

How Think Tanks Influence Policy – An Overview of Current Debates

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- **How much impact do think tanks have on policy formulation?**
- **How do they seek to influence decision-makers?**
- **What is the difference between providing policy advice and lobbying?**

Some highlights:

- **Think tanks are often believed to have significant impact on policy making.** In the US, government representatives are reportedly utilizing think tanks' research outputs more often than they use the Congressional Research Service (Bruce Bartlett 2012), and politicians move to think tanks in the hope of gaining more influence there (Snider 2012), but their actual impact remains disputed (Peter Leeson 2012). Andrew Rich (2005) argues that while think tanks have exploded in number in the US, their influence has not expanded proportionally because the overt ideological biases of some have undermined the credibility of the whole sector. In China, think tanks' influence may vary with location (Erdong Chen 2009), while in India, they are thought to be weak as they lack access to the government (Manjari Chatterjee Miller 2013). Dieter Plehwe (2014) suggests that the power of think tanks is best analysed by using a network approach, rather than by looking at individual agents in isolation.
- **Think tanks influence policy in a variety of ways.** Their staff pen op-eds, appear on television, testify in congressional hearings (Donald Abelson 2011), cultivate close relationships with politicians, build coalitions on policy issues (George Monbiot 2011), and shape public debates (Ken Silverstein and Brooke Williams 2013). While Murray Weidenbaum (2010) highlights that providing information to journalists is a core function of think tanks, Lisa Graves (2013) warns that public relations firms in the US have begun setting up fake 'think tanks' in order to promote their clients' interests through media outlets that often fail to check the background of the entities they quote. Outside the US, the influence that think tanks wield is often shaped by wider institutional environments. The Economist (2007) has criticized think tanks in Brussels for falling prey to the EU's non-confrontational culture of consensus. Anna Longhini (2013) hypothesizes that think tanks are more likely to be important in countries that are decentralized or have weak party systems, while Sara Bennett (2011) highlights the importance of financial independence and strong links to policy makers.
- **The dividing line between think tanks and lobbyists is hotly disputed.** In a 2009 speech, Siim Kallas, then Vice-President of the European Commission, urged European think tanks to join a voluntary lobby register. Andrew Willis (2009) reports that most think tanks did not want to be associated with lobbying and refused to sign up. Similarly, Patrick Gilroy (2011) points out that think tanks in the US have argued that educating legislators is distinct from lobbying them. However, Eric Lipton (2014) and Tarini Parti (2012) report that some US think tanks see lobbying as a core function, and Brooke Williams and Ken Silverstein (2013) claim that in "20 of the 25 most influential think tanks in the United States", senior people have simultaneously worked as lobbyists. The distinction between non-profits and lobbyists is also contested in Britain (BBC 2013). Lee Fang and Scott Keyes (2011) report that the UK Charity Commission – which is in charge of regulating non-profits – shut down a registered think tank that it regarded as a lobbying outfit in 2011.

Abelson, Donald E. 2002. **Do Think Tanks Matter?**

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

Book. Explores the policy influence of think tanks, comparing the US and **Canada**. Concludes that both the nature of the wider political system and the strategies employed by think tanks influence the level of influence achieved. Argues that influence cannot be accurately measured through metrics such as the number of media citations. Contains several case studies and a bibliography.

Abelson, Donald. 2011. **Think tanks must think more about issues of national interest, not self-interest.** LSE.

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

Blog. Claims that researchers at think tanks are not just hired to do research, but to pen op-eds, appear on television, testify in congressional hearings, advise politicians, and court donors, leaving little time to focus on research. Argues that for think tanks, the “primary motivation is to shape the policy preferences and goals of decision makers in ways that both satisfy and advance their ideological interests and those of their generous benefactors.” Notes that American think tanks are promoting the interests of their donors over the national interest. Suggests that think tank evaluations should be introduced.

Ahmad, Mahmood. 2008. **US Think Tanks and the Politics of Expertise: Role, Value and Impact.** The Political Quarterly.

<http://bit.ly/1f8ttOg>

Journal article. Discusses the history and growth of American think tanks. Postulates four categories of think tanks: academic, contract, advocacy, and party. Describes each type’s funding, agenda setting, ideology, and research. Explains different types of “independence” for think tanks. Includes section on how to measure think tank influence. Includes several charts and graphs.

Alterman, Eric. 2011. **The Professors, The Press, The Think Tanks—And Their Problems.** Academe.

<http://bit.ly/MeZkUU>

Article. Discusses the differences between academia and journalism. Argues that corporate interests have been able to “shift” the centre of the debate to the right using conservative media and think tanks, which leaves non-partisan academics out of the conversation. Argues that there is a growth of “ideologically motivated misinformation.”

Bartlett, Bruce. 2012. **The Alarming Corruption of the Think Tanks.** The Fiscal Times.

<http://bit.ly/1dH4WCW>

Article. Postulates a trend towards politicisation among American think tanks. Notes that government representatives are utilizing think tanks’ research outputs more often than the Congressional Research Service.

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 non-profits voiced concern over the bill, citing its complexity.

Bennett, Sara et al. 2011. **Influencing policy change: the experience of health think tanks in low- and middle-income countries.** Oxford Journal of Health Policy and Planning.

<http://bit.ly/MdRuLr>

Journal article. Assesses think tank and NGO influence on health policy through six case studies covering **Bangladesh, Ghana, India, South Africa, Uganda** and **Vietnam**. Concludes that “a supportive policy environment, some degree of independence in governance and financing, and strong links to policy makers” were critical in supporting effective policy engagement.

Callahan, David. 1999. **\$1 Billion for Conservative Ideas.**

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

Article. Alleges that think tank donations have become a new form of political campaign donations. Notes the rise of funding for conservative think tanks in the US.

Carrigan, Mark. 2010. **How right-wing think-tanks laid the foundation for the Coalition’s agenda.**

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

Blog. Lists five conservative think tanks and summarises their recent output. Discusses the policy agendas laid out in the reports.

Center for China and Globalization. No date. **China's New Think Tanks: Where Officials, Entrepreneurs, and Scholars Interact.**

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

Article. Discusses the relationship between **Chinese** think tanks and the government.

Chatterjee Miller, Manjari. 2013. **India’s Feeble Foreign Policy.** Harvard University South Asia Institute.

<http://bit.ly/1d3strD>

Article. Discusses the lack of Indian foreign policy strategies and notes that Indian think tanks lack access to the government and have not been able to shape policy because of this.

Chen, Erdong. 2009. **Think-tanks with Chinese characteristics.**

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

Article. Notes the differences between **Chinese** think tanks in different geographic areas. Beijing’s think tanks have a close relationship with the government, while Shanghai’s think tanks tend to be more independent from the Communist Party. Claims that think tanks in China do less to engage the public, because their close relationship with the government makes this unnecessary.

Ciandella, Mike. 2013. **Soros-funded Media Group Attacks Conservative ‘Stink Tanks’.** Media Research Center.

<http://bit.ly/L7Lflu>

Article. Discusses the similarities between two rival American think tank groups: the State Policy Network and the Media Consortium. The Media Consortium attacked the various think tanks in the State Policy Network, labelling them “stink tanks” for creating an “echo chamber” of opinions against the Affordable Care Act. Claims that the Media Consortium, which is funded by American liberal policy advocates, also constitutes an “echo chamber”, albeit for liberal ideas. Argues that liberal media is “hypocritical” in its reporting on conservative think tanks.

Cillizza, Chris. 2014. **Welcome to 2014 — the 501(c)(4) election!** The Washington Post.

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

Article. Discusses the influence of 501(c)(4) non-profit “politically-minded” organisations in American elections. Gives examples and includes graphs of the growth of funding for these organisations since 2000.

Denham, Andrew and Mark Garnett. 1999. **Influence without Responsibility? Think-Tanks in Britain.** Parliamentary Affairs.

<http://bit.ly/1IIE5R8>

Academic article. Gives a short history of think tanks in Britain. Focuses on conservative and labour think tanks that have worked to influence policy.

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

<http://econ.st/1jzFx7C>

Article. Contrasts US and European think tanks. Claims that “Brussels is a place where the same folk must deal with each other for years, haggling their way towards policy deals. The public demolition of somebody else's ideas is rarely a way to win friends,” and that this consensus culture makes think tanks in *Brussels* dull and uninteresting to voters. Argues that such 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.

EurActiv. 2009. **Lobby transparency spotlight falls on think-tanks.**

<http://bit.ly/LqXQX2>

Article. Discusses *EU* Administration and Anti-Fraud Commissioner Siim Kallas' call for more think tanks to sign up to the voluntary lobbyists register. Discusses the changing role of European think tanks. Explains the position of several European think tanks with regard to registering as lobbyists.

EurActiv. 2009. **Think-tanks should join EU lobby register, Kallas insists.**

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

Article. Notes that the *EU* lobby register would allow think tanks to register as different from public affairs professionals or corporate interest representatives and argues that think tanks have a unique influence on policy so they should register.

Fang, Lee and Scott Keyes. 2011. **As Scandal Engulfs American Legislative Exchange Council's UK Affiliate, A Closer Look At Its US Operation.** Think Progress.

<http://bit.ly/1mtwDS3>

Article. Reports that the Atlantic Bridge, a British non-profit, was shut down after the Charity Commission found that it was “little more than a front for various corporate lobbying and Tory party interests.” The Atlantic Bridge had a close affiliation with the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), and the author suggests a similar situation may be on the horizon for the ALEC in the US.

Gilroy, Patrick. 2011. **Have Think Tanks in Washington D.C. Become Politicized?** Hertie School of Governance.

<http://bit.ly/LAbKwG>

Academic paper. Poses the question of whether US think tanks are becoming politicised along the liberal/conservative political divide. Presents several different definitions of think tanks. Notes that many think tanks claim that educating legislators is distinct from lobbying

them. Argues that there is “no political accountability for the sector” and suggests that a “public disclosure requirement” for contributors “offers a way for citizens to evaluate the forces that influence their government.” Includes a bibliography.

Goldberg, Jeffery. 2013. **Qatar: Attention-Starved Teen of the Middle East**. Bloomberg.

<http://bloom.bg/1hFcchT>

Opinion piece. Questions why *Qatar* is donating millions of dollars to the Brookings Institute and asks “what does Qatar want?” The author argues that Qatar’s “insecurity” makes it seek influence on the diplomatic processes in the Middle East in order to compete with larger neighbours.

Graves, Lisa. 2013. **Corporate America's New Scam: PR Firm Poses as Think Tank**. PR Watch.

<http://bit.ly/1bbzZ3K>

Article. Claims that public relations firms for different industries in the US are masquerading as think tanks or non-profits and are quoted as such in the media, often without information on how such an organisation is connected to the industries it comments on. Analyses three years of media coverage generated by one such organization and finds that only 3% of items correctly linked the think tank with the PR firm sponsoring it. Reports that “there are four public relations flacks for every reporter, compared to a 1-to-1 ratio in the 1960s”, and concludes that “corporations have a right to have their voice heard, but that voice should be their own; not that of phony experts on retainer.”

Howlett, Michael. 2009. **Policy analytical capacity and evidence-based policy-making: Lessons from Canada**. Canadian Public Administration.

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

Journal article. Discusses policy-making in *Canada*. Concludes that policy analysts, including those in think tanks, do not have adequate resources to deal with long-term policy issues. Identifies lack of funding and lack of legitimacy as associated failures during the policy planning process.

Kallas, Siim. 2009. **A more transparent and accountable Commission – And what about the Think Tanks?**

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

Speech. The Vice-President of the European Commission urges *European* think tanks to join a voluntary lobby register. Claims that a “conclude, then justify” process is used by think tanks, especially in the US. Notes that most think tanks are not directly influencing policy as a lobbying organisation, but that most policy influence is through indirect means.

Krastev, Ivan. 2000. **The Liberal Estate: Reflections on the Politics of Think Tanks in Central and Eastern Europe**. In McGann, James and Kenneth Weaver, eds. *Think Tanks and Civil Society: Catalyst for Ideas and Action*.

<http://amzn.to/19VppTv>

Book chapter. Discusses the role of think tanks in *Central and Eastern Europe*. Notes that think tank research was influential in shaping new institutions, and makes suggestions for post-communist think tanks. Includes case studies.

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.

Krugman, Paul. 2005. **Think Tank Transparency**. New York Times.

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

Opinion. Suggests that think tanks’ briefings and reports that influence political officials in Washington D.C. are often funded by organisations and corporations with a vested interest in shaping policy. Claims that think tanks act much like lobbyists and argues that funding for think tanks should be publicized and subjected to public scrutiny.

Leeson, Peter T. et al. 2012. **Think Tanks**. Journal of Comparative Economics.

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

Journal article. Investigates American “pro-market” think tanks and their relationship with economic policy. Notes that think tanks attract a lot of money, and in 2003 “these [free-market] organizations attracted more than USD 300 million in donations for undertaking their activities. That’s roughly USD 50 million more than the Republican or Democratic Party raised in ‘soft money’ for the 2000 election cycle.” Concludes that free-market think tanks do not appear to “significantly” influence policy in the areas they focus on.

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

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

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. 2014. **Fight Over Minimum Wage Illustrates Web of Industry Ties**. The New York Times.

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

Article. Claims that the Employment Policies Institute (EPI) has stated that increasing the minimum wage would have “harmful” effects, but that it omits to say that it is “run by a public relations firm that also represents the restaurant industry.” Explains that millions of dollars will be spent by think tanks on the left and the right that are researching minimum wage issues to lobby to influence the legislation. Discusses corporate connections to EPI.

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 **French** and **Italian** think tanks play in influencing policy. Hypothesizes that it is more likely for think tanks to develop strong influence on policy where there is a decentralized system of government or a weak party system, and where they can access non-public sector funding.

McGann, James G. 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 G. 2012. **Global Trends in Think Tanks and Policy Advice**. University of Pennsylvania Press.

<http://bit.ly/1dNf4nN>

Report. Reports on major trends in the *global* think tank sector. Specifically points to the emergence of “phantom NGO think tanks,” which are used by governments, private corporations or individuals to promote “special interests.” Claims this comes from a lack of transparency in think tanks, allowing private interests to pose as public interest. Includes several graphs and charts about think tanks around the world.

Medvetz, Thomas. 2012. **Think Tanks in America**.

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

Book. Scholarly analysis of the history and relevance of think tanks. Argues that think tanks exert a tremendous amount of influence as they are unbound by the more clearly defined roles of universities, government agencies, businesses, and the media. Warns that they may be displacing independent academic voices from policy debates due to their power. Includes bibliography.

Monbiot, George. 2011. **Secretive thinktanks are crushing our democracy**. The Guardian.

<http://bit.ly/LCm0yr>

Opinion piece. Argues that think tanks that do not disclose their donors are a threat to democracy. Quotes an American corporate lobbyist who explains that think tanks have “considerable influence and close personal relationships with elected officials” and that they “support and encourage one another, echo and amplify their messages, and can pull together ... coalitions on the most important public policy issues.” Claims that many think tanks lobby for particular issues depending on who funds them and argues that more transparency is necessary to avoid this “secret corporate lobbying”.

Monbiot, George. 2012. **Plutocracy’s Boot Boys**.

<http://bit.ly/Lrw5Ok>

Article. Discusses the history of the Adam Smith Institute, a UK think tank, in the context of the conservative government of the late 1970s and 1980s. Quotes corporate lobbyist Jeff Judson, who says think tanks are virtually immune to retribution” as “the identity of donors ... is protected from involuntary disclosure.”

Monbiot, George. 2013. **The educational charities that do PR for the rightwing ultra-rich**. The Guardian.

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

Opinion piece. Argues that think tanks have increasingly become public relations firms for the organisations that fund them. Claims that corporations use “independent-looking think tanks” to support their ideas so that sponsors do not have to enter the political conversation themselves. Argues that more transparency will help the public to understand the influences on the think tanks quoted in the media.

Newsom, David D. 1996. **The Public Dimension of Foreign Policy**.

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

Book. Discusses the intersections of American foreign policy making with the media, think tanks, academics and Congress. Includes chapters on think tanks’ influence and advocacy.

Parti, Tarini. 2012. **Think tank jobs a lucrative landing spot.** Politico.

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

Article. Claims that US think tanks seek to hire more people from Congress as they “get more involved in lobbying and elections.” Discusses the high salaries that attract former congressmen.

Pautz, Hartwig. 2011. **Revisiting the think-tank phenomenon.** Public Policy and Administration.

<http://bit.ly/1mk59eu>

Journal article. Discusses the definition of think tank. Notes that the literature often claims that think tanks add to the policy debate and “contribute to the quality and transparency of policy-making processes,” but asserts that these accounts “overestimate the diversity of policy perspectives taken by existing think tanks.” Explores how think tanks influence the policy process and concludes that a neo-Gramscian perspective with its concepts of hegemony, civil society and the intellectual is a suitable framework for allowing a critical understanding of the think-tank as an organization linked in its essence to liberal capitalist democracy”. Includes references.

Pérez-Peña, Richard. 2008. **Senior Fellow at the Institute of Nonexistence.** The New York Times.

<http://nyti.ms/1aBCa0z>

Article. Chronicles how the US mainstream media picked up fake information put out by a fake ‘fellow’ at a fake ‘research institute’ on a hoax blog created by two filmmakers.

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 using a network approach, rather than as individual agents. Includes bibliography.

Rashid, Ahmed Khaled. 2013. **The Dynamics of Relationship between Media and Think Tanks in Bangladesh.** Asia Pacific Media Educator

<http://bit.ly/NBctIT>

Academic article. Based on journalist survey and interviews in **Bangladesh**. Concludes that “extensive interactions between journalists and think tanks do not necessarily result in quality coverage of think tanks’ policy-oriented research and advocacy initiatives. Lack of capacity of journalists to understand and report on development and policy issues, political inclinations of both think tanks and media and weak media relations expertise of think tanks” pose obstacles to effective engagement.

Rich, Andrew. 2005. **Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise.**

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

Book. Examines the influence of think tanks in domestic policymaking in the US. Argues that while think tanks have exploded in number, their influence has not expanded proportionally because the overt ideological biases of some have undermined the credibility of the whole sector. Based on 135 interviews with think tank staff, the book includes quantitative data on think tanks, case studies, and a bibliography.

Rich, Andrew et al. 2011. **Think Tanks in Policy Making – Do They Matter?** Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.
<http://bit.ly/1giwrVI>

Briefing paper. Discusses think tanks in the US, the UK, **China**, and **Germany**. Notes that to maintain “independence” American think tanks often do not accept government funding, while in Germany, think tanks are publically funded to ensure “independence from the private sector.” In China, operational independence is more important than financial independence. Includes several informative graphs and charts. Claims that a trend towards “phantom NGO think tanks” that promote special interests is cause for “concern” and discusses their perceived lack of transparency.

Rich, Andrew and R. Kent Weaver. 2000. **Think Tanks in the U.S. Media**.
<http://bit.ly/L8eU3x>

Academic paper. Examines the “visibility of expertise” and concludes that “think tanks of no identifiable ideology have a distinct advantage in gaining media visibility”, with the exception of conservative media outlets. Notes that budget resources often determine how often think tanks are cited in certain media outlets. Discusses the ways in which think tanks gain visibility and enter the policy making process.

Schneider, Jiří. 2002. **Think-tanks in Visegrad Countries**. Center for Policy Studies, Central European University, Budapest.
<http://bit.ly/1jAj03y>

Academic article. Discusses think tanks in **Hungary**, the **Czech Republic**, **Slovakia** and **Poland**. Includes section on financial conditions and the political environment, as well as policy entrepreneurship, lobbying and non-profit policy analysis. Notes that “European lobbyists have realized that they need robust and credible research capabilities in advancing interests of their clients.” Claims that “transparency is the key requirement that significantly reduces temptations of corruptive behaviour” for organisations that engage in lobbying activities. Includes a bibliography.

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.”

Snider, J.H. 2012. **Washington’s evolving think tanks**. Politico.
<http://politi.co/1bbzuXB>

Opinion piece. Argues that think tanks are moving away from public policy research and towards advocacy. Recounts that US Senator DeMint left Congress to become the president of Heritage Foundation, saying he would be more “influential” at the think tank. Claims that think tanks should be held accountable to either academic standards or lobbying standards, depending on the work they do. Suggests that think tanks should consider ethical guidelines

that would include disclosing funding, because they “exert too much political influence” and “receive too much tax-payer subsidy” to “have immunity from public scrutiny.”

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

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

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.

Stone, Diane. 2007. **Garbage Cans, Recycling Bins or Think Tanks? Three Myths about Policy Institutes.**

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

Academic paper. Addresses the complexity of the relationship between think tanks and policy. Argues that think tanks are not different from other organisations, do not necessarily serve the public interest, and are not “scientific” establishments, but that donors use such discourse to legitimise their donations. Suggests that organisations that fund think tank studies are looking for “independent, rational, rigorous analysis that is associated with the brand name.”

T’Hart, Paul. 2008. **A New Era for Think Tanks in Public Policy? International Trends, Australian Realities.** The Australian Journal of Public Administration.

<http://bit.ly/1ewP5Sr>

Academic paper. Defines four different types of think tanks and explains the impact that think tanks have on **Australian** policy. Lists the emerging challenges for Australian think tanks and makes recommendations on how think tanks can adapt. Includes a list of Australian think tanks and their annual revenues and a list of references.

Union of Concerned Scientists. 2013. **U.S. News Media Help Koch Brothers and ExxonMobil Spread Climate Disinformation, UCS Investigation Finds.**

<http://bit.ly/LtUsKY>

Press release. Claims that eight top media outlets “failed to cite think tank funding in two-thirds of climate and energy sources in 2011 and 2012.”

Weidenbaum, Murray. 2010. **Measuring the Influence of Think Tanks.** Social Science and Public Policy.

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

Journal article. States that diverse think tanks provide information “to the media, the government and to a host of interest groups involved in the public policy process” and thus create “a lively competition of ideas.” Measures the output and impact of think tanks in the US.

Williams, Brooke. 2013. **Influence Incognito.** Harvard University Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics.

<http://bit.ly/1f2Lrn1>

Working paper. Details the relationships between US think tanks and their donors, including several examples of what think tanks offer to their donors. Suggests more statistical evidence is necessary to prove the “anecdotal” claim that think tanks often act as lobbyists.

Williams, Brooke and Ken Silverstein. 2013. **Meet the Think Tank Scholars who are also Beltway Lobbyists**. New Republic.

<http://bit.ly/KCCTYr>

Article. Claims that 49 people “have simultaneously worked as lobbyists for outside entities while serving as top staff, directors or trustees of 20 of the 25 most influential think tanks in the United States.” Argues that without financial disclosure, people may allege that researchers have undisclosed conflicts of interest. Favours more transparency.

Willis, Andrew. 2009. **Commission criticises think-tanks over lobby register**. EU Observer.

<http://bit.ly/1eiMO13>

Article. Discusses the **EU** lobby registry. Claims that many think tanks receive funding from corporations that hope to gain better access to politicians. Think tanks have been slow to sign up because they do not want to be associated with lobbying.

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 or follow us on twitter **@Transparify**.