that the founder of the Applied Research Center, one of the think tanks in the report, says that “accountability of the policy groups” goes towards foundations that fund the research instead of towards people affected by the policy.

Economist. 2007. **The think-tanks that miss the target.**

<http://econ.st/1jZFx7C>

Article. Contrasts US and European think tanks. Argues that **Brussels**-based think tanks receive either too much money from the EU or too much money from corporate donors, both of which stifle debates. Favours American think tanks that compete to set the agenda with new ideas.

Elbow, Steven. 2013. **Reports shed light on how Koch brothers' money flows to campaigns.** The Cap Times.

<http://bit.ly/1dK45zW>

Article. Discusses the financing of the State Policy Network, a network of think tanks in the US, and criticizes SPN for receiving money from corporations. Cites the president of SPN as stating that these think tanks are “fiercely independent” nevertheless. Includes multiple links to sources critical of SPN.

Elliot, William, et al. 2005. **Think Tank Typologies: Which Typology Best Fits with the Mission and Core Values of NCAI Policy Research Center?** NCAI Policy Research Center.

<http://bit.ly/1eih783>

Report. Discusses three different think tank models: academic, contract, and advocacy. Looks at funding models involving government grants and individual membership. Includes references.

Feldman, Bob. 2007. **Report from the Field: Left Media and Left Think Tanks – Foundation-Managed Protest?** Critical Sociology.

<http://bit.ly/1mbEeqI>

Journal article. Gives examples of donors attempting to influence left-wing media outlets to follow the donor’s agenda. Includes tables of foundation grant amounts to several media outlets. Claims that left-wing media needs grants from liberal foundations to “level the playing field,” and that foundations fund alternative media that are more “bark than bite” and that can be dismissed if necessary. Argues that the left-wing media should look at their own current funding before critiquing right-wing organisations on their funding.

Hamilton, Clive. 2012. **The shadowy world of IPA finances.** ABC News.

<http://ab.co/1BCnHP>

Article. Connects two think tanks, the Heartland Institute in the US and the Institute of Public Affairs **Australia**, through an IPA Australia fellow who is reportedly paid a monthly sum by the Heartland Institute; the fellow claims that he does not receive funding from “special interest organisations.” Also notes in that IPA Australia does not disclose its funding sources and explores several instances of corporate funding for IPA.

Helm, Toby and Christopher Hope. 2008. **Gordon Brown opens new party funding row.** The Telegraph.

<http://bit.ly/1mhUxNf>

Article. Claims that proposed changes to the UK laws about charity funding, which cover many think tanks, could allow the organisations to fund political advocacy campaigns.

Helm, Toby and Christopher Hope. 2008. **The top twelve think tanks in Britain.** The Telegraph.

<http://bit.ly/19HqxKp>

List. Lists the top twelve think tanks in Britain, their political links, their legal status (charity, company, etc), their annual turnover, and their funding sources, among other information.

Higgins, Andrew. 2013. **Europeans Are Faulted Over Using Funds to Support Like-Minded Voices.** The New York Times.

<http://nyti.ms/1jiT6yr>

Article. Discusses pro-EU think tanks that received money from the EU and raises questions about think tank funding and independent research.

Hu, Xing. 2009. **China's Think Tanks: Roles and Implications for Civil Society in China.**

<http://bit.ly/1kNo9XA>

Presentation Summary. Discusses the functions of *Chinese* think tanks and the challenges facing them. Discusses and provides recommendations on the legal and operating framework for think tanks and NGOs, transparency and funding. Includes short discussion section.

Institute for Research: Middle East Policy. 2003. **America's Middle East Policy Think Tanks: What Went Wrong?**

<http://bit.ly/1dThcOm>

Research note. Claims there are three major issues in think tank funding: "research funding that is too highly concentrated; lack of peer review by credible, knowledgeable and independent outsiders; and highly reactive, tactically driven research agendas with little strategic focus." Provides graph on the percentage of funding that top donors contribute to several think tanks focusing on the Middle East. Argues that think tanks would have more credibility if they diversified their donors.

Jenkins, Cordelia. 2013. **Philanthropic funds take different route.** Live Mint.

<http://bit.ly/1fNsSGz>

Article. Discusses a policy think tank in *India*, where mature philanthropists are often moving from donating to charities that work directly with people to think tanks that influence politics. Claims that in India, the "issue of who should be allowed to fund think tanks and NGOs is controversial." Notes that the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act stipulates that organisations must apply to get approval if they accept foreign funding. Argues that ideal situation for Indian think tanks is government funding, in order for think tanks to avoid becoming "mouthpieces" for political parties or foreign groups.

Korayem, Karima. 2000. **The research environment in Egypt.** In Rached, Eglal and Diana Craissati: Research for Development in the Middle East and North Africa.

<http://bit.ly/MoeojA>

Book chapter. Discusses the funding for *Egyptian* research institutes. Notes that most are funded publicly, with a few privately-funded think tanks funded mainly by foreign companies or governments. Argues that there does not seem to be a difference between research outputs funded by different donors.

Krastev, Ivan. No date. **Post Communist Think Tanks: Making and Faking Influence.**

<http://bit.ly/1hDHFRE>

Book chapter. Discusses post-communist think tanks and the belief that they are an important bridge between democracy and development. Notes that in Freedom House's second edition (1999) of "Think Tanks in *Central and Eastern Europe: A Comprehensive Directory*," several of the "think tanks" listed are NGOs or advocacy organisations, raising the question of what a think tank is in post-communist Europe. Also notes that most funding for think tanks comes from the West and claims that this is reflected in the research agenda. Makes suggestions for the future development of post-communist think tanks.

Lakely, Jim. 2013. **Left-Wing Think Tank Hoist By Its Own Corporate Funding Petard.** Heartland Blog. <http://bit.ly/1iCitOp>

Blog. Heartland Institute writer claims that “The Heartland Institute is under constant attack on all fronts by an organized leftist campaign out to destroy us — and our advocacy of free markets — for supposedly being ‘shills’ for the fossil fuel industry.” Claims that the Center for American Progress had been advocating for alternative energy while taking donations from First Solar, an American solar energy company. Claims there is a bias against conservative think tanks that receive corporate funding, notably from the fossil fuel industry. Opines that corporate donors are only a problem if their funding changes the discourse of a think tank, but not if they support a think tank that holds similar views to their own.

Lauer, Adrián. 2012. **Public funds for public policy research in Latin America: a study by Lardone and Roggero.** On Think Tanks.

<http://bit.ly/1jZFyLL>

Blog. Notes that only 10 percent of public research funding goes to social science and most of that research funding goes to universities, leaving *Latin American* think tanks to rely on funding from the private sector donors and foreign donors. Some think tanks prefer this to government funding in order to keep autonomy and independence. Lists new public funding initiatives.

Liao, Xuanli. 2006. **Chinese Foreign Policy Think Tanks and China's Policy Towards Japan.**

<http://bit.ly/1hDHegk>

Book. Examines *Chinese* think tanks and their influence on foreign policy. Compares funding for Western, Chinese, and *Japanese* think tanks. Includes a graph of government funding sources for major Chinese think tanks and a bibliography.

Lipton, Eric. 2013. **Think Tank Plays Down Role of Donors.** The New York Times.

<http://nyti.ms/1h8mAOM>

Article. Discusses the donors of the Center for American Progress, which recently disclosed its donors when its former president took on a senior role at the White House.

Loewenstein, Antony. 2013. **It's time we stopped drinking the thinktank kool-aid.** The Guardian.

<http://bit.ly/1fiEiLL>

Opinion. Argues that the “mainstream media” does not want to “challenge” the “murky melding of business and politics.” Explains several incidences where corporate financial connections to think tanks have been largely ignored by media outlets.

Longhini, Anna. 2013. **The role and the influence of think tanks on the policy-making process in Europe.**

<http://bit.ly/1f31zTL>

Academic paper. Analyses the role think tanks play in influencing policy. Uses *French* and *Italian* think tanks as case studies and compares them to their US peers. Notes that both French and Italian think tanks have a high degree of public funding. Claims that in the case of Italy, “many think tanks have been set up with the legal form of foundation in order to avoid publicising their annual financial statement.” Hypothesizes that “diversification” of funding would allow think tanks to be more independent.



MacColl, Spencer. 2010. **Capital Rivals: Koch Brothers vs. George Soros.** Open Secrets Blog. <http://bit.ly/1givkoG>

Blog. Provides data on two prominent donors in the US: the Koch brothers and George Soros. Concludes that “Given the difficulty in tracking donations to nonprofits and charitable organizations, it’s almost impossible to quantify whether the Koch brothers or Soros dominate this political realm.”

McGann, James. 2001, **Globalization and the Growth of Think Tanks.** ELDIS.

<http://bit.ly/1b3zPM1>

Article. Discusses the trend of organisations from developed nations funding think tanks in **developing countries** and the increasingly transnational work that think tanks do. Discusses foreign funding and issues with credibility because there might be “strings attached.” Notes that foreign funding for policy organisations could be used as an excuse to close the organisation. Lists different classifications for think tanks depending on their research focus and affiliation.

McGann, James. 2002. **Think Tanks and the Transnationalization of Foreign Policy.** Foreign Policy Research Institute.

<http://bit.ly/Kx3O7U>

Article. Discusses the history and growth of think tanks and the effects of globalisation on think tanks. Categorizes different think tanks based on their funding. Claims that the “transnationalization” of think tanks has created a new international donor community.

McGann, James. 2004. **Scholars, Dollars and Policy Advice.**

<http://bit.ly/LCc9bN>

Report. Leading US think tanks identify positive and negative changes for think tanks in several different areas, including changes in funding. Lists findings of survey, in which of 23 think tanks asked “What should the think tank community do to improve the effectiveness, viability and sustainability of think tanks?” only one answered “develop frameworks of transparency regarding funding for all major research”. Recommends changing the mechanism for funding to think tanks to ensure sustainability.

McGann, James. 2011. **Think Tanks: Catalyst for Ideas and Action.** Diplomatic Courier.

<http://bit.ly/LuuO8T>

Article. Discusses the differences between internationally focused think tanks, transnational think tanks and global think tanks. Claims that the reasons for the growth of think tanks are “democratization, globalization, and modernization.” Notes that with the growth and legitimacy of think tanks, governments may form “phantom think tanks,” which claim to be independent, but are not. Argues that funding can have “direct or indirect” influence over think tanks so it is important to create policies to safeguard an institution’s independence.

McGann, James. 2012. **Chinese Think Tanks, Policy Advice and Global Governance.**

<http://bit.ly/1bbyBOy>

Report. Explores independent and state-affiliated think tanks in **China**. Notes low funding in BRICS countries, giving government-funded think tanks an advantage in China. Think tanks in China must have a “sponsoring governmental agency,” which limits the range of research outside “communist ideology.” States that market-oriented think tanks that receive international funding are more critical of government policies. Predicts that the influence of think tanks in China will continue to rise.

McGann, James. 2013. **Think Tank Challenge**. Asian Pathways.

<http://bit.ly/1bujIXW>

Blog. Claims that due to limited funding resources, think tanks are becoming more specialised in order to attract donors, which “discourages interdisciplinary responses to complex issues.”

McGann, James and Stephen Boucher. 2004. **Think Tanks in Europe and US: Converging or Diverging?**

<http://bit.ly/1mhJgfY>

Seminar publication. Stresses the “importance of financial transparency and effective relations with the media.” Claims that American think tanks have greater transparency than their **European** counterparts and suggests that European think tanks follow that example. States that there is “tension between academic credibility and funding” and suggests that European think tanks move away from public funding.

McGann, James and Richard Sabatini. 2010. **Global Think Tanks: Policy Networks and Governance**

<http://bit.ly/1aBNU6p>

Book. Introduction to global think tanks with offices in more than one country. Canvasses the range of existing global think tanks. Discusses their difficulties in obtaining sufficient funding. Includes an annotated bibliography.

McGann, James and Kent Weaver (eds). 2000. **Think Tanks and Civil Societies: Catalysts for Ideas and Action**.

<http://bit.ly/1lcC5ue>

Book. Different chapters for **different countries and regions**. Explores the funding situation for many of the examples. Includes several case studies, tables and charts.

Mendizabal, Enrique. 2012. **Fund like a “Secret Dragon”**: some ideas on how to support think tanks. On Think Tanks.

<http://bit.ly/1jEFTjU>

Blog. Explains the different types of think tank funding. Makes suggestions on how think tanks should approach funding opportunities and how funders should choose their grantee organisations.

Mendizabal, Enrique. 2013. **For-profit think tanks and implications for funders**. On Think Tanks.

<http://bit.ly/1dJ3B8E>

Blog. Notes that many think tanks in **Central and Eastern Europe** are registered as for-profit companies and lists several reasons why an organisation would choose to be for-profit and the challenges that non-profits face. Argues that for-profit think tanks can perform just as well as, and in some cases better, than non-profit think tanks, but they do face other challenges. Author gives advice on how think tanks and donors can best “deal” with the for-profit label.

Menon, Aditya. 2012. **Foreign Direct Instruction for our MPs? Foreign-funded IPRS holds 'closed-door' meeting with ministers**. India Today.

<http://bit.ly/1gITf6u>

Article. Discusses **Indian** MPs’ meeting with a foreign funded think tank, the Institute for Policy and Research Studies (IPRS), before a vote on FDI, which IPRS had advocated for in a report the year before. IPRS was previously denied Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) clearance for donations from Google and Ford.

eyerson, Adam. 2013. **Be On the Lookout**. Philanthropy Roundtable.

<http://bit.ly/1j8gKgW>

Article. Written by the president of the Philanthropy Roundtable. Notes that the American Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has been accused of using “inappropriate criteria” and asking for “unnecessary information” in organisations’ applications for tax-exempt status, as well as additionally screening based on certain policy positions, specifically for organisations with “tea party” or “patriots” in their names. Argues that tax-exempt status should not be based on “accreditation” and opposes regulatory bodies that could generate abuses of power. Also argues against narrowing the definition of “charity.”

Misztal, Barbara A. 2012. **Public Intellectuals and Think Tanks: A Free Market in Ideas?** International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society.

<http://bit.ly/1dFI29b>

Academic paper. Discusses the differences between ‘academic intellectuals’ and ‘think tank intellectuals’. Claims that think tank intellectuals “monopolize” public debates. Argues that even if opaquely funded think tanks “were not lobbyists in disguise”, they still would not have the “same level autonomy” as academic intellectuals.

Moncada, Andrea. 2013. **Governmental research funding frameworks in Latin America**. Politics and Ideas.

<http://bit.ly/Lg6Vlw>

Article. Discusses the difficulties facing think tanks in *Latin America* regarding funding. Notes that most funding is on a short-term, contractual basis. Recommends that researchers at think tanks should establish working relationships with public servants to be able to compete with universities for research funding.

Muckety. 2013. **Liberal think tank reveals corporate funders**.

<http://bit.ly/1cLvrkD>

Article. Includes an interactive map of the Center for American Progress’s funders.

Palmer, Anna and Robin Bravender. 2012. **Think tanks still look for Koch cash**. Politico.

<http://politi.co/1bd08PQ>

Article. Discusses a controversy involving the Koch brothers (American billionaires) who reportedly filed a lawsuit in an attempt “to seize control of the CATO institute.” Highlights other think tanks that receiving funding from the Koch brothers, but claims that these maintain their independence. Asserts that many institutions on both the left and right are funded by individuals with apparent vested interests.

Plehwe, Dieter and Matthias Schloegel. 2013. **New kids on the European blocks: European party foundations and their think tank partner networks**. WZB Berlin Social Science Center.

<http://bit.ly/1b81l8V>

Paper. Discusses think tanks’ role in promoting political positions in *Europe* like Euroscepticism, specifically looking at the links between Eurosceptic parties and Eurosceptic think tanks different countries. Claims that think tanks are influenced by the groups that fund them “no matter if they are public or private” because they are not financially independent. Also notes that very few European think tanks publish financial information and “none revealed their funding source.” Includes case studies for Sweden, Germany, and Austria.

Plehwe, Dieter. 2014. **Think Tank Networks and the Knowledge-Interest Nexus: The Case of Climate Change**. Critical Policy Studies journal (forthcoming)

Journal article. Warns of “an unprecedented level and scope of expertise-backed lobbying in policy-making across both the domestic and supranational arenas”, with think tank networks “designed to promote or to disrupt political discourse”. Uses climate change debates as case study. Suggests studying think tanks and their donors using a network approach, rather than as individual agents. Includes bibliography. Please contact the author for a copy.

Plumptre, Tim and Barbara Laskin. 2001. **Think Tanks & Policy Institutes: An overview of issues, challenges and successes in Canada and other jurisdictions**. Institute On Governance. <http://bit.ly/19YkUYn>

Report. Analyses the perceptions of several **Canadian** think tanks. Notes that big-ticket donors are more likely to jeopardise a think tank’s independence. Questions whether government sponsored think tanks can be independent.

Reddy, Prashant. 2013. **Foreign Funding of NGOs**. Open Magazine. <http://bit.ly/1gpyp6g>

Article. Discusses a bill in the **Indian** Parliament that would restrict foreign funding to NGOs and think tanks. Notes that the main debate was on the lack of transparency of foreign funding for think tanks, which play an “increasingly influential role”. Claims that the law would be used to crack down on dissenting organisations, and mentions several think tanks that receive foreign funding and work closely with the government. Notes that because Indian think tanks enjoy tax benefits, they might qualify as “‘public authorities’ under the Right To Information Act, 2005” in which case they would need to disclose their donors.

Sanjaya Baru. 2010. **Indian minds, foreign funds**. The Business Standard. <http://bit.ly/1mqPm0r>

Opinion piece. Think tank professional warns that **India’s** best-known think tanks are becoming dependent on foreign donors, and that most funding comes from multilateral financial institutions, “western and eastern private foundations like Ford, Rockefeller, McCarthy and Sasakawa”. Concludes that “India’s most respected scholars, fiercely independent in their thinking, will never sing for their supper and allow the one who pays the piper choose the tune.”

Silverstein, Ken and Brooke Williams. 2013. **Chuck Hagel's Think Tank, Its Donors, and Intellectual Independence**. New Republic. <http://bit.ly/1eYYkhZ>

Article. Highlights the discontinuity between Atlantic Council’s intellectual independence and their fundraising pitch on their website, which says “the Council works with our partners to develop their substantive narrative and determine the types of tools and products, including event opportunities and co-branded publications, required to meet their goals and needs.” Notes that one potential conflict of interest is a conference on **Kazakhstan** that Kazakhstan and Chevron (which has oil interests in Kazakhstan) paid for in 2011. Alleges that even though Kazakhstan’s president-for-life Nursultan Nazarbayev has been accused of human rights abuses, the “panels were stacked with regime-friendly voices.” Claims that three briefs that the Council published after the conference on Kazakhstan were “equally friendly.”

Singer, Peter W. 2010. **Washington's Think Tanks: Factories to Call Our Own.** The Washingtonian.  
<http://bit.ly/1h5mfM5>

Article. Discusses the “idea industry” in Washington and the ways that different think tanks are funded through foundations, corporate or individual donors. Notes that the financial crisis had an effect on the funding environment and put donors in a “privileged position.” Focuses on American think tanks, but also notes the proliferation of organizations abroad that fall under the wide definition of think tank.

Snowdon, Chris. 2012. **How the government uses charities to lobby itself.** Institute of Economic Affairs.

<http://bit.ly/1IGCLoy>

Blog. Claims that 2008 was the first year that the charity sector in the UK received “more money from the government than from individuals.” Discusses the IEA’s new paper on “state-funded activism” in which the government gives money to charities with similar policy ideas that in turn lobby the government.

Stephens, Joe and Mary Pat Flaherty. 2013. **Nonprofit groups often seek restitution, not prosecution, when money goes missing.** The Washington Post.

<http://wapo.st/1mtwsGf>

Article. Discusses the disincentives for non-profits to disclose financial issues such as embezzlement to their donors and the public. The senior manager of the Progressive Policy Institute, which is incorporated as the Third Way Foundation, acknowledged that she had taken money out of the organisation’s accounts for personal use, resigned, and later repaid the money. Claims that the organisation never disclosed the amount of money taken, never informed its donors of the incident, and did not go to the police to file charges against the manager. The only mention of the incident is on the annual federal disclosure that admits that an incident happened and that all funds had been repaid. Claims that this is common among organisations that do not want to lose contributions from donors over financial scandals.

Struyk, Raymond J. 2006. **Managing Think Tanks.** Open Society Institute and Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative.

<http://bit.ly/1cLxepG>

Book. Outlines management strategies for think tanks. Specific sections on finding funding and financial management. Includes references for think tank managers.

Tevi, Troy. 2012. **Devaluing the Think Tank.** National Affairs.

<http://bit.ly/LCbbfL>

Article. Claims that donor pressure causes the “politicisation” of think tanks and that smaller think tanks will “change course” to follow the money. Suggests that donors are interested in influencing key debates and “want their contributions to lead to results.” Speculates that “bought and paid for” research is rare; researchers “self-censoring” their findings to keep their “bosses or donors” happy is a more salient issue.

Toner, Robin. 1985. **New Day Dawns for Think Tanks.**

<http://nyti.ms/1fNfK49>

Article. Reports that due to the increase in the number of think tanks funding is uncertain, making it necessary for think tanks to adapt their structure and move away from ambitious long-term studies.

Thunert, Martin. No date. **Organization/Structure of Think Tanks**. Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.  
<http://bit.ly/1liYV3i>

Presentation slides. Distinguishes between the UK/US think tanks funding model that focuses on private donations, and the publically funded **European** model. Briefly discusses the **Asian** think tank model, which tends to be a “top-down” organisation used as “sounding board” for the government.

Vogel, Kenneth P. et al. 2011. **Gingrich relies on fading Newt Inc**. Politico.  
<http://politi.co/1bqKPJt>

Article. Discusses US politician Newt Gingrich’s network of companies and think tanks, which “pulled in more than 115 million” US dollars and is now funding his presidential campaign. His spokesman claims that these companies knew he was “not going to lobby for them,” but “more often than not,” their positions were aligned. Claims that these organisations were a way for Gingrich to lay “the foundation for his presidential campaign, both in terms of talent or staff, and in terms of networks of volunteers and donors.”

War on Error. 2013. **Progressive Third Way Foundation – Funded by the Waltons**. The Daily Kos.  
<http://bit.ly/1aMocfl>

Blog. Explores the funding of Third Way, a US think tank. Reviews Third Way’s 990 forms, a tax form that all non-profits are required to fill out, which show that the think tank receives funding from the Third Way Institute, which the author claims is a “pass through front” for the Third Way Foundation.

This annotated bibliography was compiled by Ms Taylor Braun-Dorrell. Transparify will release a total of four bibliographies on think tanks in the course of 2014, and updated versions in 2015. Please register for updates at [www.transparify.org](http://www.transparify.org) or follow us on twitter [@Transparify](https://twitter.com/Transparify).