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Dissertation Title

Beltway Power Brokers: An Examination of the Heritage Foundation

Committee

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Abstract

This dissertation undertakes a critical assessment of conservative American thought and ideas through the lens of public policy research and analysis organizations, commonly referred to as "think tanks." The study interrogates not only the historical and contemporary elements that define the American Right's intellectual core, but also more specifically focuses on an institutional analysis of The Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank established in 1973 and based in Washington, D.C.

In **Part One**, I assess the avenues open to practitioners wishing to study similar phenomena and introduce a theoretical and methodological framework therewith. Subsequently, in **Part Two**, I move into an historical survey of the development of American political and ideological conservatism, mainly from the New Deal to the present time, and offer an account of the developmental history of key American think tanks from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Particular attention is paid to those that have had a direct bearing on the formation of The Heritage Foundation. In **Part Three**, I offer analyses of Heritage as an organization, detailing the foundation's origins and development, funding base/sources, structure, and operations. Within this section, too, I assess communications practices: the range of publications Heritage produces, its marketing activities, and the ideological-organizational networks of which it is a part. I conduct two in-depth case studies that demonstrate the results of Heritage's collective resources and strengths brought to bear on specific policy issues: health care reform in the 1990s, and the foundation's role in influencing the U.S. withdrawal from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1984. **Part Four** presents a summary; conclusions; an assessment of Heritage's contribution to, and place within, organized intellectual pursuits; and offers suggested directions for future research.