

Top 10 think tanks

The tops among U.S. think tanks

1. Brookings Institution: Considered centrist on economic issues and more liberal on social issues. It has scholars who have served in both Democratic and Republican presidential administrations. Its president, Strobe Talbott, was deputy secretary of state during the Clinton administration. Its research topics include the economy, foreign policy, global development, urban issues and government. Based in Washington, D.C.

2. Council on Foreign Relations: Generally considered centrist. Its co-chairs are Robert Rubin, treasury secretary during the Clinton administration; and Carla Hills, U.S. trade representative for President George H.W. Bush. It is a New York City-based membership organization and think tank focusing on foreign policy issues.

3. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Generally considered centrist. Its funding has come from public and private sources including General Motors, ExxonMobil, former Democratic Sen. Bill Bradley and the State Department. It is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to "advancing cooperation between nations and promoting active international engagement by the United States." It is based in Washington, D.C., and has offices in Moscow, Beijing, Beirut and Brussels.

4. Center for Strategic and International Studies: Considered a bipartisan foreign-policy think tank. Its board chairman is retired U.S. Sen. Sam Nunn, D-Ga., former chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Trustees include George Argyros, former ambassador to Spain during the administration of President George W. Bush. It focuses on international issues such as defense and security, regional stability, energy and global development.

5. RAND Corp.: Generally considered centrist. Its president and CEO, James A. Thomson, is an arms control expert who served in both the Ford and Carter administrations. RAND is a nonprofit, nonpartisan institution that conducts research on health, education, national security, international affairs, law, business and the environment. It is based in Santa Monica, Calif., and has offices throughout the world.

6. Heritage Foundation: Describes itself as conservative. Its mission is "to formulate and promote conservative policies based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values and a strong national defense." Based in Washington, D.C.

7. American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research: Generally described as conservative. AEI is a private, nonpartisan, not-for-profit institution dedicated to research and education on issues of government, politics, economics and social welfare. Based in Washington, D.C.

8. Cato Institute: Usually described as libertarian. Dedicated to "the principles of individual liberty, limited government, free markets and peace." Conducts research on a wide range of policy issues, including education, environment, taxation, immigration, politics and foreign affairs. Based in Washington, D.C.

9. Peterson Institute for International Economics: Describes itself as one of the few truly nonpartisan economic think tanks. Its director, economist C. Fred Bergsten, served in both the Carter and Nixon administrations. Its focus includes international money and finance, trade and related social issues, energy and the environment, investment and globalization. Based in Washington, D.C.

10. Center for American Progress: Describes itself as progressive. Its president and CEO is John Podesta, former chief of staff to President Bill Clinton. Focuses on issues such as clean energy, national security, economic growth and opportunity, immigration, education and health care. Based in Washington, D.C., with an office in Los Angeles.

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Source for list: The Global "Go-To Think Tanks" 2010, published Jan. 18, 2011, by James G. McGann, director of The Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program at the University of Pennsylvania. These are the Top 10 U.S. think tanks from a list of the Top 50 in the report. For the complete report, go to www.gotothinktank.com.

Sources for descriptions of each think tank: individual think tank websites and news reports.