

This study deals with the phenomenon of think tanks in the United States. These organizations are broadly defined as public policy research institutes and are part of the non-profit, non-governmental organizations sector. However, this is to a great extent only theory. As this study brings to light, the field of think tanks is not only vast in their number but as well in number and variety of subjects of their interests, the way how they approach them and the biases and influences that affect them on this way.

The purpose of the whole study was to put theoretical research of think tanks, which is covered in its first part, together with a practical and concrete deep analysis of a single institution of this kind, covered in the case study on the Washington Institute for the Near East Policy (WINEP). This Washington D.C. based think tank was chosen as a subject of the case study for several significant reasons. These included that it is a single-issue and single-region oriented think tank with a potential big impact on American foreign policy-making in the chosen field of its research. Additionally, the whole research of the WINEP deals with the Near East, which is itself a very attractive as well as divisive region. Anyhow, it offers a broad range of important issues which may be approached in various manners.

The main subject of interest of the WINEP was estimated by this study to lie in the research of Israeli-Palestinian relations and the relevant US foreign policy. This was therefore stated as the hypothesis for the whole study. To it was added a question asking for the degree of objectivity and balanced approach towards this supposed pivotal issue of the whole WINEP research.

The case study was for its most part conducted through the method of qualitative analysis, following the path of interaction of the WINEP with other major socio-political actors. The ones which proved to be connected with it the most were the media, the administration of the United States and in part surprisingly also other think tanks, which do their research in the same field.

The conclusions of the case study led to the confirmation of central role of the Israeli-Palestinian issue for the research of the WINEP. However, several serious doubts

in this field disabled the study to confirm the overall objectivity and balanced approach of the WINEP. These included doubts about connections with a lobby that promotes one-sided perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian issue (AIPAC), lack of information about the financial background of the WINEP and several others.

Finally, the whole study principally encourages a broader research concerning both the Washington Institute for the Near East Policy and think tanks in general. It also offers certain options for how the status of think tanks as non-governmental organizations may be clarified and the quality of their research enhanced.