ABSTRACT

Public policy decision-making refers to actions taken within governmental settings to formulate, adopt, implement, evaluate, or change policies. In this growing interdependent world, the process of foreign policy formulation is becoming more and more complex in which, besides formal actors, informal actors play an increasingly important role. The US is no exception to this rule. Therefore, in addition to the executive and legislative branches of government that remain the principal initiator of American foreign policy, there are numerous other actors that seek to influence US foreign policy. These include multitudes of lobby groups, business interest, trade union, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), media, public opinion, think tanks and the like.

The modern states depend on experts whose views on issues can provide the theories and rationale for policy and legislation. State structures are the dominant but not the only sources of policy innovations as there is a need to consult other interest for information. Think tanks seek to provide this kind of information and occasionally play a dynamic role in identifying problems. They are increasingly a mechanism for refining and presenting knowledge and expertise in a relevant and usable manner.

Britain's American colonies broke with the mother country in 1776 and were recognized as the new nation of the United States of America following the Treaty of Paris in 1783. Sustained by victories in World Wars I and II and the end of the Cold War in 1991, the US remains the world's most powerful nation state. The economy is marked by steady growth, low unemployment and inflation, and rapid advances in technology. Given the importance of the US in the world affairs it is important to understand how the debate on the global role of the US is evolving, how foreign policy decision are made, what US priorities are and how the US exercises its power and influence on the world stage.

Foreign policy generally refers to how the government of the state acts
in relation to other states. It can also refer to what government do in relation to international organizations, multinational corporations, political and military organisations that are not state actors, and sometimes even prominent individuals.

There are so many issues that are emerging or re-emerging in US foreign policy, because these problems have taken on greater significance at the beginning of 21st century. The security related US foreign policy problem is a high priority on the policy agenda. These issues include conventional force structure, ballistic missile defence, weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, transnational organised crime and humanitarian intervention. Next two sets of issues associated with environment-environmental degradation and biodiversity – since these have the potential of becoming major threats to US security. These are some issues that are traditionally considered to be significant US foreign policy concerns; because they have an impact on the prosperity of US citizens and can ultimately affect US security. Among these issues are energy, international trade and international financial management. Finally, there are wide ranges of issues – sustainable development, pandemic disease control, international resource management, and democratisation – that are important general foreign policy concerns for the United States. They are important not only because they ultimately affect US security and prosperity, but also because the issues resonate with the historic US belief that the country has a responsibility, where possible, to help other people in the world to enjoy a better lifestyle that more closely resembles the standard of living enjoyed by US citizens. From the viewpoints of US political decision makers, policy influential and public opinion leaders, these issues are significant because they relate to the basic goals and core values of US foreign policy.

Making policy about any particular issue occurs not in a single moment, by a single decision, with a consistent set of actors but rather over a series of moments in a lengthy period that typically involves scores of different types of decision and actors. The policy process is conventionally
analysed in relation to stages of policy development. Think tanks, experts and expertise generally become important and influential at different points in the policy process.

The relationship between political leaders and those who advise them is critically important to the study of governmental decision-making. Knowledge is the central aspect of power. In this increasingly complex, interdependent and information rich world, government and individual policy makers face the common problem of bringing expert knowledge to bear in the governmental decisions making. Policy-makers need basic information about the world and the societies they govern, how current policies are working, possible alternatives, and their likely costs and consequences. As a matter of fact, in both information rich and poor societies policy makers need informations that are understandable, reliable, accessible, and useful.

By providing their expertise to members of Congress, the Executive and the bureaucracy, policy advisors play a vital role in formulating and injecting ideas into the policy making process. While policy makers in the United States continue to solicit the advice of experts in universities, interest groups, professional and business associations, corporations, law firms and consulting agencies, they are relying increasingly on scholars from think tanks or policy research institutions to identify, develop, shape and at times implement policy ideas. Think Tanks are among the most numerous organisational forms devoted to policy research, and they are often amongst the most focused and visible sources of ideas and analysis in contemporary policy making.

The literature on American foreign policy making continue to grow, but only recently has the participation of think tanks in the policy formation process been discussed. The increasing involvement of think tanks in the policy making process requires scholars to reevaluate various models and theories developed to explain how leaders make policy decisions. This is not to suggest that contemporary theories and models of foreign policy decisions making need to be supplemented, but rather that their parameters should be expanded to take
into consideration how think tanks identify and shape policy issues and problems. By treating think tanks as an important input into the policy making process, instead of passive observers of American politics, foreign policy analysts can provide a more detailed explanation of the various actors competing for power in the political arena.

The term 'think tanks' was employed originally in the United States during World War II to refer to a secure room or environment where defense scientists and military planners could meet to discuss strategies. This rather narrow usage of the term has since been expanded to describe over 1500 US-based organisations that engage in policy analysis and approximately 2,500 other similar institutions worldwide.

Think tanks are largely twentieth century inventions. But the expert advisor and the intellectual working in the shadows of power have had a role in the political life for more than two millennia. Political advising in the west began with famous teachers who tutored young princess and prepared them for leadership. Aristotle tutored the young Alexander. Some leaders have found themselves turning to books for solitary counsel. For example, Niccole Michiavelli’s book ‘Prince’ has served as a practical manual for many generations of aspiring politicians.

Defining think tanks, and establishing clear boundaries as to which organisations fit within the categories, is one of the most conceptually difficult tasks in analyzing these organizations. At the broadest level, one can say that think tanks are institutions that provide public policy research, analysis, and advice. However, this definition casts the net very broadly. Many interest groups, university research centres and other civil society organisations carry out policy research and advice as one of their activities, if not the central one. Many government agencies also offer policy research and advice as a major function.

To overcome the difficulty, we generally accepted the core definition of think
tanks as policy research organisations that have significant autonomy from government and from societal interest such as firms, interest group, and political parties. However, we also recognise that autonomy is a relative rather than an absolute term, and that the operational definition of think tanks must differ from region to region.

These public policy research organisations first appeared in the US and Europe at the turn of 20th century when organisations such as the Brooking Institution (1916), the Carnegie Endowment for International peace (1914) the Kiel Institute of World Economics (1914) and Royal Institute for International Affairs (1920) were established. After the World War II, the term was applied to contract researchers, such as RAND Corporation, that did a mixture of deep thinking and programmes evaluation for the military. The use of the term expanded in the 1960 to describe other groups of experts who formulated various policy recommendations, including some quasi-academic research institutes concerned with the study of the international relations and strategic question. By 1970, the term think tank was applied to institutions focusing not only on foreign policy and defence strategy, but also on current political, economic, and social issues. At the dawn of the 21st century, more than 1,200 think tanks dot the American political landscape. They are a heterogeneous lot, varying in scope, funding, mandate, and location. McGann classifies think tanks into five types:

- Independent civil society think tanks established as non profit organizations;
- Policy research institutes located in or affiliated with a university;
- Corporate created or business affiliated think tanks;
- Governmentally created or state sponsored think tanks;
- Political party (or candidate) think tanks.
While think tanks in recent years have become a "global phenomenon", U.S. think tanks are distinguished from their counterparts in other countries by their ability to participate directly and indirectly in policy making and by the willingness of policy-makers to turn toward them for policy advice.

With an expanding market for ideas and their legitimacy established, think tanks still require money to operate. Policy research institutes cannot rely on membership dues to cover operating costs. Nor can they rely upon the sales of publications and services. Therefore, philanthropy and corporate support are essential to their survival.

The majority of think tanks in the United States are composed of a group of intellectuals dedicated to solving the most challenging economic, social, and political problems confronting the nation. They also maintain staffs consisting of researchers, administrators and individuals offering technical support. Indeed, it is often expected that the staff at think-tanks perform a variety of functions ranging from writing and researching papers, to editing volumes and newsletters or magazines, to organising conferences and seminars, and to fund raising and preparing news releases.

Most think tanks share common objectives of shaping and moulding public opinion and public policy. As the United State prepared to assume the role of a hegemonic power in the aftermath of the World War II, a number of think tanks were making their presence felt in the policy making circles. Through their publications, conferences and meetings with members of the Executive, Congress, and a host of government departments, boards, and agencies, think thanks were able to develop and expand their network of influence throughout Washington.

Yet, despite their appeal, only a fraction of the estimated 1,500 think tanks in the United States have made their presence felt in key policy-making circles. The Brooking Institution, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the American Enterprise
Institute, Rand and the Heritage Foundation, among others, are frequently referred to in the media.

The desire for policy influence is one major aspect of think tank activity. Their increasingly active involvement and influence in the policy-making process came as no surprise to the scholars. However, the questions that scholars continue to struggle with are how much of an impact and in what specific ways?

Think tanks are in the business of developing, refining, repacking, and most importantly, marketing ideas. To this end, they employ a number of strategies to convey their thoughts to policy makers and to the public. These range from testifying before Congressional Committees and submitting editorial pieces to major newspapers, to inviting elected officials to participate in think tank sponsored seminars.

However, rarely there is a one-to-one correspondence between a book or a study and a particular policy change. There are numerous intervening forces that mediate and alter the impact of research that shroud any cause and effect relationship that may exist between policy institutes and government decision making. Hence, influence can not be measured. Proof of it is elusive and, at best, unreliable. Think tanks indicators such as media citations or appearances of staffs before Congress and various committees merely signify that think tanks have attracted the attention of the media and politicians. It does not demonstrate that the thinking or perceptions of the public or politicians has been influenced or that some policy initiative or reform has resulted. Asking the question, ‘How do you measure the influence of independent policy research institution?’ misses the point. It is more important to ask first, what they do that is relevant, and how? In a nutshell, while it is difficult to accurately measure the extent to which think tanks influence specific policy decision, it is possible to identify the various strategies and channels they rely on to gain access to the corridors of power.
By doing so, one can begin to observe how and to what extent think tanks have become entrenched in Washington’s decision making network.

Think tanks affect American foreign policy-makers in five distinct ways: by generating original ideas and options for policy, by supplying a ready pool of experts for employment in government, by offering venues for high level discussions by educating the U.S. citizens about the world, and by supplementing official efforts to mediate and resolve conflict. However, it is not easy to grab the attention of busy policy makers already immersed in informations. To do so, think tanks need to exploit multiple channels and marketing strategies—publishing articles, books, and occasional papers, appearing regularly on television, op-ed pages and newspaper interviews. Congressional hearings provide other opportunities to influence policy choices.

Think tanks are hidden participants in policy, whereas decision making in the formal political arenas by political parties, legislature and executive is a more transparent process. While think tanks do not have a clear consistent or legally designated route to policy influence, their policy entrepreneurship in policy and epistemic communities provides informal but haphazard access and opportunities for agenda setting. They invest in a gradual, incremental creep of new ideas into prevailing thinking.

This study focuses on key issues of foreign policy strategy of the US and policies that serve it best, and key questions of foreign policy politics, regarding institutions and actors within the American political system as their roles and the influence they exercise. However, the main focus of this study is on analyzing how and to what extent think-tanks have become involved in the political arena in America and to highlight the various governmental and non-governmental channels they rely on to participate in the policy making process since World War II. By analysing so, a more comprehensive understanding of the domestic sources of public policy would be possible.
The study is based on both primary and secondary source. The primary sources incorporate government documents, reports, Presidential speeches and think tanks annual reports. A number of tables, figures, books, articles and website bibliography linked to the topic provide a helpful guide for research. The approach to this study is qualitative, historical and analytical. The work is divided into five main chapters. The plan of the work is as under:

**Chapter one** provides the comprehensive theoretical aspect of American foreign policy making process keeping in mind the determinants, implementation process and related issues. It, then, identifies the different actors involved in foreign policy making in America. However, a large part of it is devoted to analyse the growing involvement of think tanks in the policy making process. In brief, it also examines the several contemporary theories often employed by scholars to explain how foreign policy is made. By exposing some of the inherent limitations of several theories and models, it attempts to highlight that it is necessary to expand the parameters of the study of foreign policy decision making in order to take into account the growing involvement of think tanks in the policy formulation process.

**Chapter two** discusses the importance, aims and objectives of American foreign policy. Moreover it, examine the various issues that emerge or reemerge in the US foreign policy and on which decision makers seek views of experts. It, then, discusses the slow but steady rise of the US global power. A brief historical review highlights some of the issues that have characterised American foreign policy since the founding of the republic. Further it examines the domestic and external pressures that propelled the US to intervene in two World Wars and after 1945, to establish a world wide network of alliances and military bases to fight the Cold War. The record of three Presidents in the office after the end of Cold War and how they attempted to define a new post- Cold War paradigm for American foreign policy is also discussed.
Chapter three evaluates the dilemma of defining think tanks. Further, it looks at the typology and changing role of American think tanks. Although a think tanks boom has occurred internationally, the political, legal and cultural condition in the US presents a more fertile environment for think tanks growth. Accordingly, it shows up the factors responsible for the exceptional growth of think tanks culture in America since World War II. Different from both public and private sector organisation, they face a set of problems peculiar to the non-profit organisation.

Despite the central role of think tanks in the US have made their presence felt in the key policy making circle. Therefore, Chapter four, looks at the organisation, management and influence of three major think tanks, keeping in mind their size, funds, area of specialisation and media citations. It then, identifies the various strategies and channels they rely on to gain access to the corridors of power. By doing so, it observes how to what extent think tanks have become entrenched in American decision making networks.

The concluding Chapter discusses why it is necessary to devote greater attention to the role think tanks play in the foreign policy making process and also to provide more comprehensive approach to the study of American foreign policy making. While it is important to identify the psychological and bureaucratic constraints, which influence decision makers, it is equally important to examine other domestic inputs, which may influence the behavior of American decision makers.