

Think Tanks:

Who's Hot



BY ADAM S. POSEN

Independent public policy research institutions, aka “Think Tanks,” are major contributors to the policy debate in the US and worldwide. Drawing on a small but well-defined community of scholars with the combination of academic training and practical policy interests – and usually some policymaking experience – these institutions influence legislative and executive decisions, educate the public about policy issues, and bring together disparate interest groups in substantive discussion. They also receive a significant share of foundation, corporate, and NGO funding of policy relevant research, as well as provide advice, and sometimes high-level appointees, to the US government and the major international organizations.

Small wonder then that the relative influence of particular think tanks and of individual scholars within the community elicits a great deal of interest, even for those not involved in the game themselves. An article in the September/October 2000 issue of this magazine, evaluating the press visibility of specifically economic policy think tanks and their scholars over 1997-1999, attracted a great deal of attention¹. In it, the top three tanks in press citations on economics were found to be Brookings, the Institute for International Economics [IIE], and the American Enterprise Institute [AEI], and the top three individual economists were Fred Bergsten of IIE, and Robert Litan and Nicholas Lardy of Brookings.

Large parts of the think tank community were pleased if not surprised by the study and its results. Beyond the obvious satisfactions for those of us affiliated with the top ranked institutions, there was a useful benchmarking aspect for a profession whose ability to track effectiveness often seems limited. While

Adam Posen, is Senior Fellow at the Institute for International Economics.

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888 16th Street, N.W., Suite 740
Washington, D.C. 20006

Phone: 202-861-0791 • Fax: 202-861-0790
www.international-economy.com
editor@international-economy.com

The latest study comparing economic think tank visibility in the media. The hot economists and hot topics.

And Who's Not

press visibility is only one measure of a think tank's or individual economist's influence, it is an important one, given the well-known feedback loops between visibility and access to policymakers, credibility of research, public awareness of proposals, and breadth of support for those proposals.

It also is a reasonably objective measure of influence. Reporters for the major mainstream press have an interest in presenting authoritative and representative views on the important policy issues of the day – they will quote those people who are most useful to them on these criteria. To whatever degree particular think tank scholars are covered more because of their ability to clearly convey their analyses, that probably correlates with similar added impact on Capitol Hill and in meetings with decision-makers. Moreover, thanks to electronically searchable databases, the extent of press coverage of individuals can be verified without bias.

For these reasons, we undertook to extend Nicolas

Brookings, IIE, and AEI are ranked 1-

2-3. Cato is in fourth place with 341.

Ruble's earlier survey, both in time and over institutions considered. In this article, we report the results of a study of the number of press citations by think tank and by scholar for 16 research institutions in the major news publications over a five-year period, July 1, 1997 through June 30, 2002². The basic principle for inclu-

Table 1

The Competitors

The American Enterprise Institute (AEI)
The Brookings Institution (Brookings)
The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (Carnegie)
The Cato Institute (Cato)
The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)
The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP)
The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)
The Economic Policy Institute (EPI)
The Economic Strategy Institute (ESI)
The Heritage Foundation (Heritage)
The Hoover Institution (Hoover)
The Hudson Institute (Hudson)
The Institute for International Economics (IIE)
The National Center for Policy Analysis (NCPA)
The Progressive Policy Institute (PPI)
The Urban Institute (Urban)

sion was that the scholar in question had to be listed by one of the considered think tanks as a senior-level (non-visiting, but not necessarily resident) researcher with primary areas of work in economics.

There were several questions that only this longer study, which spans changing agendas and presidential administrations, could answer, in addition to giving those included updates on "How'm I doin'?"

- **First**, is the demand for think tank commentary driven by the relative priority of differing news stories? So, for example, would the number of

Table 2

Think Tank Rankings for Overall Period from 1997-2002 and 5 Year Average Cites per Economist

TOTAL CITES 5 YR RANK	THINK TANK	TOTAL CITES	TOTAL NO. OF ECONOMISTS	5 YR AVG CITES PER ECONOMIST
1	Brookings Institution	1244	37	33.6
2	Institute for International Economics	771	12	64.3
3	American Enterprise Institute	624	19	32.8
4	Cato Institute	341	22	15.5
5	Economic Policy Institute	265	16	16.6
6	Hoover Institution	257	51	5.0
7	Heritage Foundation	227	16	14.2
8	Urban Institute	194	15	12.9
9	Center on Budget and Policy Priorities	181	13	13.9
10	National Center for Policy Analysis	106	12	8.8
12	Council on Foreign Relations	105	10	10.5
11	Economic Strategy Institute	104	6	17.3
13	Carnegie Endowment for International Peace	96	8	12.0
15	Progressive Policy Institute	96	9	10.7
14	Center for Strategic and International Studies	79	20	4.0
16	Hudson Institute	28	10	2.8

And bottom line, which scholars are doing well in the press? Over the last five years, the top three think tanks by press citations are the same as in 1997-1999: Brookings first, IIE second, and AEI third in total cites, and IIE first, Brookings second, and AEI third if ranked by citations per economist, though AEI has closed the gap on both counts in recent years. The rest of the economics think tanks have a long way to go before catching up with the big three. The most cited individual think tank economists were pretty stable over the five year period as well: Fred Bergsten first, Robert Litan second, with Robert Reischauer moving into third place after taking over the Urban Institute (Nicholas Lardy, who was in third from 1997-1999, moved to fifth place overall).

citations given to economists working on international issues decline as the Asian Crisis receded and Monicagate and the 2000 Presidential election came to the fore? (Short answer, yes, but in 2001-2002 global issues came back.)

- **Second**, to what degree does the partisan environment in Washington affect who is quoted? Are more conservative think tanks and economists given greater coverage under a Republican presidency? (Short answer, yes, but not hugely so.)
- **Third**, are there consistent personalities and qualities to think tanks? Or do the rankings and impact of them reflect changing fashions? (Short answer, no, those on top tend to stay on top, and their staffs tend to be stable, reinforcing the rankings.)
- **Fourth**, are there patterns in which publications favor which think tanks? For example, do domestically based and oriented US publications pay less attention to global economic issues than some international publications? (Short answer, yes, indeed, global coverage is greater in global papers.)
- **Finally**, how do the most cited economists compare to their peers, both to other think tank economists and to well-known academics, in terms of their visibility? (Short answer, the best-known think tank economists tend to gather at the same think tanks, and to garner citations comparable to all but a pair of academic superstars – guess who?)

1. THINK TANK BY THINK TANK

The Competitors [*see Table 1*] are sixteen think tanks well-known in Washington and worldwide³. Some are multi-issue, like Hoover or CSIS, while some focus solely on economic issues, like ESI, but all are ranked here solely on the basis of their economics scholars' citations, to compare like with like. The political spectrum runs from libertarian right like Cato to labor-backed left like EPI. And some have a dedicated domestic fo-



Former press favorites **Michael Boskin (54)** and **Lester Thurow (98)** have lost some visibility.



C. Fred Bergsten of IIE comes in first overall.

cus, like the Urban Institute, while others are dedicated to international issues, like CFR.

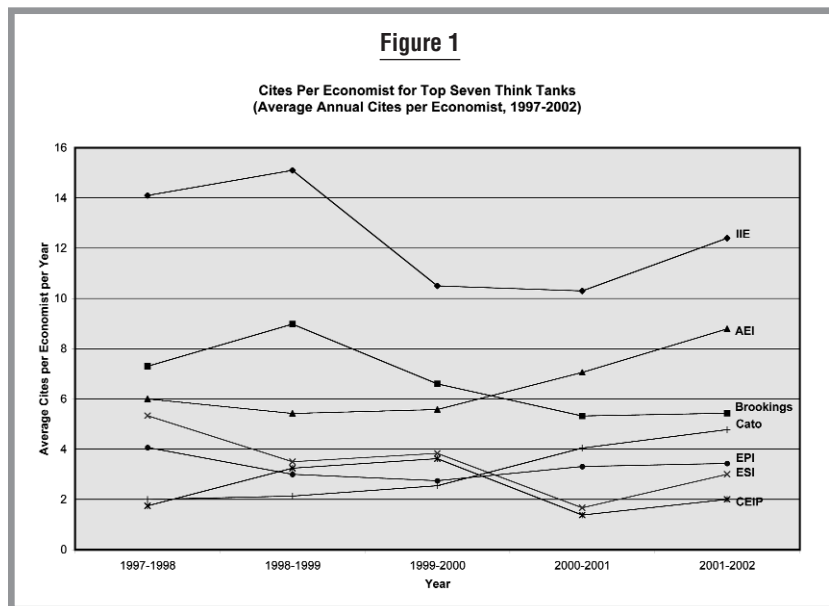
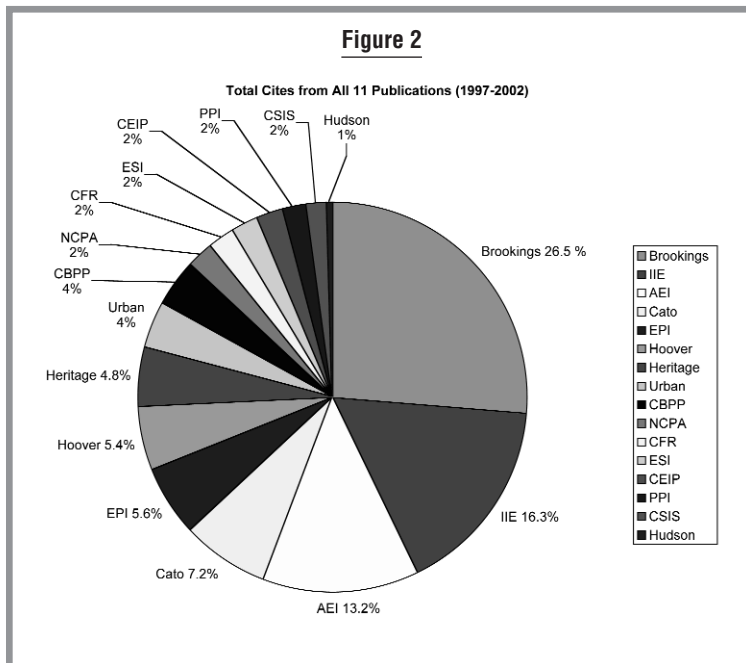
As can be seen in **Table 2**, Brookings, IIE, and AEI are ranked 1-2-3 in total cites, with Brookings having nearly twice as many cites (1244) in total over the five years as either IIE (771) or AEI (624). Cato is in fourth place with 341, behind the top three by a noticeable margin,

but also a comfortable amount ahead of the remaining think tanks. EPI, Hoover, Heritage, Urban, and CBPP are clustered together in the same range (180-265 cites over five years), with the remaining seven far behind. For think tanks whose primary focus is other than economics (CFR, CSIS), their low overall ranking should not be a surprise.

In terms of partisanship, there seems to be quite a bit of even-handedness by the press, with the most middle of the road/academic think tanks most cited, and an even split between left and right think tanks in the next tier of visibility. This was consistent over the period, with Brookings number 1 in total cites all five years, IIE in second in 4 out of 5 years, and AEI in third in 4 out of 5 years. The

most noticeable improvements in visibility were for the Urban Institute after Reischauer took over, and recently by PPI.

Of course, think tanks vary greatly in size of staff. Hoover (with 51 economists) and Brookings (37) are far larger than any of the other institutions considered, while ESI (6) and PPI (9) are practically boutique-size tanks. While total impact of a think tank's staff should be related to number, impact per scholar is also of interest. Thus, in **Figure 1** we track year-by-year citations per economist as a measure of average visibility, and per-



haps quality as judged by the press. The overall rankings change little, with the same top six think tanks, but IIE comes out on top by a wide margin (12.9 cites per economist per year), with Brookings (6.7) and AEI (6.6) essentially tied following behind. Both AEI and Cato have been steadily increasing their citations per economist in recent years, Cato more than doubling (to a rate of around 5 cites per economist per year).

Turning to impact on the press rather than relative to each other, **Figure 2** shows the shares of total cites from all 11 publications considered given to economists from each think tank. Brookings is again on top, with 26.5% share, followed by IIE (16.3%) and AEI (13.2%). Cato is clearly in fourth, with 7.2%, and EPI, Hoover, and Heritage are all around 5% market share.

Continued on page 54

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Table 3

Think Tank Rankings Publication Cite – Summaries and Domestic and International Total Cites

5 Yr Rank	Institution	WPost	NYT	WSJ	USA	BW	Domestic Total	% of Total Domestic	FT	AWSJ	WSJE	IHT	Econ	Intl Total	% of Total Intl	
1	Brookings Institution	343	303	168	93	87	994	29.4	54	58	64	13	48	237	18.8	
2	Institute for International Economics	156	92	116	28	18	410	12.1	77	99	85	56	28	345	27.3	
3	American Enterprise Institute	194	85	100	13	23	415	12.3	45	49	57	44	10	205	16.2	
4	Cato Institute	92	49	79	26	13	259	7.7	17	26	31	2	4	80	6.3	
5	Economic Policy Institute	56	102	31	21	17	227	6.7	12	11	12	1	2	38	3.0	
6	Hoover Institution	32	34	71	5	26	168	5.0	4	34	43	6	2	89	7.1	
7	Heritage Foundation	82	29	31	26	3	171	5.1	14	13	19	2	2	50	4.0	
8	Urban Institute	58	60	23	27	8	176	5.2	11	2	4	0	1	18	1.4	
9	Center on Budget and Policy Priorities	81	48	18	15	7	169	5.0	4	4	4	0	0	12	1.0	
10	National Center for Policy Analysis	11	27	38	4	7	87	2.6	4	5	9	1	0	19	1.5	
12	Council on Foreign Relations	3	14	9	3	0	29	0.9	26	6	7	4	12	55	4.4	
11	Economic Strategy Institute	23	16	14	12	6	71	2.1	10	12	8	3	0	33	2.6	
13	Carnegie Endowment for International Peace	26	21	9	6	1	63	1.9	13	4	8	2	2	29	2.3	
15	Progressive Policy Institute	35	7	10	9	18	79	2.3	3	5	5	1	3	17	1.3	
14	Center for Strategic and International Studies	18	16	6	8	3	51	1.5	4	1	1	16	1	23	1.8	
16	Hudson Institute	6	3	5	2	0	16	0.5	5	3	4	0	0	12	1.0	
Total Breakdown for All Think Tanks							3385							1262		
Total Cites for All Think Tanks over Period							4647									

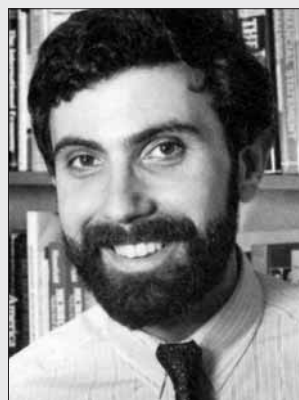
Different publications, however, have different tastes. Grouping the press into two categories, Domestic (BW, NYT, USA, WP, WSJ) and International (AWSJ, Economist, FT, IHT, WSJE), one finds a significant divergence⁴. **Table 3** gives the breakdown by category and publication. Brookings dominates in the domestic publications, with 29.4% of total cites, and is particularly relied upon by *Business Week* and *USA Today* relative to other think tanks. AEI (12.3%) and IIE (12.1%) are

nearly identical with each other both in share and (perhaps more surprisingly) in distribution across the five domestic press outlets. As might be expected Cato and Hoover play disproportionately well in the *Wall Street Journal*, while EPI gets far more coverage in the *New York Times* than in any other outlet. In interestingly bipartisan fashion, *The Washington Post* gives a great

AEI and Cato have been steadily increasing their citations per economist.

deal of coverage to both Heritage and to CBPP economists as compared to the other major news outlets.

Three major differences are apparent in the international press' coverage. First, Brookings and IIE switch places, with IIE grabbing a 27.3% share versus Brookings' 18.8% (AEI remains in third with 16.2%). Second, as these numbers make clear, there is a concentration at the top, with the share of the first three think tanks rising by 10% versus their piece of the pie in the domestic market. Presumably in the world press there is an emphasis on brand names, and displacement of some of the exposure of the less well-known US think tanks by



Two standouts are **Jeffrey Sachs** with 375 cites, and **Paul Krugman** with an incredible 701 cites.

Asian, European or other local institutions. Third, EPI loses a great deal of ground in the international market (3.0% vs. 6.7% domestic press share), in line with its more domestically focused mission.

In terms of individual publications, IIE scholars get far and away the most mention in the *Asian WSJ*, even in comparison to Cato and Hoover. Brookings scholars are rarely cited in the *International Herald Tribune*, despite their huge share of *The Post* and *Times* citations in the domestic market. The *Economist* clearly favors Brookings and IIE on both a total and per economist basis, but it is also the publication in which CFR's few economists have the most impact.

2. INDIVIDUAL ECONOMIST TALKING HEADS

Of course, it is individual scholars who are both the sources of these citations and the constituent components of these think tanks⁵. If press citations are at least a partial indicator of influence on public policy, then the most cited in the press are the policy gurus to be reckoned with. Admittedly, it is also more fun to consider rankings of individuals than of institutions, particularly among the (ahem) modest members of the think tank community.

Table 4 gives the overall and year-by-year ranking by number of press citations of the top 30 economists at the sixteen think tanks considered. C. Fred Bergsten of IIE comes in first overall (with 299 cites), and having ranked number one in three of the five years. Robert Litan of Brookings (268) is second, ranking first in the two years Bergsten did not, but also dropping to fourth place in the most recent year, perhaps as regulatory issues receded under the Bush administration. In third place, Robert Reischauer (222), now President of the Urban Institute, formerly of

Table 4

Thirty Highest-Ranking Scholars (Five Year Rank and Breakdown of Annual Rankings)

5 Yr Rank	Scholar	Institution	Total Cites by Fellow	Rank 7/1/97-6/30/98	Rank 7/1/98-6/30/99	Rank 7/1/99-6/30/00	Rank 7/1/00-6/30/01	Rank 7/1/01-6/30/02
1	C. Fred Bergsten	IIE	299	1	1	2	3	1
2	Robert E. Litan	Brookings	268	3	2	1	1	4
3	Robert D. Reischauer	Brookings/Urban	222	9	3	3	2	3
4	James K. Glassman	AEI	187	2	4	10	5	2
5	Nicholas R. Lardy	Brookings	149	6	5	5	14	7
6	Morris Goldstein	IIE	120	5	6	30	12	12
7	Kevin A. Hassett	AEI	116	30	13	5	4	5
8	Jared Bernstein	EPI	112	15	7	10	8	8
9	John H. Makin	AEI	108	11	21	26	5	6
10	Henry J. Aaron	Brookings	89	14	8	10	14	28
11	Gary Clyde Hufbauer	IIE	87	N/R	17	4	9	8
12	Clyde V. Prestowitz, Jr.	ESI	79	7	13	15	N/R	19
13	William G. Gale	Brookings	75	11	15	5	17	28
14	Robert Greenstein	CBPP	71	16	27	26	7	N/R
14	Adam S. Posen	IIE	71	21	9	30	21	10
16	Bruce Katz	Brookings	70	30	18	15	10	22
17	Bruce Bartlett	NCPA	67	N/R	N/R	13	11	28
18	Alice Rivlin	Brookings	64	N/R	9	8	19	N/R
19	Will Marshall	PPI	60	N/R	24	13	12	22
20	Anders Åslund	CEIP	56	21	12	15	N/R	N/R
21	Robert W. Crandall	Brookings	51	21	N/R	N/R	N/R	10
22	Nicholas Eberstadt	AEI	50	N/R	24	12	29	28
23	Michael D. Tanner	Cato	49	4	18	N/R	20	N/R
24	Daniel J. Mitchell	Heritage	47	30	N/R	N/R	18	19
25	Jeffrey J. Schott	IIE	46	N/R	30	18	N/R	24
26	Edwin Feulner	Heritage	45	N/R	16	26	22	N/R
27	Gary Burtless	Brookings	41	21	21	26	N/R	N/R
28	Milton Friedman	Hoover	38	21	18	N/R	N/R	N/R
28	Jeff Faux	EPI	38	N/R	N/R	20	22	N/R
28	Benn Steil	CFR	38	N/R	N/R	20	22	14

NOTE: N/R notes that a scholar was not on the Top 30 list during a given year.

Brookings, has ranked #2 or #3 in each of the past four years.

No other think tank economist accumulated over 200 press cites in the last five years, and in fact only six others topped 100 total. Two AEI scholars, Kevin Hassett (#7, 116) and John Makin (#9, 108), have shown the steadiest climbs up the rankings, showing up in the #4 through #6 slots in both of the last two years. Combined with the return of James Glassman (#4, 187) to the top 5, the second Bush era seems to have been coincident with a rise in AEI's visibility. Brookings has four scholars in the top 10 and nine in the top 30 from its staff of 37, and IIE has two in the top 10 and five in the top 30 from its staff of 12.

Clearly, the salience of scholars' topics of research to the current policy agenda (and press interests) has significant ef-

fects on their visibility in the press, once one goes below the top three. Glassman of AEI shot up to the number 2 position in 2001-2002 after investors' concerns about financial markets became paramount – it must be noted, however, that unlike the other 29 scholars on this list, Glassman has had a weekly column in *The Post* for most of this five-year period, and Post citations account for just under 50% of his total coverage. Nicholas Lardy of Brookings (#5, 149) has clearly had his visibility vary in line with the prominence of China in popular consciousness, just as Morris Goldstein of IIE (#6, 120) has seen his rank move up and down with the prominence of emerging market and IMF issues, though both have stayed in the top 30 throughout. On the domestic side, Jared Bernstein of EPI (#8, 112) has tended to gain rank in election years, reflecting his labor-issue focus. Robert Crandall of Brookings (#21, 51) and

Nicholas Eberstadt of AEI (#22, 50) are examples of individuals who had single banner years when their particular issues (transportation and Korea, respectively) became hot.

Breaking down the individual citations and ranks by period (*see Table 5*) further illustrates how the policy agenda drives prominence. During the



Among the top ranked scholars, Robert Litan has the most domestic press citations (217).

Table 5

Changes in Cites by Fellows During Periods from 1997-1999 (Heat of the Asian Crisis) and 2000-2002 (Election/Recession)

5 Yr Rank	Scholar	Institution	Total Cites by Fellow	Cites by Fellow for 1997-1999	Cites by Fellow for 2000-2002
1	C. Fred Bergsten	IIE	299	165	87
2	Robert E. Litan	Brookings	268	120	84
3	Robert D. Reischauer	Brookings/Urban	222	96	82
4	James K. Glassman	AEI	187	100	69
5	Nicholas R. Lardy	Brookings	149	80	45
6	Morris Goldstein	IIE	120	75	37
7	Kevin A. Hassett	AEI	116	28	64
8	Jared Bernstein	EPI	112	46	48
9	John H. Makin	AEI	108	36	62
10	Henry J. Aaron	Brookings	89	43	27
11	Gary Clyde Hufbauer	IIE	87	14	47
12	Clyde V. Prestowitz, Jr.	ESI	79	57	19
13	William G. Gale	Brookings	75	42	25
14	Robert Greenstein	CBPP	71	23	38
14	Adam S. Posen	IIE	71	32	31
16	Bruce Katz	Brookings	70	22	33
17	Bruce Bartlett	NCPA	67	21	30
18	Alice Rivlin	Brookings	64	22	22
19	Will Marshall	PPI	60	12	31
20	Anders Åslund	CEIP	56	31	9
21	Robert W. Crandall	Brookings	51	25	22
22	Nicholas Eberstadt	AEI	50	16	17
23	Michael D. Tanner	Cato	49	20	21
24	Daniel J. Mitchell	Heritage	47	13	27
25	Jeffrey J. Schott	IIE	46	15	17
26	Edwin Feulner	Heritage	45	21	15
27	Gary Burtless	Brookings	41	23	8
28	Milton Friedman	Hoover	38	24	11
28	Jeff Faux	EPI	38	12	15
28	Benn Steil	CFR	38	1	24
Total Cites by All Fellows in Time Period:			1235	1067	

1997-1999 period, when the Asian Financial Crisis was the dominant economic policy story, such international specialists as Bergsten, Lardy, Goldstein, and Prestowitz had on average nearly twice as many total cites as during 2000-2002, when US domestic politics and policy were prominent. The effect does not seem to be symmetric, however, with most domestic specialists, including Reischauer, Bernstein, Bartlett, and Rivlin, remaining relatively steady across the two periods or increasing a little in coverage. Of course, individual factors also were at play, as can be seen in the rise of particular scholars, the reduced citation of those approaching retirement, or the fate of those with one issue of declining salience. Nonetheless, the message seems to be that economics coverage expands to encompass international events when they draw attention from policymak-

Table 6

Domestic and International Total Cites for Each Scholar

5 Yr Rank	Scholar	Institution	WPost	NYT	WSJ	USA	BW	Domestic Total	FT	AWSJ	WSJE	IHT	Econ	Intl Total
1	C. Fred Bergsten	IIE	61	44	37	7	4	153	34	40	30	26	11	141
2	Robert E. Litan	Brookings	58	79	38	19	23	217	7	15	15	5	8	50
3	James K. Glassman	AEI	90	5	22	3	4	124	7	9	16	30	1	63
4	Robert Reischauer (left Brookings 2/00)	Brookings/Urban	70	70	30	27	0	197	10	2	8	1	4	25
5	Nicholas R. Lardy	Brookings	19	22	15	6	11	73	24	26	11	3	9	73
6	Morris Goldstein	IIE	23	14	23	9	1	70	4	21	14	6	4	49
7	Kevin A. Hassett	AEI	35	14	24	3	8	84	6	9	12	4	1	32
8	Jared Bernstein	EPI	14	63	12	7	7	103	3	2	3	0	1	9
9	John H. Makin	AEI	20	22	17	0	3	62	10	12	13	7	4	46
10	Henry J. Aaron	Brookings	34	31	9	6	4	84	1	0	2	0	2	5
11	Gary Clyde Hufbauer	IIE	13	5	26	2	1	47	5	11	17	5	2	40
12	Clyde V. Prestowitz, Jr.	ESI	16	8	13	8	6	51	7	11	7	3	0	28
13	William G. Gale	Brookings	23	17	15	4	14	73	0	0	2	0	0	2
14	Adam S. Posen	IIE	8	7	7	8	2	32	10	10	9	3	5	37
14	Robert Greenstein	CBPP	27	22	8	8	0	65	1	3	2	0	0	6
16	Bruce Katz	Brookings	24	13	3	18	1	59	1	2	3	0	5	11
17	Bruce Bartlett	NCPA	5	15	22	3	5	50	4	4	8	1	0	17
18	Alice Rivlin	Brookings	26	14	8	4	5	57	2	1	0	2	1	6
19	Will Marshall	PPI	26	6	4	6	10	52	1	2	3	0	2	8
20	Anders Åslund	CEIP	9	12	7	3	1	32	9	3	7	1	1	21
21	Robert W. Crandall	Brookings	4	12	17	3	2	38	2	3	8	0	0	13
22	Nicholas Eberstadt	AEI	8	12	7	2	0	29	0	11	7	0	2	20
23	Michael D. Tanner	Cato	17	6	14	6	1	44	0	2	3	0	0	5
24	Daniel J. Mitchell	Heritage	14	9	8	2	2	35	3	2	7	0	0	12
25	Jeffrey J. Schott	IIE	18	6	2	0	2	28	6	3	2	4	2	17
26	Edwin Feulner	Heritage	26	3	3	0	1	33	2	7	2	0	1	12
27	Gary Burtless	Brookings	9	18	5	1	1	34	0	0	2	0	5	7
28	Milton Friedman	Hoover	1	4	17	1	0	23	0	7	6	2	0	15
28	Jeff Faux	EPI	13	10	3	0	2	28	7	2	1	0	0	10
28	Benn Steil	CFR	0	5	3	2	0	10	11	1	5	0	10	27
28	William A. Niskanen	Cato	16	12	5	1	1	35	1	1	1	0	0	3

ers, rather than domestic and international scholars fighting for a fixed pool of total economics coverage.

Considering the citation proclivities of particular publications (Table 6), parallel to the categorization for think tanks in the previous section, supports the picture that partisanship plays a

very limited role in press visibility. The *WSJ* and its two sister publications are rather inclusive in their citations, spreading them around the think tanks, although giving particular voice to Bruce Bartlett of NCPA in comparison to other publications. Similarly, the *Times*, while clearly favoring Bernstein of EPI compared to other publications, did reach out to a number of scholars from all think tanks, including Heritage and Cato. Leaving aside the set-asides for Glassman, the Post also drew its citations relatively even handedly across the political spectrum of think tanks. Clearly, however, economists at the more academically oriented think tanks (AEI, Brookings, IIE, excepting Hoover) drew the bulk of the citations from all the publications⁶.

Unlike perceived partisanship, domestic versus international focus of research counts for a lot in determining where

AEI and Cato have been steadily increasing their citations per economist.

Table 7

Think Tank Rankings without Most-Cited Economist

Think Tank (Ranked by Cites per Economist with Most Cited Economist)	Most Cited Economist	5-Yr Total Cites w/o Most Cited Economist	Number of Economists w/o Most Cited Economist	Cites per Economist w/o Most Cited Economist	% of Total Cites w/o Most Cited Economist
Institute for International Economics	C. Fred Bergsten	472	12	39.3	61.2
Brookings Institution	Robert Litan	976	36	27.1	78.5
American Enterprise Institute	James Glassman	437	18	24.3	70.0
Cato Institute	Michael Tanner	292	21	13.9	85.6
Heritage Foundation	Edwin Feulner	182	15	12.1	80.2
Economic Policy Institute	Jared Bernstein	153	15	10.2	57.7
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities	Robert Greenstein	110	12	9.2	60.8
Council on Foreign Relations	Benn Steil	67	9	7.4	63.8
Urban Institute	Robert Reischauer	97	14	6.9	50.0
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace	Anders Aslund	40	7	5.7	41.7
Hoover Institution	Milton Friedman	224	50	4.5	87.2
Progressive Policy Institute	Will Marshall	36	8	4.5	37.5
National Center for Policy Analysis	Bruce Bartlett	39	11	3.5	36.8
Economic Strategy Institute	Clyde Prestowitz	17	5	3.4	16.3
Center for Strategic and International Studies	Edward Luttwak	58	19	3.1	73.4
Hudson Institute	Dennis Avery	12	9	1.3	42.9

one is cited. Among the top ranked scholars, Litan has the most domestic press citations (217), with Reischauer (197) in second and Bergsten (153) in third. In the international press, however, the situation changes significantly, with Bergsten (139) way ahead, China expert Lardy (73) moving into second place, Litan (50) dropping to fourth, and Reischauer (25) into eleventh. More than half the total citations in the *IHT* go to AEI and IIE

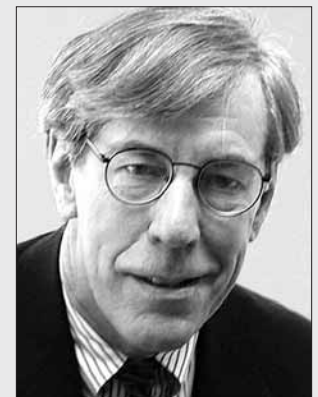
labor economist Jared Bernstein of EPI, and the budget expert Robert Greenstein of CBPP. Meanwhile, most of those economists focused on international issues are evenly covered in both the international and the domestic press. It would seem that an emphasis on international research generally leads to more variable visibility, but also to exposure in a wider range of publications.

Given the focus on individual scholars, it is reasonable to ask whether any think tanks consist of one-man-bands, that is, whether the visibility of a single economist in the press is on its own the source of most of his home institution's visibility. **Table 7** addresses this question by removing the most cited economist at each think tank in our sample from the institutional totals. The most important point is that the ranking of think tanks is essentially unchanged for the top half of

IIE scholars get far and away the most mention in the Asian WSJ.

scholars, while Brookings and IIE corral more than half of the *Economist's* coverage (though Benn Steil's top individual total there of 10 cites gives CFR a presence in that one publication). The remaining international publications tend to spread coverage around like their domestic counterparts.

Several economists who are big in the domestic press go nearly unmentioned in the international press, including the tax scholars Henry Aaron and William Gale of Brookings, the



*The most noticeable improvements in visibility were for the Urban Institute after **Robert Reischauer** took over.*

the rankings even after this removal, either on total cites or on cites per remaining economists.

For some of the smaller institutions, however, the percent of total cites accruing to the remaining economists can be quite small, as low as 16.3% for ESI (without Prestowitz), or 36.8%

*The Economist clearly favors
Brookings and IIE.*

for NCPA (without Bartlett). The flattest institutions by this criterion are Hoover (87.2% without Milton Friedman) and Cato (85.6% without Michael Tanner). Perhaps conservatives are egalitarians after all. In any event, among the top eight think tanks, only one (EPI) gets more than 40% of its citations from a single individual.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that think tank economists do not have a monopoly on press citations about public policy issues. Several well-known academic economists, often but not always with high-level policymaking experience, are also very visible in the major press. The most prominent of them are comparable in exposure to the most widely cited think tank economists. Taking Bergsten (299) and Litan (268) as the

*Cato and Hoover play disproportionately
well in the Wall Street Journal,
while EPI gets far more coverage
in the New York Times.*

benchmark for five-year citation totals among think tank economists, the other most familiar names are in the same ballpark: Alan Blinder has 265 cites over 1997-2002 in the 11 publications considered, Martin Feldstein has 241, and Laura Tyson has 219. Former press favorites Michael Boskin (54) and Lester Thurow (98) have lost some visibility, though they still would rank as comparable to the top-30 think tank economists.

Unsurprisingly, the two standouts are Jeffrey Sachs with 375 cites, and Paul Krugman with an incredible 701 cites over the period. Even taking out the appearances of Krugman's *New York Times* column since January 2000 (and direct responses to them in the Times), he accumulated 332 cites in the last five years – and presumably the existence of his column cuts both ways somewhat, by guaranteeing him a certain number of appearances but discouraging his quotation elsewhere.

It remains to be seen whether any of the major economists who recently made departures from senior government positions (Stanley Fischer, Joseph Stiglitz, Larry Summers), or of those likely at some point to return to a life of policy scholarship from the current administration (Glenn Hubbard, Larry Lindsey, John Taylor) will attain those levels of press coverage. Of course, it depends on the particular jobs they have chosen and how they pursue them. It is safe to say, however, that the most prominent think tank and academic economists share the same rarefied circles of coverage, and the rest of the think tank top-30 get far more press coverage than their remaining academic brethren. ♦

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- 1 "Think Tanks: Who's Hot and Who's Not," Nicolas S. Ruble, *The International Economy*, September/October 2000, pp. 10-16.
 - 2 The major news publications searched for this study are the *Asian Wall Street Journal*, *Business Week*, *Economist*, *Financial Times*, *Foreign Affairs*, *International Herald Tribune*, *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Wall Street Journal Europe* and *The Washington Post*. Both *Lexis/Nexis* and *Dow Jones Interactive* databases were used. For more details on the precise methodology employed see <http://www.iie.com/study/study.htm>.
 - 3 Two well-known institutions contributing to policy analysis are omitted because they do not fit into the definition of think tanks as independent research institutions with permanent staff. The *Rand Corporation* is largely funded by government contract work, and as a result, its scholars do not tend to make themselves as available to press. The *National Bureau for Economic Research* is a clearinghouse for hundreds of academics, with only a handful in residence at any time; far more often than not, NBER economists are identified by their primary, home university, designation when cited in the press.
 - 4 *Foreign Affairs*, being *sui generis* and only appearing six times a year, is left out of these calculations.
 - 5 An interesting question is whether think tanks are more than the sum of their individual parts in two senses: first, whether the reputation effect of a think tank overall might lead to an economist getting greater or fewer press cites than she would on her own merits; and, second, whether a community of reasonably comparable quality scholars within an institution might alter the visibility of its members, through increased or decreased opportunities either to refer press contacts to each other or to quality control each others' work.
 - 6 *Business Week* is the one publication to show obvious favoritism to scholars at one think tank in particular with no other think tanks' scholars cited half as often. Over 36% (87 out of 237) of the think tank economist citations in *Business Week* in the last five years were to *Brookings* scholars.