

# AN ANALYSIS OF THE STUDIES ON THINK TANKS SUCCESS AND RANKING

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## Abstract

In public policy process; official, unofficial and international actors play complicated roles. As unofficial actors, think tanks contribute to public policy making in various areas and ways and compete with each other. In historical perspective, American think tanks highly beneficial to formulation of internal and foreign policies in their respective country and some of them have noteworthy funding. This study which is structured into three parts starts with the analysis think tanks development and their influence on public policy. Later on, the literature on ranking, success and impact studies of think tanks is intensely scrutinised. Lastly, Global Go To Think Tanks (GGTTT) reports under the leadership of McGann are examined. This study reveals the think tanks ranking literature based on the evolution, citations, similarities and differences of think tanks. Moreover, GGTTT index reports are the most comprehensive, contemporary and prominent of these studies, despite some criticisms made by other scholars and experts.

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**Keywords:** Think Tanks, Ranking, Success, Impact, GGTTT

## Introduction

Ranking studies encourage think tanks to increase their success and efforts for visibility in the media. All these ranking and success studies help researchers to figure out the role and importance of think tanks on public policy. Ranking studies of think tanks can also be quite valuable to donors. A justification of ranking studies of think tanks and ranking of economists working for think tanks was described by Trimboth (2005: 12-13). According to Trimboth, having ranking of top economists provides some fundamental functions: Firstly, high quality economists for think tanks are determined so as to enhance their ranking. Secondly, graduate students can benefit from the ranking to measure reputational capital of the prospective

employers. Lastly, generating a ranking of top economists can inform the public about the experts whose research policymakers are probably to use.

Public policy that is conducted by numerous institutions or people in order to find a solution or meet social needs (Anderson, 2014: 7), influences and covers all or many citizens (Rose, 1989; Peters, 1996; Birkland, 2005). Thus, unofficial actors are getting involved in the policy process as well as official and international actors. Think tanks that produce policy in different fields of public policy are active in many developed countries, especially, in the US since the beginning of 20th century. On the other hand, under the impact of globalization, think tanks in developing countries also provide significant contribution and encouraging outcomes to public policy process. Even the number of think tanks is limited in developing countries; many remarkable consequences can be seen in the international think tank success index reports.

In-depth studies frequently reveals stories to understand impact of think tanks, however these studies do not provide rankings for large number of think tanks. Think tanks play important advisory roles in policy making and for policy makers. For instance, Smith (1991a) illustrates a discussion of the role of institutions like the Brookings Institution, the RAND Corporation, and the Committee for Economic Development with presidents, executive branch agencies, and business lobbyists, respectively, through the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s in the US. Also in earlier decades, think tanks were at times visibly credited for important outcomes. A prominent example in the past is the Brookings Institution's influence in the establishment of the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) in 1973 (Smith, 1991a: 82–86). Three are increasing number of ranking, success and impact studies of think tanks since 1997 and especially after 2001. Some of these studies specifically focus on ranking or success of think tanks and ranking is a secondary aim for some others. Some of ranking and success studies of think tanks are local or regional; only a couple of them are universal and comprehensive.

No major study has ever attempted to list, combine and systematise all or most of the ranking and success studies of think tanks, and only few studies cite and relatively organise previous ranking studies. Koellner (2013) provides brief information on some of the think tanks success index studies and criticises McGann's reports. McNutt and Marchildon (2009) offer and elaborate a web-based comprehensive think tanks success index and provide some insights about previous studies. Trimbath (2005) summarises earlier two studies published in the same Magazine in 2000 and 2002. Thunert has tracked down some of the earliest and/or hard-to-reach studies on success like Burson–Marsteller reports (1993; 1997), “Think Tanks Spectrum” series by Dolny (1996).

In this study, firstly, the development of think tanks which are one of the most momentous unofficial actors of public policy process will be dealt. Secondly, the emergence of think tanks ranking studies around the world in English literature will be examined and criticised. Lastly, GGTTT index reports which have been conducted and directed by McGann will be analysed and evaluated. This study reveals that even developing a comprehensive, reliable and respectful think tanks ranking and success assessment is pretty hard, promising attempts and some crucial progresses have been managed in the recent years after basic and exploratory studies were conducted in the past two decades. It seems that with the launch of worldwide GGTTT index reports; think tanks success and ranking studies attract the interest of academicians, politicians, directors and experts of think tanks.

### **The Development of Think Tanks in the Historical Process and Their Influence on Public Policy Making**

Think tanks think and generate thoughts and reports for other organisations, aim to connect the world of ideas and innovate with the world of action and implementation (Bedford and Hadar, 2014: 64). Public policy, the relation of a government body with the environment (Eyestone, 1971: 18), is an action plan aimed at providing solutions to existing and arising problems (Kraft and Furlong, 2004: 4). Thus, public policy can be explained as the whole decisions and actions rather than one (Hill, 1997: 7). As a research institution, think tanks offer recommendations to policy maker in a specific or wide range of policy areas (Stone, 2007: 149), and affect policy process depending on expertise and ideas (Rich, 2004: 11). In this context, it is stated that think tanks are regarded as a bridge between information and power in the modern democracy (UNDP, 2003: 6). Think tanks as independent research institutions are occasionally ideologically neutral; it is indicated that they often have proximity to a political thought. However, there are also think tanks that have collaboration with universities and make great contribution to public policies (Birkland, 2005: 89).

The development of think tanks has consisted of three broad periods since early years of the 20th Century. These periods are pointed out as 1) before World War II, 2) Cold War era, and 3) after 1980 (Stone and Denham, 2004). Also according to Abelson (1998, 2000), the development period of the think tanks can be listed as four waves/generations. The concept of think tanks were firstly debated at the beginning of the 20th Century and think tanks such as Brookings Institution, the 20th Century Fund, Russell Sage Foundation, Fabian Society, National Institute for Economic and Social Research were established in the US and the UK (Abelson, 2000: 217; Stone, 2007: 150). In the period before 1939, think

tanks generally emerged in industrialized, urbanized and economically developed countries as US and other English spoken countries. The reason of the early emergence of think tanks in the US and English spoken countries is expressed as to provide solutions to the problems that arisen with rapid economic growth (Smith, 1991a; Abelson, 2002) and socio-economic transformation of the society. The second period for think tanks began with the Cold War and some adverse circumstances as economic stagnation, crisis and social depression led to the need for technical analysis. Hence, think tanks which were established in this period provided solutions to the needs of the society and the government utilizing statistical techniques and cost-benefit analysis (Stone, 2007: 150). In the period of after 1980, the number of think tanks increased dramatically due to the spread of neo-liberal political thoughts in many countries and so-called New Right think tanks such as Adam Smith Institute that started to operate in London (Denham and Garnett, 2004) and prepared main ideas and policies for Thatcher government and Thatcher herself before her position as prime minister. Today, the organizations like the World Bank (WB), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) which are the financiers and customers of policy analysis offer a crucial contribution to the creation of new think tanks and networks (UNDP, 2003). For the fourth generation think tanks, Abelson (1998, 2000) identifies them as vanity and legacy-based think tanks. These types of generation think tanks have more determined and bounded mandate then other classic research institutions. Policy-making community are attracted in some cases by the fourth generation think tanks. Jimmy Carter Centre at Emory University, Richard Nixon Centre for Peace and Freedom can be given as prominent fourth generation legacy-based think tanks which established a wide range of research programs. On the other hand, vanity think tanks such as Senator Dole's Institute, Better America, and the Progress and Freedom Foundation are the latest generation of public policy research institutions in the US. Both legacy-based and vanity think tanks succeeded to have an influential institutional infrastructure with considerable budgets (Abelson, 1998: 114-115; Abelson, 2000: 221-222).

### **Evolution of Ranking, Success and Impact Studies of Think Tanks**

The International Economy Magazine's (Ruble, 2000; Posen, 2002; Trimbath, 2005) rankings focus solely on economists affiliated with think tanks and economic policy ideas of think tanks. McDonald's (2008) dissertation concentrates on education policy; Rich (1999; 2004) emphasises health care and telecommunication policy impacts of think tanks. In this chapter, the classification of academic work is an original effort by the authors to provide pioneering ideas on success, impact and ranking of think

tanks studies in order to fill the void in the literature and help the readers to interpret current ranking writings and reports.

No major paper has classified neither think tanks ranking and success literature nor their theoretical bases. Thus, to us, three sets of studies may establish a base for ranking and success literature on think tanks: First set of literature is multi-country comparative or across nations think tanks studies, like McGann and Johnson (2005) edited book focusing on 20 countries in depth, Stone, Denham, and Garnett's edited book (1998) providing examples from 10 different major countries. Stone (2005) reviews think tanks and policy advice in transition countries. Two country comparative studies on think tanks success reflect second sets of this literature. Higgott and Stone (1994) US and Britain, Abelson, and Carberry (1998) US and Canada, Abelson (2000, 2009) US and Canada, Abelson and Lindquist (2000) North America (US and Canada), Thunert (2003) US and Canada, Braml (2006) US and Germany, Pautz (2010) the UK and Germany are among significant examples of the second group of literature. Third set of literature to overwhelmingly contribute think tank ranking and success studies is in-depth single think tank success and/or impact studies. There are increasing examples of these in-depth studies; some of the examples of this group are as follows: Frost and Vogel's (2007) German KGSt (Institute of Urban Affairs) study on German NPM reform on local governments; The Heritage Foundation (Edwards, 1998); The Brookings Institution (Smith, 1991b).

Earliest theoretical bases for measuring think tanks success and ranking can be found in Lindquist (1993), Ricci (1993), Abelson (1998), Radaelli and Martini (1998), Stone, Denham, and Garnett (1998), Stone and Garnett (1998), Stone (2000), Haas, Molnar, and Serrano (2002); Rich (1999; 2004); Abelson (2002); Later contributions to theoretical basis to think tank ranking comes from McGann (2006), Frost and Vogel (2007), McDonald (2008), Weidenbaum (2010), Koellner (2013), Kuntz (2013).

Based on publication year order, starting from the oldest, each ranking and/or success studies on think tanks studies are summarised below: McGann's contemporary and regular/repeating ranking study of GGTTT (2008-2015) is examined in a separate, following, chapter/title due to its importance, citation taken and comprehensiveness. It seems that one of the earliest studies on measuring success and providing framework for ranking think tanks is suggested by Lindquist with an article published in Canadian Public Administration in 1993. According to Lindquist "there is little understanding of their diversity beyond well-known value orientations, nor of how they differ from other 'think tank' organisations such as government councils and academic research centres". Lindquist (1993) offered concepts and a framework for assessing the capacity and role of policy institutes and

also compares the size and activities of several well-known Canadian institutes.

A Washington D.C. based institution Burson-Marsteller prepared two reports in 1993 and 1997 named Perceptions of Think Tanks among Washington Influentials based on pools conducted in 1992 and 1996. The second report (1997) prepared by Andrew Rich, who pursued his doctoral education on a same main topic, in 1999. Rich also presented a paper at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, in 1998 titled “Think tanks as sources of expertise for Congress and the media”. Thus, Rich became a pioneering academician on think tank influence on politicians and media; however, he did not specifically focus on ranking (Burson-Marsteller 1993; 1997; Thunert, 2003: 16-17).

Sociologist Michael Dolny collects media citations of the 25 leading think tanks in the United States for the left-leaning report Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) and its magazine called Extra!. In his first measurement, Dolny employed a search of the Nexis database on January 1996 of major newspapers radio and TV transcripts for the year of 1995. Dolny distinguished the political orientation of think tanks into the categories as ‘conservative or right-leaning’, ‘centrist’ and ‘progressive or left-leaning’. Moreover, as his leading contribution to ranking studies, Dolny developed a single table showing media references of major think tanks. In 1995, while the Heritage Foundation was cited 2,268 times as winner, the 25th place went occupied by the Centre for Defence Information with 136 cites. From a left-of-centre perspective, these numbers indicate a huge imbalance in think tanks visibility (Dolny, 1996; Thunert, 2003: 16). The invisibility of left think tanks is a longstanding phenomenon (Dolny, 1996). FAIR ranking study in 2011 of top 25 major US think tanks rankings based on citations and/or mentions has a new methodology as explained in Fair! Magazine published on July 2012 by Dolny. “FAIR’s annual surveys of think tank citations in corporate media uses a sample based on lists of think tanks generated by political observers, notably the National Institute for Research Advancement (NIRA), Project Vote Smart and the University of Michigan library Political Science Resources list. Rankings are based on the number of stories that refer to the groups in the sample in the Nexis databases of US based major newspaper articles and US radio and TV transcript databases. For some of the later ranking studies, Fox Business Network transcripts were eliminated because they were added for the first time in 2011, and as a result would have exaggerated the trend between the years of 2008 and 2011” (Dolny, 2012). Each study covers statistics in the previous year. So, starting from 1996 to 2013, for 18 years, 12 Think Tanks Spectrum study were published in the “Fair! Magazine; no ranking studies were published in the years of 1998, 1999, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011.

Radaelli and Martini (1998) made allocation some significant space in their paper for major Italian think tanks and provided basis for assessing success through size of the office staff, number of researchers, total expenditures, and media exposure. Out of 69 total Italian think tanks, they compared 11 of them in most of these criteria. Therefore, they utilised complimentary criteria to measure success of think tanks in Italy.

Ruble (2000), Posen (2002) and Trimbath (2005), all published in *The International Economy (Magazine)*, conducted ranking studies of American think tanks focused on economic issues. Think tanks which are operating in the economic policy area were ranked by Ruble (2000) and the result was published in the *Magazine of International Economic Policy*. The press visibility of 12 economic policy think tanks and 171 their scholars between the years 1997-1999 were evaluated in order to present promising data for future studies. According to Ruble's study, the top three think tanks in press citations on economics were listed as the Brookings, the Institute for International Economics (IIE) and the American Enterprise Institute (AEI). On the other hand, Fred Bergsten, Robert Litan and Nicholas Lardy were found to be the top three individual economists. In 2002, Posen's study, which was also published in *Magazine of International Economic Policy*, dealt with the think tanks rankings overall period from 1997-2002 and 5 year average cites per economist. In this study, number of press citations by think tank and by scholar for 16 research organisations and 276 economists in the major new publications (*Asian Wall Street Journal, Business Week, Economist, Financial Times, Foreign Affairs, International Herald Tribune, New York Times, US Today, Wall Street Journal, Wall Street Journal Europe and the Washington Post*) were illustrated. It is surprisingly seen that the top think tanks by press citations are identical to Ruble's study. Brookings, IIE and AEI were ranked on the top in total cites. Also, the most cited individual think tank economist list were almost same and Bergsten, Litan, Lardy deserved to be ranked 1st, 2nd and 5th respectively.

In the UK, *Prospect Magazine* which is supported by the Shell Company have been conducted think tanks of the year awards since 2001. The main aim of the think tanks award is to encourage organizations that play a crucial role on the process of public and political thinking on policy questions. The selection of the best think tanks is basically based on some criteria. These are listed as; coherent selection of topics of importance, innovative and plausible policy prescription, rigor of analysis, influence on politics, influence on media and wider impact, convening power. On the other hand, the judge committee which comprises of different occupational groups like chief economists, editors of the journals, academicians, writers and commentaries, secretaries and others have the full authority in the selection process of the think tanks. The most of the awards are set for the

UK think tanks, in a separate award category; US think tanks are also chosen and honoured. Thus in the reports, it is feasible to follow the awards dedicated to US think tanks. In the reports, the way to list the successful think tanks is quite different than the other ranking reports. For instance, the reports of the UK Prospect Magazine do not only show the winner think tank in each award category, but also provide shortlists which consist of four successful think tanks including the winner. Beside one award category for the US, separate awards are given to the UK think tanks operating in various policy areas as international affairs, social policy, energy and environment, economy and finance (<http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk>).

In 1995, think tanks in Canada, which were categorised according to their political proximity, were ranked in terms of their mentions in the Globe and Mail compiled by Campbell between 1993 and 1995. In respect of the Globe and Mail study, which was summarised and cited by Thunert, the Fraser Institute, known its closeness to conservative-libertarian ideology, got the 1st place and the runner-ups were C.D. Howe, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, IRPP respectively. Thunert (2003) succeeded to design a ranking for the purpose of think tanks citations on Economic issues in US press between the years 1999-2000. This report was essentially based on the data of Ruble (2000) and made a crucial contribution to the rankings of US think tanks which are politically biased. As stated in the report, the Brookings Institute got the %30 of the citations on economic issues in the US press and ranked in the 1st place. Institute of International Economics and American Enterprise Institute became the runner-ups with the percentages 19 and 11 respectively.

After two pioneering studies published in the Magazine of International Economic Policy, Trimbath's (2005) study made a comprehensive assessment of the years 1997-2005. In this study; the ranking of think tanks in case of total citations, top thirty think tanks scholars, number of citations per month, number of scholars cited per month, political labels on the think tanks were analysed in detail. In the study totally 445 scholars in 17 institutions were examined to collect data for the publication. Accordingly, top 17 think tanks and top 30 think tanks scholar rank was created which represents the years between 1997-2005. As reported by Trimbath (2005); the Brookings Institution, IIE and AEI deserved to be listed in the top 3 ranking. On the other hand, Bergsten, Reischauer and Litan became the most cited think tanks scholar and got the top places in the ranking list.

In Canada, think tanks are very keen to benefit from web to reveal their finding in order to enhance their institution reputation. McNutt and Marchildon (2009) introduced visibility and relevance as web-impact measures of the think tanks. Thus, think tanks were listed and ranked in the

context of five policy subjects with important Canadian dimensions such as social policy, the child tax benefit, equalization, clean energy policy and peacemaking. In ranking of social policy web-based community, Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN) got the first place due to their considerable insider and broader community influence. For the ranking in child tax benefit web-based policy community, Canadian Council on Social Development deserved to be listed first and Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives became the runner-up. In the list of ranking in equalization web-based policy community, Institute for Research on Public Policy ranked on the top in case of their core policy network and broader policy community impact.

The rankings of South Korean think tanks provided by the Hankyung Business Newspaper, published in Korean, which are based on consolidation of four main scores for 1) “public influence”, 2) “quality of research papers”, 3) “competency of researchers”, and 4) “scale of the institute” (<http://magazine.hankyung.com>)

According to Roodman and Clark (2012), GGTTT is the most detailed accomplishment that classifies and measures the performance of think tanks; also when looked at the top think tanks, it is obvious that most of them are so familiar for the public and thus they are generally comes out on top. Roodman and Clark (2012) focused on the top 20 think tanks which were listed in 2011 GGTTT and measured their impact in cases of Facebook and twitter fans, web traffic rank, incoming links, Nexis hits and Google news hits citations. In other words, some indicators like how often a think tanks work is reported, cited, downloaded, followed were the fundamental issues of the report created by Roodman and Clark (2012).

Clark and Roodman (2013) managed to conduct an index on the public profile of think tanks. Thus, their fundamental objective was not to have a comprehensive method for the ranking. In the report prepared by Clark and Roodman, the main focus was to develop an index, in cases of, best at garnering public attention, scholarly citations, media mentions, web traffic, and social network followers of the think tanks. Moreover, the size of the each think tank in terms of operational expenses was also handled to compare with the size of think tanks profile. In this context, 18 US think tanks were listed alphabetically in terms of their expenses per year, age, social media fans, web traffic, incoming links, media mentions and scholarly citations. In addition to this, international development think tanks which were ranked by GGTTT in 2011 were also listed alphabetically in order to provide data for the think tanks expenses per year, age, social media fans, web traffic, incoming links, media mentions and scholarly citations.

Quantitative metrics can only help to get a better idea of the output or visibility of think tanks and their staff. Quantitative metrics can be useful for

capturing the “intermediate goods” (Weidenbaum, 2010) offered by think tanks. Such metrics have, however, little to say about the actual impact that think tanks, individually or collectively, might have on policy processes. Whether policy makers make use of these goods is a different question. Reputational data –based, for example, on surveys asking policy makers how much they value individual think tanks and their experts– can be used to try and capture impact. But again, such data are more about perceptions and tell us little about actual impact. Moreover, it is difficult to link such data with other quantitative data in a convincing manner. Given these analytical problems, ranking think tanks in terms of influence remains a highly problematic undertaking, even at the national level.

Impact analysis of think tanks is predominantly concerned with the media presence of think tanks (Abelson, 2002; Clark and Roodman, 2013; Groseclose and Milyo, 2005; McNutt and Marchildon, 2009; Posen, 2002; Rich and Weaver, 2000; Roodman and Clark, 2012; Ruble, 2000; Trimbath, 2005). However, the visibility of think tanks in the media only reflects their recognition by journalists and ordinary people. In contrast, “citation analysis draws not on the mediation of their texts by others but on the direct consumption by the community of practice to which the focal think tank is targeted to” (Frost and Vogel, 2007: 33-34). Frost and Vogel (2007) assumed bibliometric techniques to offer further advancements in impact analysis of think tanks.

Think tanks are still important if they produce high quality, objective knowledge products and services, not otherwise available to policy and decision makers (Bedford and Hadar, 2014: 64). Think tanks may not be necessary, as many in the literature suggest, if their focus have shifted from research to advocacy (Bedford and Hadar, 2014: 64). Therefore, it becomes important to measure success and make ranking based on research products and capacity of think tanks; and some increasing number of comprehensive or narrow studies take into considerations in their calculations factors such as citations, number of full-time equivalent research personnel, budget, external funding as indicators of research capacity and research- based influence.

### **Global Go To Think Tanks Index (GGTTT) Reports**

Launched in 2001, the Think Tanks, Politics and Public Policy Project was designed to provide factual and objective information about the state of independent policy advice in individual countries while establishing a framework for a cross-national comparison of five Regions of the World (Africa, Middle East, the Americas, Europe and Asia). This Project is an outgrowth of the international survey of think tanks conducted in 1999 that involved 817 think tanks in 126 countries around the World. This study

found that the number of think tanks varied from country and region to region (McGann and Johnson, 2005).

Authors in the book edited by McGann and Johnson (2005) utilised the think tanks data collected in 1999 and updated in December 2002, and presented and analysis of differences in think tanks that exist in the countries within each region. In order to reduce the pitfalls involved in making generalizations about an entire region, the specifics of the context are played out on a select group of countries in a given region. In each region, the countries were selected based on their different economic, political, social and legal systems in order to determine how variance in these factors impact think tanks and civil society organizations (McGann and Johnson, 2005).

GGTTT reports were prepared and directed by McGann (2008-2015) in the scope of Think Tanks Civil Society Program (TTCSP). International surveys of more than 1500 scholars, policy makers and journalists made great contribution to the ranking of over 6500 think tanks by using 18 criteria developed by TTCSP (<http://gotothinktank.com>). Think tanks were categorized in different ways regarding their region, research area and special achievement. In the reports top think tanks in the world were listed and also the number of the think tanks for each country was provided as part of data. Listing think tanks by region was critically significant; ranking reports were generated based on various regions. Definition and categories of regions vary in each report regarding the number of think tanks, economic contribution and importance of countries. In this context, top think tanks in North America, Central and South America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, Southern Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific were indexed in the recent GGTTT index reports (McGann, 2008-2015).

Think tanks are operating in numerous policy/research areas; therefore creating index lists in case of research area is overwhelmingly necessary. In GGTTT index reports, think tanks were ranked by their policy/research area. The research areas of the think tanks which were highly used in the index reports by McGann can be listed as International Development, Health Policy, Domestic Health Policy, Global Health Policy, Environment, Security and International Affairs, Domestic Economy Policy, Social Policy, Science and Technology, Defence and National Security, Education Policy, Energy and Resource Policy, Transparency and Good Governance, Foreign Policy and International Affairs. In research area indexes, most of the ranks were occupied by US and UK think tanks. In the recent reports, developing countries' think tanks have shown a promising achievement and ranked in the indexes (McGann, 2008-2015). Consequently, the think tanks ranking like GGTTT have a huge role to

encourage less-known think tanks in underdeveloped and developing countries. Thus, these think tanks might be more integrated to the public policy making processes. Moreover, GGTTT is the sole think tanks ranking effort covering many countries outside of US, UK and Canada.

In GGTTT index reports; there were also special achievement categories that think tanks were ranked. In these categories a diverse array of achievement list were taken basis to have an extensive index. In this context special achievement categories such as Think Tanks with the Most Innovative Policy/Idea Proposal, Best New Think Tanks, Outstanding Policy Oriented- Public Policy Research Program, Best Use of Internet to Engage the Public, Best use of Media to Communicate Programs and Research, Most Impact on Public Policy or Policy Debates, Best for Profit Think Tanks, Best Governed Affiliated Think Tanks, Best Institutional Collaboration involving two or more Think Tanks, Best Managed Think Tanks, Best New Idea or Paradigm Developed by a Think Tank, Best Policy Study/Report Produced by a Think Tank, Best Think Tank Conference, Best Think Tank Network, Best Think Tanks with Political Party Affiliation, Best University Affiliated Think Tanks, Best Use of Social Networks, Think Tanks to Watch, Think Tanks with the Best External Relations/Public Engagement Program, Think Tanks with the Best Use of the Internet and Think Tanks with Annual Operating Budgets of Less Than \$5 Million USD were used in order to rank the think tanks (McGann, 2008-2015). In terms of ranking award categories, McGann's index reports cover quite different policy areas and regions; the closest follower is the UK Prospect Magazine with around five categories.

When the GGTTT index reports are examined, it is possible to claim that the annual reports have a large scale of coverage of the think tanks in the world. Due to having many categories, many think tanks from variety of countries have been included in the indexes. Thus, GGTTT index reports are cited by the academic scholars who studies on the relevant topics. Moreover, many other ranking studies firstly start their discussion by addressing to GGTTT as analysed in the various parts of this paper.

## **Conclusion**

Think tanks ranking and success measurement studies have been under development in the last two decades. The literature on think tanks success and ranking is relatively non-integrated. Starting from 2001 with the UK based Prospect Magazine's studies; several evaluation and assessment of successes of think tanks have been regularly calculated and broadcasted; however there were some one-shot pioneering studies on think tanks ranking. Most of the ranking studies are criticised from several aspects, even the studies by the UK Prospect Magazine have not any citation and critics at all in its 13 years of appearance despite its' potential contribution to the think

thanks ranking literature. Several think tank ranking, impact and success studies have existed since late 1990s and early 2000s; nonetheless these studies remain separate, non-integrated and mostly not comprehensive beside McGann's reports. Some of these ranking studies repeat annually, some others are occasional. Also there are ranking studies cover a relatively long periods at one ranking like Posen (2002), on the other hand several studies mostly focus on a single year like the UK Prospect Magazine and McGann's GGTTT.

Some ranking and success studies cover whole world (every or almost every country) (McGann, 2008-2015), some others focus a couple of countries (The UK Prospect Magazine, 2001-2014) and most focus on a single country (South Korea, The Hankung Business). Most ranking studies focus solely on US (Ruble, 2000; Posen, 2002; Trimbath, 2005) or US and another country, mostly Canada (Thunert, 2003) and UK.

Two country comparative studies, especially focusing on developed countries, are also seen. Ruble's (2002), Posen's (2002) and Trimbath's (2005) studies published by the International Economy (Magazine) predominantly concentrate on rankings for economics; others compile rankings at the same time on several different topics (McGann, 2008-2015; The UK Prospect Magazine, 2001-2014). With the leadership of McGann, GGTTT prepared and published annually since 2008 have a distinguished place among all ranking studies on think tanks. GGTTT index reports are comprehensive and influential; they attract interest both from practitioners and academicians.

Think tanks ranking studies seldom cite each other; thus the main of aim of this paper is to summarise and scrutinise ranking studies available in English literature including theoretical background and pioneering studies focusing on success measurement. Ranking studies published on the International Economy Magazine repeat only three times under the authorship of different researchers. On the other hand, the Prospect Magazine and GGTTT continue to provide ranking annually since their introduction in the years of 2001 and 2008 respectively.

Only two ranking studies were based on data of another study. The first one was published by Roodman and Clark (2012). Both McGann (2008) in his initial top successful think tank study and Roodman and Clark (2012) based on McGann's ranking study made an alphabetical list instead of ranking. The second ranking study based on data of another study was completed by Thunert (2003: 17), which compiled data based on Ruble (2000) and ranks nine think tanks. In addition to annual GGTTT index reports, three TIE studies by Ruble, Posen, Trimbath on think tanks ranking presented almost no theoretical background, even they successfully and directly focused on ranking of think tanks and their experts. On the other

hand, Abelson (2002), Rich (1999), McDonald (2008) reviewed theory and/or other aspects of think tanks development and allocated ranking some limited and secondary place in their studies. McNutt and Marchildon (2009) had a more balanced assessment between theoretical background and actual ranking on ranking and success of think tanks.

In some studies of think tanks ranking and success studies, citation becomes one of the few indicators to measure success (e.g, Thunert, 2003; Roodman and Clark, 2012). Thunert (2003) utilised citations and newspaper mentions to measure success of Canadian and American think tanks. Studies published in and conducted for TIE utilised only citations for the measurement of think tanks success and rankings in the area of economy in the US. Thunert (2003) uses both quantitative and qualitative measurement of think tanks impact. Detailed methodological explanation was not maintained in the most of the ranking and success studies of think tanks. However, a few studies like McGann (2008-2014), Haas, Molnar, and Serrano (2002); Trimbath (2005), Dolny (2012), the Prospect Magazine (2001-2014); McNutt and Marchildon (2009) furnished a detailed methodology to the readers and researchers.

To sum up, as an unofficial actor, think tanks play increasing research and advocacy roles in the process of public policymaking. Especially in the last two decades, the number of think tanks in all over the world has increased dramatically. In a similar fashion, diversification and increment of the think tanks rankings have been observed. In order to understand and encourage think tanks, well-designed, complementary, regional ranking papers and in-depth success studies and stories are highly needed. This paper attempted to create an outline which covers different types of ranking and success studies so as to fill the void in this part of recent think tanks literature. In this context, GGTTT index reports which are regarded as the most outstanding and contemporary studies were discussed in detail. Thus, it is possible to claim that the ranking reports which are policy issue based, regional based, worldwide based, special achievement based like GGTTT might lead to future studies in different countries. Still, we need more ranking studies to include other countries which are not well-cited/covered but have many think tanks like China, India, France, Argentina, Russia, and Japan.

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