2021

Think Tank Talent For the Future Forum 2021 Report

James G. McGann
University of Pennsylvania

Alisa Wadsworth
University of Pennsylvania

Zuha Noor
University of Pennsylvania

Elie El-Kefraoui
University of Pennsylvania

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.upenn.edu/ttcsp_papers

Digital Commons

Part of the International Relations Commons, and the Public Policy Commons

Recommended Citation

All requests, questions, and comments should be directed to:
James G. McGann, Ph.D. Senior Lecturer, International Studies Director Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program The Lauder Institute University of Pennsylvania Telephone: (215) 746-2928 Email: jmcgann@wharton.upenn.edu

2021 Copyright: All rights reserved. No part of this report may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by information storage or retrieval system, without written permission from the University of Pennsylvania, Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program.

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. https://repository.upenn.edu/ttcsp_papers/8
For more information, please contact repository@pobox.upenn.edu.
Think Tank Talent For the Future Forum 2021 Report

Abstract
In July 2021, think tanks from around the world met in Dubai, United Arab Emirates at the Think Tank Talent for the Future Forum to discuss the strategic and operational challenges they face in recruiting and retaining talent for their organizations. The objective was to identify effective strategies that will help prepare think tanks for the fast-paced and increasingly complex public policy environment in which all policy research organizations must now operate. Historically, the primary competition for think tank scholars, dollars and influence was from other think tanks; today, they must compete with consulting, law and public relations firms. The Global Forum attracted 102 participants from think tanks and other sectors in July, 2021 including over 65 senior think tank scholars and executive diverse group of think tanks from across the globe. The global Think Tank Talent for the Future Forum will provide thought leaders, resources, and cutting-edge research to help think tanks develop critical and beneficial strategies so they can thrive in today's highly competitive marketplace of ideas and policy advice.

Keywords
Think Tank, Civil Society, NGO, Pandemic, COVID-19, Policymaking, Young Talent, Human Resources, Lauder Institute, University of Pennsylvania

Disciplines
International Relations | Public Policy

Comments
All requests, questions, and comments should be directed to:

James G. McGann, Ph.D. Senior Lecturer, International Studies Director Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program The Lauder Institute University of Pennsylvania Telephone: (215) 746-2928 Email: jmcgann@wharton.upenn.edu

2021 Copyright: All rights reserved. No part of this report may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by information storage or retrieval system, without written permission from the University of Pennsylvania, Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program.
Introduction

In July 2021, think tanks from around the world met in Dubai, United Arab Emirates at the Think Tank Talent for the Future Forum to discuss the strategic and operational challenges they face in recruiting and retaining talent for their organizations. The objective was to identify effective strategies that will help prepare think tanks for the fast-paced and increasingly complex public policy environment in which all policy research organizations must now operate. Historically, the primary competition for think tank scholars, dollars and influence was from other think tanks; today, they must compete with consulting, law and public relations firms. The Global Forum attracted 102 participants from think tanks and other sectors in July, 2021 including over 65 senior think tank scholars and executive diverse group of think tanks from across the globe. The global Think Tank Talent for the Future Forum will provide thought leaders, resources, and cutting-edge research to help think tanks develop critical and beneficial strategies so they can thrive in today’s highly competitive marketplace of ideas and policy advice.

The Forum featured CEOs and senior human resources executives from think tanks who addressed the challenges they face in building a staff that is required to make it possible for their organizations to meet the technological, management, and resource mobilization challenges while producing the cutting-edge policy research that all think tanks need to remain competitive. The Forum also featured young think tank scholars and executives who discussed why they work at think tanks, what they look for in an employer and what would make for a rewarding and fulfilling career path for them at these institutions. Innovative staffing strategies and business models for think tanks were presented. The Forum examined new models for think tanks and the transformation process that all think tanks must understand to plan for the future of work at think tanks. Finally, the Program examined how COVID has transformed the workplace and the workforce at think tanks. We hope such conversations continue, especially at this critical transitioning time when adaptability, flexibility, and innovation are indispensable elements for think tanks to thrive and attract and support young talent.

James G. McGann
Tuesday, 27 July, 2021

15.00 – 16.30 **Hotel Check In**
Dubai Ritz Carlton | DIFC, off Sheikh Zayed Road, Dubai

16.30 – 17.00 **Move to Venue**
Dubai Trade Centre | Sheikh Zayed Rd, Trade CentreTrade Centre 2, Dubai

17.00 – 17.15 **Welcome to the Summit**
Dubai Trade Center | Sheikh Zayed Rd, Trade CentreTrade Centre 2, Dubai

**James G. MCGANN** | United States
Director | Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program

**Mohammed Abdullah AL-ALI** | United Arab Emirates
Chief Executive Officer and Founder | TRENDS Research and Advisory

17.15 – 17.30 **Opening Remarks**

**H.E. Dr. Zaki Anwar NUSSEIBEH** | United Arab Emirates
Adviser for Cultural Affairs | UAE Ministry of Presidential Affairs
Chancellor | United Arab Emirates University

17.30 – 18.50 **Presidents’ Panel: Current HR and Organizational Challenges**
This session will feature a panel of CEOs from every region of the world who will explore the challenges think tanks face recruiting scholars and executives that will help them remain on the cutting edge. The Panel of CEOs will share their experiences of how they are meeting the human research needs of their organizations. They will be asked specifically what strategies they use to recruit scholars and executives for their organizations. Additionally, they will be asked about some of the major obstacles they face in recruiting key personnel and how they have met these challenges.

**Chair:**
**James G. MCGANN** | United States
Director | Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program

**Panelists:**
**Tomiko ICHIKAWA** | Japan
Director General | Japan Institute of International Affairs

**Samir SARAN** | India
President | Observer Research Foundation

R. Andreas KRAEMER | Germany
Founder & Director Emeritus | Ecologic Institute

Hamad Ebrahim AL-ABDULLA | Bahrain
Executive Director | Derasat

Charles POWELL | Spain
Director | Elcano Royal Institute

18.50–19:05  **Keynote Welcome Address**

H.E. Dr. Maqsoud KRUSE | United Arab Emirates
Strategic Communications Advisor | UAE Ministry of Presidential Affairs

19.05–21.05  **Dinner**

**Wednesday, 28 July, 2021**
Dubai World Trade Center | Sheikh Zayed Rd, Trade CentreTrade Centre 2, Dubai

8.30–9.00  **Welcome Coffee and Sign In**

9.15–9:45  **Keynote Discussion**

**Moderator:**
Mohammed HAMDOUI | United Arab Emirates
Director of Economic Studies | TRENDS Research & Advisory

**Keynote Speaker:**
Renata DWAN | United Kingdom
Deputy Director and Senior Executive Officer | Chatham House

9.45–11.05  **Session II: Future Leaders**

This session will feature junior and mid-level think tank scholars and executives who will discuss why they work at think tanks and what would make for a rewarding and fulfilling career path at these institutions. The panel will provide insight from the perspective of the next generation of think tank scholars and executives. The panelists will discuss: What do they look for in an employer? What can think tanks do to better nurture and retain talented young staff? What can think tanks do to recruit the best and brightest talent for their organization?

**Chair:**
Intissar FAKIR | United States
Director of North Africa and Sahel Program | Middle East Institute

**Panelists:**
Liliana ALVARADO | Mexico
11.05–11.20 Coffee Break

11.20–13.10 Session III: Diversity and Innovation Connection
This session will discuss specific ways in which think tanks have benefited from building a diverse, tech-savvy generation of think tank scholars and executives, and what think tanks look for when hiring younger individuals. What are the benefits of building a diverse staff for a think tank, and is there a connection between diversity and innovation?

Chair:
Ebtesam AL-KETBI | United Arab Emirates
Founder and President | Emirates Policy Center

Panelists:
Rose ABDOLLAHZADEH | United Kingdom
Managing Director of Research Partnerships | Chatham House

Natasha JACOME | United States
Deputy Chief Operating Officer | Wilson Center

Natasha HALL | United States
Senior Fellow at Middle East Program | Center for Strategic and International Studies

Paul McALLISTER | United States
President | Global Leaders in Unity and Involvement

Luke EASLEY | United States
Vice President of Human Resources and Operations | Center for Global Development

Elyazia AL HOSANI | United Arab Emirates
Head of TRENDS Council for Young Researchers | TRENDS Research & Advisory

Kunihiro MIYAKE | Japan
Research Director | Canon Institute for Global Studies

13.15–14.15 Lunch

14.15–15.00 Luncheon Interview
Luncheon dialogue will focus on the challenges HR executives face in building a staff that can help think tanks meet technological, managerial, and resource mobilization challenges while producing the cutting-edge policy research that all think tanks need to remain competitive.

Moderator:
Linda ROTH | United States
Vice President of External Relations | Wilson Center

Panelists:
Deron LEHMAN | United States
Managing Director, Human Resources & Talent Development | American Enterprise Institute

David O’BRIEN | United States
Vice President for External Affairs | Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE)

15.00–16.35 Final Session: Being Prepared for an Uncertain Future
This session will cover tangible strategies and actions that think tanks can take to meet the challenges posed by a world and workplace disrupted and transformed by technology, COVID, and the need for a more resilient, responsive and agile approach to life, work and public policy.

Chair:
Antonio VILLAFAранCA | Italy
Director of Studies and Co-Head of the Center on Europe | Institute for International Political Studies

Panelists:
Abla ABDEL-LATIF | Egypt
Executive Director | Egyptian Center for Economic Studies

Lydia RUDDY | Indonesia
Director of Communications | Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia

Elaine FORD | Peru
Founding Director | Democracla Digital
Osama ELGOHARY | Egypt
Chief Executive Officer | Information and Decision Support Center for the Egyptian Cabinet

Sarah DONAHUE | United States
Associate Director of Operations | Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center

Khuloud ODEH | United States
Vice President, Technology and Data Science Chief Information Officer | Urban Institute

16.35—16.50 Closing Remarks

James G. MCGANN | United States
Director | Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program

Mohammed Abdullah AL-ALI | United Arab Emirates
Chief Executive Officer and Founder | TRENDS Research and Advisory

16.50—18.50 Cultural Tour or Event

20.00—22.00 Informal Networking Dinner
Countries & Institutions Represented

Total Participants
Joined for part or all of the Conference

Countries Represented: 44

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>South Sudan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Tunisia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Republic of Congo</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>Yemen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution Name</td>
<td>Country/Region</td>
<td>Program Area</td>
<td>Partner Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU)</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Global Leaders in Unity and Evolvement</td>
<td>Maghreb Economic Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Heritage Institution</td>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>GLOBSEC Policy Institute</td>
<td>Middle East Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Governance and Policy Think Tank (GPTT)</td>
<td>Middle East Political and Economic Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Christian Liberal Arts University Congo-UCI</td>
<td>Congo</td>
<td>Harf and Fasela Media</td>
<td>Migration Policy Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Enterprise Institute</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Harvard Kennedy School, Belfer Center</td>
<td>Ministry of Presidential Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>Hoover Institution/Stanford University</td>
<td>Mitvim Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashar Center for Studies and Research</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>IDSC (Information and Decision Support Center for the Egyptian Cabinet)</td>
<td>Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhuth</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>Elcano Royal Institute</td>
<td>IFI-AUB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blending Community Service Organization (BCSO)</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Energy Leadership &amp; Strategy Advisory</td>
<td>IFRI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brookings Institution</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>ERIA</td>
<td>IMIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canon Institute for Global Studies</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Ethos Public Policy Lab</td>
<td>Independent Privat Analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for Research and Monitoring (CEMI)</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>European Eye on Radicalization</td>
<td>Institute of Economic Affairs - Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for Global Development</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>European Policy Centre</td>
<td>Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for Research and Intercommunication Knowledge</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>FGV</td>
<td>ISPI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Institutions Registered & Represented: **83**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Center for Strategic &amp; International Studies (CSIS)</th>
<th>Foreign Policy</th>
<th>Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security</th>
<th>Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Center for Strategic Studies</td>
<td>Fundar, Centro de Análisis e Investigación</td>
<td>Konrad Adenauer Stiftung</td>
<td>Tel Aviv University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center of Information and Arabian Russian Studies</td>
<td>Gateway House</td>
<td>Liberal Democracy Institute</td>
<td>Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Event Summary & Key Takeaways**

**Tuesday, 27 July 2021**

**Welcome to the Summit**

**James McGann, Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program, United States**

Dr. James McGann began by thanking all attendees and TRENDS Research & Advisory for making the Forum possible despite unparalleled challenges and circumstances. In accordance with the theme of the event, he mentioned the importance of diversity, innovation, and the need to engage the next generation to answer questions like where the best and brightest are going to come from and how we can ensure vibrant and innovative institutions. He highlighted that there was a higher proportion of women at the Forum than any other TTCSP event organized in the past, which was emblematic of the objectives of the Forum. He also mentioned TTCSP's recent initiatives to further foster gender equity in our institutions, including the Women in Think Tanks Forum which resulted in the creation of several working groups who will present their findings and recommendations at upcoming global summits.

He reiterated the need to innovate and adapt in order to have a better, faster, smarter, more digital, more innovative, and more agile structure in our institutions. This would require think tanks and civil societies to consider new business models. Given ongoing global circumstances, Dr. McGann stated that, “the only thing that is certain is change.” In order to adapt to this reality, executives need to ensure they staff their institutions with young talent who are keen to adapt and innovate for the future.

**Mohammed Abdullah Al-Ali, TRENDS Research and Advisory, United Arab Emirates**

Dr. Mohammed Abdullah Al-Ali welcomed all attendees to the Forum and especially thanked them for their presence despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. He expressed optimism and hope to soon see the end of the pandemic, and that it provides us with expertise to confront future challenges. He discussed the various challenges think tanks face, whether they be technological, information-related, financial, or logistical, in order to achieve goals of peace, prosperity, and development. He stated that these challenges were the reason why TRENDS has collaborated with TTCSP; specifically, to address these difficulties and develop strategies to identify the next generation of think tankers.

Dr. Al-Ali emphasized that the youth are the most important group of leaders and have the power to induce positive change. Investing in the youth and developing their capabilities to push for growth & prosperity while encouraging them to contribute to the development of their countries will allow them to thrive in decision-making positions. Their critical thinking skills and capabilities to propose ideas to face collective challenges will help us build a future we all aspire to. He also highlighted that while this mission is not exclusive to think tanks and must be undertaken by educational & vocational institutes too, think tanks must take the lead. He mentioned recent initiatives taken by TRENDS in this regard, including the
research produced by young scholars and first TRENDS dialogue with media heads & directors of research centers which discussed the role of youth in research and media institutions as well as sustainable development. He ended his address by expressing gratitude to partners, TTCSP, the TRENDS team, and the worthy guests. Their ideas, vision and propositions would be invaluable and help achieve the goals of the Forum.

Opening Remarks

**H.E. Zaki Anwar Nusseibeh**, United Arab Emirates Government and United Arab Emirates University, United Arab Emirates

His Excellency Zaki Anwar Nusseibeh congratulated TTCSP and TRENDS Research & Advisory on organizing a much-needed initiative as these are vital issues our institutions face today. Across a variety of sectors, organizations are looking for new ways to develop young talent and thus their success means achievement of goals in all fields. Pursuit of talent is particularly important for think tanks and research institutions, as they are in a better position to provide the knowledge required for positive change. Hence, he stated, think tanks must work hard. The UAE leadership prioritizes the country’s capacity to produce sustainable development. The country’s national strategy created federal agencies and programs geared towards the development of youth and is proud of having the youngest government minister in the world, Shamma bint Suhail Faris Al Mazrui, who oversees youth affairs. He pointed out that Arab countries across the region now look up to the UAE as a model of economic security.

Nusseibeh further stated that educational systems and think tanks are responsible for polishing the talent of the country. Schools & universities are cradles to help innovate, create, and transform ideas. Universities need to identify effective practices in building partnerships within the academic sector and beyond. Governments must provide financial incentives to universities to encourage this aim. In addition to this, he highlighted the importance of international exchanges and interaction with the private sector to work towards this collective goal.

Presidents’ Panel: Current HR and Organizational Challenges

**James McGann (Chair)**, Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program, United States

Dr. McGann welcomed and introduced all panelists and asked them about the organizational challenges they face in their respective think tanks and what strategies they have in place to combat them. He also asked them to shed light on how they have transformed organizational practices to make the environment conducive to development of young talent, especially during the pandemic. Finally, he asked each panelist to describe what they would want included in a new business model for think tanks.

**Tomiko Ichikawa**, Japan Institute of International Affairs, Japan
Tomoki Ichikawa joined the event virtually from Japan. She began with highlighting 3 types of challenges common to independent think tanks in Japan, particularly her own think tank, JIIA. These included:

- Small number of staff members, including researchers, who do not have strong career paths or lifelong career development, as opposed to careers in universities;
- Traditionally & contemporarily in Japan, the absence of a revolving door between government service and researchers and;
- Focus on a limited range of policy issues and the absence of a holistic approach.

She proceeded to suggest several ways of combating these challenges:

- Encouraging interdisciplinary progress within internal researchers. She mentioned JIIA’s annual strategic report which is a product of such an effort.
- Understanding career paths of employees and encouraging them to establish their own contacts and skills to participate in external events to develop careers so they can find diverse ways to achieve goals.
- Nominating more young and female researchers to incorporate diversity in new interdisciplinary areas. She mentioned the relatively small number of female researchers currently working in Japan.
- Covid has made JIIA accustomed to innovative ways, new skill sets, and more flexibility. Having greater youth and female representation on the staff provides more innovative solutions and diverse opinions.

In response to a question regarding important elements for a newer and more innovative approach, Ms. Ichikawa argued that executives should oversee both the management and research side of think tanks and always expect, and be prepared for, the unexpected in an uncertain and volatile environment.

**Samir Saran, Observer Research Foundation, India**

Samir Saran also joined the Forum virtually from India. He stated that the pandemic taught us a lot about human resources; specifically that “think tanks need to be a great place to work.” If digital work is the future, think tanks need to offer a unique proposition to the young talent. As think tanks are deeply connected with each other, CEOs need to work as, and with, HR managers to keep human capital nourished and in its best form. There is a need to imbibe new skills and learn to work with different kinds of people especially as remote work gains popularity and working from distant locations becomes more common. We are no longer in a world where we sit in closed-room meetings. We need to find new ways to communicate and to do so, we should not just be attracting scholars and experts but also activists, artists, and members of the civil society to make it a truly collaborative effort.

He highlighted how the work-from-home experience opens up a different market which should encourage think tanks to think global. Institutions must provide care, support, and opportunities to young talent and reorient their thinking this way if they want to succeed in the post-pandemic world. The talent think tanks now seek is different. He explained that think tankers of his generation had different needs to those of the younger generation. Accordingly, think tanks must be far bolder in embracing change and challenges. He specifically contended that think tanks need to “stop acting like defenders of the old order” and become more “nifty and disruptive institutions” themselves. Transformations require new energy, so we need to let go of old assumptions. He also mentioned the need to defend research but also to communicate it differently in the world today. There is a need to engage with the young, get the message across to them,
and develop a “glamour” that makes them hear think tanks. Finally, he said that there is a need to hunt talent and upskill them while at the same time making this process exciting.

R. Andreas Kraemer, Ecologic Institute, Germany

Andreas Kraemer took an environmental perspective to respond to the questions which represented the focus of his think tank’s work. He pointed out how there will be a change of leadership in Germany after 16 years which will inevitably necessitate the replenishment of institutes with new, capable staff. He said the German government was encouraged to recruit from think tanks as organizations like the Ecologic Institute are reputed to have the required skills. Politicians, as well as young people, want to learn from think tanks which is shown by the number of applications received every year. Priority is given to those who are ready to meet the demands of the moment, fulfill societal needs, and are not just looking to establish careers. Characteristics like versatility, curiosity, and risk-taking ability are prioritized above all else.

One of the strategies employed at the Ecologic Institute includes employees being sent to technical/vocational colleges while working at the Institute. The Institute also invests in scholars, career enhancements, and young professionals in order to help them grow. He emphasized that maintaining contact with people who move on from the Institute and supporting their career paths and aspirations is extremely important.

In response to the question about a new business model for think tanks, Mr. Kraemer mentioned that think tanks are about the future and estimating correctly. We cannot focus solely on what we have available, rather there is a need to step back, look over the horizon, and consider what the future may hold. Providing flexibility to employees as their needs and lives change and utilizing networks with other think tanks to help employees should be part of the new model. As we come out of the pandemic, new think tanks will form with a focus on health policy. Hence, events like these should change us for the better. Moreover, he stated that political will is necessary to bring forth these changes as technology is already available. He also urged think tanks to concentrate on “scenarios” rather than “models.” Finally, echoing Dr. Saran’s suggestion, he said that our institutions should engage with advocates and activists alongside scholars and experts.

Hamad Ebrahim Al-Abdulla, Derasat, Bahrain

Dr. Hamad Ebrahim Al-Abdullah emphasized the important history of think tanks by pointing out examples such as the RAND Corporation’s role in advising the United States on critical policy challenges. The current landscape of think tanks is also similar and the role of think tanks in policy advice has only grown. Think tanks have 3 common objectives:

- Providing policy papers that have a multitude of options;
- Launching policies prior to enactment by having research and debaters discuss important issues and;
- Ensuring high objectivity by leaving partisan issues out of any discussions.

He then mentioned some initiatives taken at Derasat to support these objectives, including internships for the youth, training for research staff, encouraging innovative solutions, assisting scholars and their academic aspirations, signing memoranda with universities, supporting interdisciplinary conferences etc. During the pandemic, Derasat launched a joint initiative with UNDP to understand Covid-19 in Bahrain,
its impact on the private sector, socio-economic impacts, resulting consumer behavior, remote working, impact on women and the environment etc. He mentioned that Derasat’s progress is reflected by its position on the Global Go To Think Tank Index and that his organization is committed to fostering best practices.

He further explained that as the state’s soft power, think tanks face certain challenges including:

- Funding
- Quickening pace of regional and global events, such as the prevalent pandemic
- The need to work under a holistic research umbrella
- Need for forward-looking studies
- Lack of social awareness regarding the importance of think tanks.

In response to a question, he said that young people are more acquainted with social media so think tanks must capitalize on that. A new model for think tanks should utilize and form partnerships, especially with universities, emphasize communication with other researchers and scholars, and employ new and innovative methods to connect with people from all over the world.

**Charles Powell, Elcano Royal Institute, Spain**

Charles Powell suggested a replacement term for the word “think tanks” which captures the work and responsibility of such institutions more accurately: “Change hubs.” Think tanks do not simply think rather they act and they should not be symbolized with enclosed spaces as they embody vast thinking. The term change hubs refers to the interconnectedness of the think tank community. The silver lining of the Covid-19 cloud is that it has allowed us to rethink our institutions internally, including how we function, and thus placing our staff at the heart of our institutions. The pandemic made us realize we are nothing without a happy and productive staff. Hence, there exists a pressing need to professionalize our human resource management which will help deal with multiple internal issues. In terms of recruitment, it is important to make use of social media if we want to recruit the brightest young minds.

He suggested that think tanks need to provide competitive salaries as there is significant competition from consulting firms and other institutions, and one of the most crucial ways to compete with them is by offering our staff much more meaningful careers. This means:

- Expanding research projects to make them truly relevant and interesting
- Introducing new technologies in our institutions, such as AI
- Creating friendlier work environments in terms of diversity, trade unions etc.

Our collective motto should be “renew or die”. Self preservation is vital for think tanks, necessitating the provision of interdimensional pluralism. We need to constantly renew the generational pyramid by involving young people who have skills that older generations do not. Powell continued that the young professionals should be at the forefront of this revolution if we really want to show them how much they are valued at our institutions. Regarding the political revolving door, he said that we need to think broadly and not only tie it to the government but also to other sectors and fields like journalism, law, technology, etc. Finally, he said that a new business model for think tanks must be more social media savvy and concentrate on diversifying financial bases by considering all sources of funding. He also mentioned the need to have a more professionalized approach towards our departments like human resources and the
fostering of interdisciplinary research.

Keynote Welcome Address

**H.E. Maqsoud Kruse, United Arab Emirates Government, United Arab Emirates**

His Excellency Maqsoud Kruse delivered a powerful speech on the transformation of think tanks and civil societies that will ultimately bring about collective progress for our countries. He said knowledge only goes to a certain extent and it is actions and implementation that will determine the success of our institutions. The outcome of the research and work of think tanks will prove the theoretical commitments made by the institutions and ultimately attract young talent.

He offered three main reflections to trigger and encourage thinking:

- What do we mean by talent and how do we cultivate it? Talent hunt is the process and tools of identification to find those who are unique. Think tanks used to be in the business of envisaging the future but now they are in the business of creating and designing one and only through true talent can that be achieved.
- All think tanks are connected to the spirit of thinking. Creative minds should be given necessary opportunities by these institutions.
- Think tanks need to follow the line of thinking that leads to a transformed and new business model because without innovation, their purpose of creation will not be fulfilled.

He emphasized that the exercise of reflection on these questions should not end. Today is not just about empirical data, it is about being bold, introspective, and willing to think critically. It is the awakening of the self and if the awakening of our passions happens, our objectives of transforming our institutions for the future and developing young talent can be attained.

Wednesday, 28 July 2021

Keynote Discussion

**Mohammed Hamdou (Moderator), TRENDS Research and Advisory, United Arab Emirates**

**Renata Dwan, Chatham House, United Kingdom**

Dr. Renata Dwan began by emphasizing that the future of think tanks is contingent upon the perception of their employees, staff, and researchers. She explained that some of them tend to perceive their employment in think tanks as a phase in a wider path, whereas others approach think tanks with a more career-focused angle. In this array, it comes as a natural consequence that think tank leaders should value their employees’ input, be able to listen to different ideas, and act accordingly.
Dr. Dawn then proceeded to explain that a core question at the heart of today’s forum is that of purpose. What do think tanks strive to do and how do they strive to do it? As a response, she began by stating that nowadays, there is a strong competition for resources. Actors such as government agencies, prominent corporations, international organizations, and tech firms all seek to attract the best and brightest, often armed with bigger budgets and wider name recognition. She then elaborated on the key challenges that stem from this competitive environment:

➢ Think tanks are in a consistent search for a more authoritative voice. They seek autonomy and independence all the while acting as mediators and conversation-starters. For that, think tanks try to recruit prominent, experienced researchers and administrators who tend to to be retired officials and corporate individuals, instead of youthful individuals. The main risk emanating as a result is that think tanks are consequently less effective in challenging established ideas.
➢ Think tanks lack diversity, which hinders innovation. Think tanks should be on the lookout for daring partnerships and recruit underrepresented groups and professions. By bringing all these voices to the table, think tank leaders have a better idea of the happenings of the policy world and are thus able to develop and evolve their range of thought.

Session II: Future Leaders

Intissar Fakir (Chair), Middle East Institute, United States

An experienced researcher and the chair of the future leaders session, Dr. Intissar Fakir began by noting that the issues that have been discussed so far have multifold solutions, requiring action at the levels of funding and budgeting, as well as engagement in capacity building, marketing and management. As leaders of the policy world, she explained, think tanks have a lot of impactful, intense work to do, which could seem both daunting and appealing to the youth. Fakir subsequently posed the following question: How can think tank leaders involve the voices of the younger generation and make a career in policy research appealing for them?

Liliana Alvarado, Ethos Public Policy Lab, Mexico

Liliana Alvarado provided several reasons why working at a think tank is appealing. She first explained that think tanks provide an ideal opportunity for the development of a large body of skills. Additionally, it allows for the creation of ties and networks, while actively shaping the world of policy-making. With that said, Alvarado pointed to three ways think tank leaders can better recruit from a younger pool:

➢ Offer balance between work and personal life. Companies offering such flexibility have been shown to not only attract a wider pool of applicants, but also increase productivity and efficiency.
➢ Offer more responsibilities for think tank employees. Recent graduates do not want to be left on the sidelines. They want to have a seat at the table and feel responsible for the results produced.
➢ Offer attractive incentives through training programs, insurance, emotional salaries, and additional benefits that have a notable impact on employees and come at little cost for think tanks.
Lastly, Alvarado explained that branding is important. Applicants have been shown to factor in an employer's reputation as an important qualification while rejecting offers at environments with a bad reputation, even when unemployed.

**Strahinja Subotic, European Policy Centre, Serbia**

Strahinja Subotic explained that the think tanks that have a clearly defined vision and business model attract a wider pool of applicants. Offering mentorship, training, and exchange programs helps in keeping employees engaged and ensures longevity. Subotic finally commented that age has previously been considered a limiting factor in recruiting for think tanks. However, this has prevented the representation of an entire section of people and taken a toll at diversity inclusion in think tanks.

**Amal Al Breiki, TRENDS Research and Advisory, United Arab Emirates**

Amal Al Breiki mentioned what she called the “three pillars of enablement”:

- Raising awareness about the existence of career paths in think tanks. This includes explaining what think tanks are and what their work involves.
- Creating a brand that is well-known to college students by creating partnerships with universities, being involved in career fairs, and offering internships.
- Upscaling operations by diverting from uniquely academically-oriented training and focusing instead on solution-oriented policies and reports.

Al Breiki finished by noting that the youth care about having a meaningful career path, and it is up to think tanks to consider whether they will take advantage of the youth’s raw potential or miss this opportunity.

**La Toya Waha, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Germany**

La Toya Wahad began by laying out the 3 major reasons why individuals pursue careers in think tanks:

- The possibility to do impactful research beyond mere citations
- The wide variety of research topics that cater to young people’s interests
- The possibility to translate academic research into practical policies

To increase outreach, however, Waha explained that think tanks must be able to offer three major prospects. First, think tanks need to allow for freedom of thought, learning, and growth. Waha gave the example of a 4+1 work style, where employees would conduct regular work over the span of four weekdays and use the fifth day to reflect, innovate, and generate ideas. Second, think tanks must offer opportunities for growth. This is especially relevant for researchers who often feel stagnant in their positions. Third, think tanks must allow for flexibility in the location and time of their operations. As Waha pointed out, a lot of think tank employees often have to be separated from their families to work in the office, which does not offer a sustainable career path. As she puts it, “The think tank world is not bound to working hours, and sometimes, creativity does not fit into the 9-5 work days.”

**Micky Aharonson, Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security, Israel**
Micky Aharonson explained that think tanks should consider becoming official government partners, as ministries and governmental agencies can outsource valuable funds towards academic, policy-oriented research. She additionally noted that international organizations can be equally involved in creating frameworks and data collection.

Session III: Diversity and Innovation Connection

**Ebtesam Al-Ketbi**, Emirates Policy Center, United Arab Emirates

As the session’s chair, Ebtesam Al-Ketbi introduced the panelists and began the conversation on diversity and innovation by noting that inclusivity, modernity and opportunity should be the primary prescription for any institution in order to apply diversity to current business and operational models.

**Rose Abdollahzadeh**, Chatham House, United Kingdom

Rose Abdollahzadeh said that having representational diversity is essential in order to keep think tanks relevant. As an organization, Abdollahzadeh noted that Chatham House is majority female, and yet it is difficult to bring that aspect of Chatham House to light via its publications and public relations. She said that as think tanks, we must include entire organizations in conversations surrounding diversity; we must also make use of external support and collaboration with other think tanks, universities, and organizations to pursue these goals. It is imperative to incorporate a range of different perspectives in order to truly achieve new and innovative thinking.

**Natasha Jacome**, Wilson Center, United States

Natasha Jacome added to the conversation, saying that think tanks are able to get the most distinct perspectives on innovation when they successfully bring together a diverse group of people—diverse in terms of gender, age, educational backgrounds and socioeconomic status—and create an equitable policy.

**Paul McAllister**, Global Leaders in Unity and Involvement, United States

Paul McAllister highlighted the importance of thought diversity; the incorporation of a broad consensus of thinkers who do not mind hashing out difficult and challenging problems. Encouraging a multidisciplinary culture within one’s think tanks brings out the best in everyone; diversity has a tendency to drive innovation, and the results tend to be very rewarding. McAllister also said that it is vital for think tanks to invest in people: People will achieve great things given the opportunity, if they are believed in.

McAllister also said that while we have not yet found solutions to critical issues, that does not mean there are no solutions. Rather, it means that we may need to consider ideas that are presented by those who are often discredited or discounted due to race, gender, or other markers of one’s identity. McAllister concluded his remarks by saying that if we make our society a ‘brotherhood,’ rather than a neighborhood, we will open up a world of opportunity.

**Natasha Hall**, Center for Strategic and International Studies, United States

Natasha Hall referred to numerous studies which have shown that having women on board increases successful problem solving and financial dividends; a diverse group of people has even been shown to
solve murder mysteries more efficiently than homogeneous groups of people. These examples were raised by Hall to show the importance of providing diverse voices with leadership opportunities. In cultivating diversity, Hall noted that it is also imperative to ensure that there is a culture of mutual respect and confidence; without that, innovation and morale cannot be built within an organization.

Furthermore, Hall said that issues of diversity cannot be solved overnight. We have a long way to go as an industry, and a lot of these problems are related to socioeconomic issues that go beyond think tanks’ capabilities. Changes made within think tanks to better promote diversity must be tangible; for example, at CSIS, Hall said that they built an advisory board of leading experts from across the world, as well as working groups of experts from the relevant region to advise on research projects and other programs conducted by the organization. Such initiatives allow for a greater understanding of the importance of collaboration rather than competition.

**Luke Easley, Center for Global Development, United States**

Luke Easley argued that the real challenge is in removing institutional barriers for the full participation of people once they are in the door. It is important to amplify voices who lack the kind of platform that a think tank can provide. Easley highlighted two key areas of focus regarding diversity:

- Normative cases for diversity: People do not want to work in places they are not listened to; as think tanks, we want to look like the communities we are trying to impact.
- Positive cases for diversity: How does diversity strengthen a think tank’s relevance as well as the research it puts out?

Easley said that even the most skillful iconoclast cannot dislodge the case for talent; the organization that can go out and find the greatest and most diverse range of talent will inherently have a comparative advantage over other think tanks. Finally, Easley noted that when think tanks have a strong emphasis on retention, there can be downsides to increasing diversity; absent growth or turnover, there is little opportunity to change an organization’s diversity profile. Some turnover is healthy and key to diversity, so Easley encouraged think tanks to think about turnover more strategically and have a more rounded view of its value.

**Elyazia Al Hosani, TRENds Research and Advisory, United Arab Emirates**

Elyazia Al Hosani said that she refers to a simple equation: Diversity plus inclusivity leads to innovation. The equation does not stop there; rather, that is where the equation begins. At TRENDS, Al Hosani said that her institution believed in her before she believed in herself. In this vein, it is imperative for the youth to have a seat at the table and participate in decision-making processes. She added that at TRENDS, there are three key bonuses offered—opportunity, benefits and experience—that are critical for successfully achieving diversity.

Furthermore, Al Hosani said that think tanks need to focus on the quality of research as well as how think tanks can better deliver their messages. Organizations need to capitalize on modern digital media and the integration of new forms of media. In doing so, research must be structured in a way so that key findings can be easily disseminated. With declining trust in broadcast news, think tanks have an advantage because they are able to provide positive solution-oriented research. Finally, Al Hosani said that age should not pull
people back from bringing new ideas to the table; it is ultimately critical to include the youth, particularly as young people are part of the digital generation.

**Kunihiko Miyake, Canon Institute for Global Studies, Japan**

Joining the Forum virtually, Kunihiko Miyake said that when it comes to diversity, his job is to find the best talent so that they can produce the best possible research, which means finding talent regardless of nationality or race. Additionally, Miyake noted that in Japan, society places more emphasis on harmony, unity and consensus over leadership and innovation. In that sense, Japan remains a fairly traditional society but globalization has impacted both culture and society. Before diversifying one’s think tank, in countries such as Japan, diversifying the country more broadly is the first and foremost priority.

**Luncheon Interview**

**Linda Roth, Wllson Center, United States**

As moderator of the luncheon interview, Linda Roth focused on tackling the challenges that human resources often encounter in think tanks. These challenges include disengaged management teams, current business models in light of the pandemic, and recruiting talent.

**Deron Lehman, American Enterprise Institute, United States**

Deron Lehman emphasized the importance of creating an inclusive, consistent, high-quality workplace environment. As Mr. Lehman put it, think tanks “need to sell a reason for employees to come into the office.” He then noted possible ways of doing so. First, he emphasized the importance of creating wellness, efficiency, and mentorship programs that would allow employees to build strong networks and skills. He noted that having different mentors brings different perspectives to the table and helps employees shape their own perspective, in turn allowing them to develop mentees of their own. Second, employees need to be introduced to and aligned with their workplace culture, since it is much easier to teach an employee the skills required for the job than it is to fit them into a mission and culture they do not agree with. Lastly, he mentioned the importance of building a strong HR department and went on to describe some of the challenges it could face, such as creating an engaging environment and creating a team of experienced individuals.

He concluded by stating that a “one size fits all” approach no longer works; it is now about guiding each employee individually and helping them understand that their impact outlasts the role and instead reaches their coworkers, clients, and policymakers.

**David O’Brien, Peterson Institute for International Economics, United States**

For David O’Brien, think tanks must professionalize the systems that they already have in place. He gave the example of handing out anonymous surveys to better listen to all employees as well as creating a rating system for every manager and leader with the expectation that they will sustain the values expected of them as a consequence. He moved on to note that the biggest challenge an HR department faces is creating a team able to optimize the efficiency of the firm as a whole. For him, this is done through two main ways:
➢ Engage others as the HR team is formed, consulting with both outside experts that can help widen the team’s vision as well as the think tank employees that will help focusing it.
➢ Create a mentorship program that would allow employees to make the best of all the resources they have at their disposal.

Final Session: Being Prepared for an Uncertain Future

Antonio Villafranca (Chair), Institute for International Political Studies, Italy

As the chair of the panel, Antonio Villafranca started the conversation by saying that we must look beyond shorter-term issues; as think tanks, it is imperative to focus on sustainability and thus look beyond the pandemic.

Abla Abdel-Latif, Egyptian Center for Economic Studies, Egypt

Abla Abdel-Latif said that we must revisit strategies for government development; we cannot stick to the same strategies as before, due to the changes caused by COVID-19. She added that at ECES, they have completed 35 new studies from the beginning of the pandemic up until now, using different scenarios of the pandemic to assess reality against such scenarios and subsequently come up with policy proposals for the government. This initiative reflects the position of think tanks between policymakers and the general public; recommendations made by think tanks can be useless if they are not tangibly turned into policy. Abdel-Latif highlighted four key points for think tanks to keep in mind:

➢ There is a strong need for think tanks to build trust between themselves and policymakers: More often than not, policymakers make their own decisions irrespective of research because they do not understand the research or they have a bad relationship with think tanks.
➢ The areas of focus think tanks need to consider include governmental development strategies. While governments are occupied with immediate emergencies, think tanks must assess the long-term impact of policies.
➢ The role of think tanks in training policymakers in adopting policies is an extremely important function; as think tanks, we are training second and third layers of government agents.
➢ As an industry, think tanks must be able to bring everyone on board on a global scale. All of the issues that think tanks are currently tackling are multifaceted, and we thus need to collaborate with other institutions as many think tanks tend to have specific research focuses. In doing so, think tanks can not only collaborate with each other, but we can begin collectively creating new frameworks to move forward.

Finally, Abdel-Latif noted that there is a glass ceiling for the youth; they tend to be constrained by the beliefs of older generations, but we must allow for their innovative ideas to be brought to the table and ensure that their voices reach policymakers.

Lydia Ruddy, Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia, Indonesia

In her remarks, Lydia Ruddy referred to an instance during which her boss told her: “Don’t worry, you will fail.” While such a statement was surprising, it made her feel more comfortable in taking risks; something for think tanks to keep in mind. Additionally, Ruddy noted that from the perspective of a Communications
Director, there are methods of basic communication that think tanks must continue acting upon. If attracting and retaining talent is a priority, then think tanks must ensure that they are disseminating research in a way that highlights the meaning and impact of such research. Ruddy continued that while think tanks cannot always claim credit for when trade agreements are made or policies are passed after they output relevant research, think tanks can write opinion pieces about the role they played in such processes. In this way, it is critical for think tanks to learn how to develop their messaging as well as adapt to new technologies.

**Elaine Ford, Democracia Digital, Peru**

Elaine Ford highlighted that think tanks in Latin America in particular have very limited financial resources, and by extension, the scope of projects is often fairly limited. Social turbulence across the region has decreased international cooperation and caused donors to largely withdraw, dramatically impacting local think tanks. Ford provided three recommendations based on these regional circumstances:

- Form international networks for joint and collaborative work between think tanks. This can open the door for funding and cooperation. In certain countries where independent think tanks are suppressed by governments, such international networks can engage in advocacy for these think tanks.
- Technology is critical: In adverse times, it is difficult to maintain communication and utilize technology properly. It is thus important to be bold with social media, as social networks have served activists in many countries; for example, think tanks can use new social media platforms such as TikTok to reach new audiences. Think tanks should keep in mind the five M’s in their communication efforts: mindset, management, mechanism of interest, matter and message. The message is particularly important, and technology plays the vital role of disseminating think tanks’ messaging.
- The think tank industry must ensure female empowerment; this will strengthen the entire think tank community.

**Osama El Gohary, Information and Decision Support Center for the Egyptian Cabinet, Egypt**

Osama El Gohary provided four key themes that think tanks should consider as they navigate an ever-changing sociopolitical climate:

- Do not provide research that is not data-driven.
- Never run out of ideas. For example, at IDSC, they built an artificial intelligence platform to help determine who should receive support from the government, making use of new technologies to provide tangible government support.
- Always communicate with people; do not leave the public alone. Revamp methods of communication to strengthen public outreach. El Gohary said that at IDSC, they never rely on technology or data alone when presenting research to the Prime Minister; they utilize correspondence with the public to convey societal needs and perspectives to the government.
- Maintain strong relationships with the government.

**Sarah Donahue, Belfer Center at Harvard Kennedy School, United States**
Sarah Donahue, joining the Forum virtually, provided three key themes that think tanks should consider as we navigate this new era due to COVID-19:

- Flexibility: At the Belfer Center, Donahue noted that they had to rapidly change how they interacted with their constituencies due to COVID-19. They focused on virtual programming and using technology for team building and outreach. This helped their institution in moving away from siloes, understanding new norms, engaging with people, and encouraging others to adapt in times of upheaval and uncertainty.
- Hierarchies: When the Belfer Center became remote, more people had a seat at the table within the organization, including professionals from non-PhD backgrounds. Removing rigid hierarchical structures within organizations can allow for more agile working groups, greater diversity, and elevated decision-making processes.
- Inclusion and accountability: It is important for think tanks to track their outposts, face cultural shifts, and conduct marketing campaigns to attract all demographics.

Khuloud Odeh, Urban Institute, United States

Also joining the Forum virtually, Khuloud Odeh highlighted the importance of think tanks prioritizing their ability to be technologically savvy. Institutions that are technologically fit are more capable of adapting and scaling quickly; security breaches are also inevitable, so technological adeptness is becoming an essential aspect of resilience for think tanks. Technology is thus a vital part of allowing think tanks to survive and succeed during the pandemic, and must be a priority for think tanks as we move forward.

Closing Remarks

James McGann, Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program, United States

To conclude, Dr. McGann began by thanking all the speakers for their incredible participation and the conclusions that stemmed as a result. He then made note of two major points. First, he explained that in reality, the history of think tanks has shown that leadership positions are somewhat codified, with individuals simply falling into the position rather than being trained for it. However, today’s reality has it that think tanks can no longer afford a margin of error induced by the current business model. Simply put, think tanks must look for the people with the best experience fit for the job. Second, Dr. McGann reiterated that “the only constant is change.” With the increased velocity of information and policy flows, think tanks must be resilient and ready to take on the fast-paced changes. Floods and massive fires are no longer rare occurrences, pandemics have become an integrated aspect of our daily lives, and navigating the intricacies of international politics has become more difficult than ever. As Dr. McGann concluded, now more than ever, is the time to rise up to challenges that the world of policymaking presents.

Mohammed Abdullah Al-Ali, TRENDS Research and Advisory, United Arab Emirates

Dr. Abdullah Al-Ali began by expressing his gratitude to all those involved in the success of the Think Tank Talent for the Future Forum, stating that such collaboration is essential in attracting, recruiting, and retaining talent. He then states that the forum has established that resources and advanced technologies are required to thrive in the marketplace of ideas. The forum elaborated on 2 important trends:
➢ Investing in young researchers and enhancing their capabilities is no longer an option for think tanks, but a duty.
➢ Forums such as this one allow the think tank community to grow as a whole as they allow us to assess active strategies as we seek to identify the future generation of think tank leaders, especially given increasing competition.

Dr. Abdullah Al-Ali concluded by extending his thanks to both the TTCSP and the TRENDS teams for their hard work and dedication.
Panelist Biographies

Abla ABDEL-LATIF | Egypt
Executive Director | Egyptian Center for Economic Studies

Dr. Abla Abdel Latif is currently the Chair of the Presidential Advisory Council for Economic Development; and the Executive Director and Director of Research of The Egyptian Center for Economic Studies (ECES). She is also a Member of the Central Bank of Egypt’s Coordinating Council, and has been a Board Member of the National Bank of Egypt – the first female in this position, for over six years. In 2013, she was honored with membership of the Committee of Fifty, whose mission was to draft Egypt’s Constitution following June 30, 2013. In that capacity, she was officially representing the Egyptian Federation of Industries, and one of only five women in the Committee. She is also a cofounder and Board Member of BASEERA (the Egyptian Center for Public Opinion Research), and “El Nidaa” Foundation for job creation for women and youth.

In addition to her teaching career as Professor of Economics at the American University in Cairo (AUC) for over twenty years, she has been selected to be a Life Time Research Fellow at the Economic Research Forum (ERF) and has authored a large number of publications in class A internationally refereed journals. She has also been a senior international expert in several UNIDO projects and other international organizations. Her professional experience is also extensive, starting from being the Policy Unit Manager in the Industrial Modernisation Centre (IMC) to being the Minister of Industry’s Advisor shortly after the 25th of January Revolution and since 2015, she became the main economic advisor to the President of the Republic.

Dr. Abdel Latif received a special award for outstanding achievement and excellence in research from Sussex University in the UK and another faculty excellence teaching award from the American University in Cairo. She was also invited by the Singapore Government to participate in the 10th Leaders in Governance Programme in 2017. She is an Egyptian national with a B.A. in economics from the American University in Cairo (AUC) (with highest honors) and an M.A. and Ph.D. in economics from the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, California.

Rose ABDOLLAHZADEH | United Kingdom
Managing Director of Research Partnerships | Chatham House

Rose Abdollahzadeh is Managing Director for Research Partnerships at Chatham House. She oversees the institute’s research project development and directs the Chatham House SNF CoLab, a 10-year initiative launched in 2020 to translate the institute’s research findings into interactive and immersive formats to expand outreach to new audiences. Rose also coordinates Chatham House’s strategy and activities for engaging the next generation across the UK and globally. She believes think tanks offer unique spaces in society for cross-pollination and free-thinking.

Rose has an MSc in Migration and Ethnic Studies from the University of Amsterdam and a BA in International Relations from Warwick University.

Mohammed Abdullah AL-ALI | United Arab Emirates
Chief Executive Officer and Founder | TRENDS Research and Advisory

Dr. Mohammad Al-Ali is the CEO and Founder of the new TRENDS Research & Advisory & Senior Researcher/Writer and an Emirati author, specializing in strategic and political affairs. Dr. Al-Ali received a Ph.D. in Criminology from Mutah University. He obtained a Master of Arts in Diplomacy from the American University in the Emirates, and a Bachelor’s in media, radio, and television from the UAE University.
He has vast experience in the media where he supervised magazines and academic journals covering and analyzing regional and international developments. He has worked as Editor-in-Chief of several scholarly periodicals and has held important positions in think-tanks. Dr. Al-Ali has produced several studies including “The Role of Electronic Press in Creating Awareness Among the Youth in Arab Gulf Countries,” published in the Annals of Arts and Social Sciences in Kuwait. He has also presented numerous research papers at various international conferences.

**Hamad Ebrahim AL-ABDULLA | Bahrain**

**Executive Director | Derasat**

Dr. Hamad Ebrahim Al-Abdulla was appointed Executive Director of the Bahrain Center for Strategic, International and Energy Studies (Derasat) as of October 2020. Previously he was an Assistant Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at the Social Sciences Department, College of Arts, University of Bahrain since 2017. Prior to this he worked as a Media Specialist at the General Secretariat for the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Over the years, he has published a number of works, including “Ettore Muti: The Legend of Fascist Italy,” (2010), a documentation of the life and times of the Italian commander who led an air raid on Bahrain's oil refinery in the Second World War; “Samuel Zwemer: The Encounter of Christianity with Islam,” (2011), which covers the life and works of the American missionary Samuel Marinos Zwemer, focusing primarily on his work in Bahrain; “Charles Belgrave under the shades of Siwa Oasis,” (2012), which highlights the journey of Sir Charles Belgrave to Siwa Oasis in Egypt in 1920, and his first administrative post prior to his appointment as advisor to the government of Bahrain in 1926; “Bahrain's English Newspapers: an Illustrated History,” (2014), this publication in English chronicles the birth and development of English newspapers in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Moreover, the author participated on 30 June 2018 in a conference titled, “Al-Khalifa Rule in the Qatar Peninsula: History and Sovereignty,” organized by the Bahrain Center for Strategic, International and Energy Studies (Derasat), with a paper titled, “The Qatari Military Aggression against Al-Zubarah in 1937”.

Furthermore, he published an academic research paper titled, “Bahrain's Sovereignty in the Qatar Peninsula and Britain's Stance (1935-1949),” in the Annal of the Centre for Bahrain Studies at the University of Bahrain. Additionally, he participated in a conference titled, “History of Pandemics in the Arabian Gulf”, organized by Abu Dhabi's Department of Culture and Tourism in the United Arab Emirates in 2020, with a paper titled, “The Role of Foreign Medical Missions in Combating Epidemics in the First Quarter of the Twentieth Century in Bahrain.” Dr. Al-Abdulla has participated in the University of Bahrain Social Sciences Department's first conference titled, “Prospects of Formal Education in the Kingdom of Bahrain,” with a paper titled, “Challenges of Formal Education in Bahrain during the Second World War (1939-1945).” He has also participated in several lectures in Bahrain. Dr. Al-Abdulla received his B.Sc. and MA in Mass Communication and Ph.D in History from the University of East Anglia in the UK in 2016.

**Amal AL BREIKI | United Arab Emirates**

**Deputy Head of TRENDS Council for Young Researchers | TRENDS Research & Advisory**

An International Affairs graduate from Zayed University, Amal Al Breiki worked as a research assistant while completing her degree. She has gathered diverse experience in the fields of research and government communication while interning and working in the government sector. She is currently pursuing her Master's in Applied Sociological Research at Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi.

**Micky AHARONSON | Israel**

**Expert on International Relations and Euro-Asia | Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security**

Micky Aharonson is a senior research fellow at the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security, specializing in national security, international relations and diplomacy. Her recent writings focus on international involvement in the Middle East and the impact on Israel’s national security; regional developments such as Russia’s evolving role in the Middle East and US – Russia relations. Prior to joining JISS, Aharonson concluded nearly a decade of service at the National Security Council in the Israeli Prime Minister’s Office as Senior Director of the Diplomatic Secretariat. Aharonson appears frequently in the Israeli and international press and advises companies and NGOs on policy and development. Before serving in the Prime Minister’s Office, she was a lecturer and researcher in international relations. She holds an MA in
diplomacy from Birmingham University and a BA in international relations and English literature from the Hebrew University.

**Elyazia AL HOSANI | United Arab Emirates**  
**Head of TRENDS Council for Young Researchers | TRENDS Research & Advisory**

Elyazia Jasim Al Hosani is a graduate from Zayed University with a Bachelor's Degree in Humanities and Social Studies, specialized in International Affairs. Elyazia's areas of interest include social studies and social media. She is currently the head of the Website and Social Media department at TRENDS Research & Advisory and the president of the TRENDS Council for Young Researchers.

**Ebtessam AL-KETBI | United Arab Emirates**  
**Founder and President | Emirates Policy Center**

Dr. Ebtessam al-Ketbi is the President of the Emirates Policy Center (EPC), which she founded in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates in September 2013. EPC undertakes the task of studying and foreseeing future regional and international geopolitical projects and their impact on the Gulf region based on the region's self-perception of its concerns and interests. The center also focuses on exploring current and future issues that have an impact on the security of the UAE and the region as a whole. EPC provides strategic analysis and policy papers on these issues that serve the UAE and Gulf governments. The center is considered now as one of the most renowned think tanks in the region. Abu Dhabi Strategic Debate, which is organized annually by EPC, has also become one of the key platforms for dialogue in the world to discuss regional and international security. EPC has ranked 7th in the Middle East and North Africa region in the annual global think tank index report 2018 released by the University of Pennsylvania. The center has also ranked 10th in the top best think tank conference worldwide.

In recognition of her role as a leader of one of the most important think tanks in the Arab world and the great respect she enjoys as part of the distinguished elite, not in the UAE only, but also in the Gulf region as a whole, Dr. al-Ketbi was appointed in 2015 as a member of the Consultative Commission of the Cooperation Council of the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC). She was also chosen by Arabian Business magazine in July 2018 in its list of 50 Most Influential Women in the Arab World as she was the first woman to lead one of the most important think tanks in the Arab world. Dr. Al-Ketbi also received the Women Super Achiever Award during the WORLD WOMEN LEADERSHIP CONGRESS (WWLC) that took place in Mumbai, India in Feb. 2019, and the Arab Social Media Influencers Award in the Politics Category by Dubai Press Club in Dec. 2018. In 2021, she was chosen as an advisor in the Global Commission for Post-Pandemic Policy for her distinguished contributions in research on the comprehensive consequences of COVID-19 pandemic on the world and the Middle East.

Before she founded EPC, Dr. al-Ketbi was a professor of political science at the United Arab Emirates University. She also held several posts such as the General Coordinator of the Gulf Development Forum, and served as a member of the Executive Committee of the Arab Association for Political Science and as a member of the board of trustees in the Center for Arab Unity Studies, the Arab Thought Foundation, and the Arab Anti-Corruption Organization. She is currently a member of the Board of Directors of the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington and the Global Advisory Board of Observer Research Foundation in India.

Dr. al-Ketbi published a number of research papers on Gulf Security, US-GCC relations, and War on Terrorism. She has recently published two books; the first titled The UAE Power-Building Model and Foreign Policy Shifts (the Emirates Policy Center, 2021) and the second titled Iran and the Biden Administration: A Potential Return to Negotiations (the Emirates Policy Center, 2021). Moreover, she has participated in many conferences that address regional and global affairs, and is frequently hosted by many Arab news channels as an expert in the Gulf and Iranian affairs. She holds a PhD in political science from Cairo University.

**Sarah DONAHUE | United States**  
**Associate Director of Operations | Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center**
Sarah J. Donahue is the Associate Director of Operations at the Belfer Center. Sarah received her B.A. in Political Science from Stonehill College and her Master’s in Higher Education Administration from Boston College. She began her career in campaigns, traveling to New Hampshire, Tennessee and Iowa as a staffer for John Kerry. She has also worked on Jon Corzine’s New Jersey gubernatorial campaign and the Tom Reilly for Governor Campaign. Outside of campaigns, she has worked for the Stonehill College Alumni Office.

Renata DWAN | United Kingdom
Deputy Director and Senior Executive Officer | Chatham House

Renata Dwan is the Deputy Director and Senior Executive Officer of Chatham House where she oversees the delivery of the Chatham House research agenda and the institute’s 12 programme teams. From 2018-2020, Renata was Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) in Geneva, Switzerland. At the United Nations, Renata worked on peace operations and complex emergencies in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Mali and Syria. She led major UN-wide policy initiatives on peacekeeping, security sector reform, and crisis management capacities. Prior to the UN, Renata led Stockholm International Peace Research Institute’s programme on armed conflict and conflict management and was Deputy Director the EastWest Institute security programme in Budapest, Hungary. She was a Special Adviser to the European Union Council Secretariat on crisis management issues. Dr. Dwan, who is Irish, has published widely on peacekeeping, international conflict management and peacebuilding. She received her B.A, MPhil and DPhil in International Relations from Oxford University.

Luke EASLEY | United States
Vice President of Human Resources and Operations | Center for Global Development

Luke Easley is the Vice President of Human Resources and Operations at the Center for Global Development, overseeing the Center's operations including human resources, finance, and administration. He has over fifteen years of experience in business and human resources operations, accounting and financial management, strategic workforce planning, compensation, and talent management. Easley is a Senior Certified Professional of the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM-SCP), a member of the DC SHRM Chapter, and a member of the Think Tank Diversity Council. Luke also teaches SHRM-SCP certification preparation courses for local chapter members. He holds a Bachelor's degree in human resource management from Colorado State University.

Osama ELGOHARY | Egypt
Chief Executive Officer | Information and Decision Support Center for the Egyptian Cabinet

Osama El-Gohary serves as the Chairman of the Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC), a think tank extension of the Egyptian Cabinet. In addition to this role, he also acts as an assistant to Egypt's Prime Minister. The IDSC's principal role is to advise policy makers on economic, social and political issues, placing an emphasis on reform efforts to streamline Egypt's continued development. They also serve as an intermediary between the public and the government and foster communication across different government ministries. El-Gohary has held roles in the Egyptian government since 2002, beginning as a Police Officer in the Ministry of the Interior before advancing to become a Department Head in the Ministry of Petroleum and then moved to be the head of the technical office of the Prime Minister in 2016. Outside of his government employment, El-Gohary is a lecturer at Misr International University located in Cairo.

Intissar FAKIR | United States
Director of North Africa and Sahel Program | Middle East Institute

Intissar Fakir is a senior fellow and director of MEI’s North Africa and Sahel program. She is an expert on North Africa, the Sahel, and key regional thematic issues including governance, social change, migration, and security. She has written extensively on North Africa’s evolving politics including Islamist electoral politics in post-2011 Morocco and Tunisia, the Western Sahara issue, foreign policy priorities in Morocco and the broader region, and the impact of COVID-19 on
regional political stability. Her research has also included political transitions, mobilization trends, energy, and social change in Morocco, Mauritania, Algeria, and Tunisia.

Prior to joining MEI, Intissar was a fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace where she was also the editor-in-chief of the bilanguage (English and Arabic) Middle East platform Sada. She has also implemented programs at various NGOs in support of political, economic and social reform in North Africa and the Middle East. She has consulted and advised governments and corporate entities in the US and Europe on Maghreb developments. She is the author of numerous reports, articles, and book chapters on the region and has been published in foreign policy journals and newspapers in English and Arabic. Intissar is fluent in English, Arabic, and French. Originally from Morocco, she holds an M.A. from the Elliott School at George Washington University.

Elaine FORD | Peru
Founding Director | Democracia Digital

Elaine Ford has a Master’s in International Studies from the Institute of International Studies of the University of Chile, with a postgraduate degree in International Law from the University of Nottingham, England. She also has journalism studies from the Peruvian University of Applied Sciences and completed a Specialization in Innovation in Government and Collaborative Solutions from the John F. Kennedy School of Government Institute at Harvard University. Currently, she is Director of Democracy & Development International and founder of the Digital Democracy Program for Peru and Latin-American countries. She is also the author of the book “The challenge of digital democracy: towards an interconnected citizenship.”

Tomiko ICHIKAWA | Japan
Director General | Japan Institute of International Affairs

Tomiko Ichikawa assumed the current position in July 2020. She joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1985. Her assignments in Japan include Directorship at West Europe Division, Economic Integration Division (EU), Non-proliferation, Science and Nuclear Energy Division as well as Economic Policy Division. Overseas postings include the Embassy of Japan in the UK and Permanent Mission of Japan to the International Organizations in Vienna. She also assumed positions in international organizations as Political Affairs Officer at UNPROFOR (UN PKO in the Former Yugoslavia) and Special Assistant to the Director General, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Ms. Ichikawa participated in the Six Party Talks (December 2006-December 2008), and continued to follow the DPRK nuclear issue at Permanent Mission in Vienna (2011-2014) and the IAEA (2014-2020). She obtained Bachelor in Law, University of Tokyo, Japan and MA, International relations and contemporary war, King’s College London.

Natasha HALL | United States
Senior Fellow at Middle East Program | Center for Strategic and International Studies

Natasha Hall is a senior fellow with the Middle East Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Natasha has over 15 years of experience as an analyst, researcher, and practitioner in complex humanitarian emergencies and conflict-affected areas with a specialty in the Middle East. She has lived and worked in over 15 countries in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, the Southern Caucasus, and Europe. Her work has focused on conflict resolution, governance, displacement, environmental issues, resilience, and civilian protection. Her reports have spurred congressional hearings and high-level donor responses on Syria. As a director with Mayday Rescue, she led these responses, working with the White Helmets to reinforce critical civilian infrastructure and protect civilians from explosive weapons and other consequences of the war. She is a commentator and contributor for a number of media outlets and think tanks, including CNN, BBC, and MSNBC. She has written articles and in-depth analyses for the Washington Post, Newsweek, U.S. News & World Report, the Atlantic Council, the United States Institute for Peace, and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, among others. Natasha is also the founder of Art in Exile. She earned her master’s from Georgetown’s School of Foreign Service and her B.A. from the University of Virginia in foreign affairs and Middle East studies. She did a Fulbright Fellowship in Jordan from 2006-2007 and a Boren Fellowship in Syria in 2010.

Mohammed HAMDOUI | United Arab Emirates
Director of Economic Studies | TRENDS Research & Advisory
Mohammed Hamdoune is the head of the Economic Studies Department at the TRENDS Research & Advisory. He is an energy, metals, and mining industry expert with over 15 years of experience analyzing different aspects of the industry, including supply and demand, price forecasting, cost analysis, resources monetization, market studies, and natural resources strategies. He conducts economic analysis of different industries and participates in various studies spanning multiple sectors. Before joining TRENDS, Mohammed was an Energy Researcher at the ECSSR, a Research Director, Commodities Analytics, at Wood Mackenzie, a Planning and Financial Analysis Manager at AAECE, and Business Development Analyst at Syntrum Energy. He started his career at Unilever as an IT Project Manager. Mohammed has worked and managed teams in four different continents. He earned a Bachelor’s/Master’s degree in software engineering from École Mohammadia des Ingénieurs in Morocco, and an MBA and an MS-MIS from the University of Oklahoma. Mohammed is fluent in Arabic, French, and English.

**Natasha JACOME | United States**
**Deputy Chief Operating Officer | Wilson Center**

Natasha Jacome is the Deputy Chief Operating Officer, Chair of the Staff Committee and Co-chair of the Diversity & Inclusion Council. She works with the CEO and COO to shape operations, manages and oversees the Support Operations Department, and leads the review, development, implementation and accountability of center policy changes. Previously, Natasha worked alongside the Chief Operating Officer as the Executive Manager providing strategic, operational and project management throughout the Center. In 2018, Natasha worked in the Financial Management Office, where she handled contracts, procurement and investments. Her work with the Wilson Center started in 2017 when she joined the Latin American Program as an intern. She holds an MS in Management specialized in Finance and a BA in Economics from the University of Maryland. As a first-generation American, Natasha spends much of her time educating minors on the importance of effective financial planning.

**R. Andreas KRAEMER | Germany**
**Founder & Director Emeritus | Ecologic Institute**

R. Andreas Kraemer, Founder & Director Emeritus of Ecologic Institute in Berlin, Germany, and Chairman (pro bono) of Ecologic Institute US in Washington DC, is currently non-executive Director of the Fundação Oceano Azul in Lisboa (Portugal), Chairman of Agora Energiewende in Berlin, and Visiting Assistant Professor of Political Science and Adjunct Professor of German Studies at Duke University as well as teaching faculty at the EADA Business School in Barcelona, Catalunya, Spain. He is also Initiator and Convenor of the Arctic Summer College. His research focuses on the role and functions of science-based policy institutes or "think tanks" in theory and the practice in different political systems, the interactions among policy domains and international relations, and global governance on environment, resources, climate and energy.

R. Andreas Kraemer is also Manager (pro bono) of the Konrad von Moltke Fund and active as Co-Chairman of the Advisory Board of OekoWorld, which sets global investment criteria for ethical and ‘green’ investment funds or mutual trusts, Advisory Board Member of The Arctic Institute, and Member of the Practice Board for the Master Course on "Strategic Sustainability Management" at the University of Applied Sciences in Eberswalde (HNE Eberswalde). In 2015, he was Visiting Scholar at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Center for Energy and Environmental Policy Research (CEEPR). From 2011 to 2014, R. Andreas Kraemer was Speaker of Ecornet, the Ecological Research Network of independent, trans-disciplinary environmental research institutes in Germany. From 2015 to 2018, he was Senior Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS), Potsdam, Germany.

**Deron LEHMAN | United States**
**Managing Director, Human Resources & Talent Development | American Enterprise Institute**

Deron Lehman has been the Managing Director of Human Resources and Talent Development at the American Enterprise Institute since September, 2020. He has more than 20 years of experience in research institutions, non-profit, and government settings focused on business strategy, building the capacity of human resources teams, and streamlining operations to provide enhanced services.
He began his career focusing on enhancing state government efficiency with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by applying business strategies and principles to streamline bureaucratic processes. He quickly realized that processes can be easily changed, but the people that support and use them were generally underserved. This changed his focus to a people-centric strategy for enhancing value creation and enhancing employee experience. He has led teams at Mercatus Center, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, National Association of Insurance Commissioners, DC Government, and National 4-H Council. Through his organizational roles and consulting services he has helped improve employee experience, increased human resources’ contribution to business outcomes, and enhanced alignment with culture and mission. He contributes to the development of HR professionals and business leaders by facilitating learning sessions through local and national seminars and speaking engagements.

Deron is a member of the DC SHRM board of directors and the HR Virginia state council. He holds SHRM-SCP and SPHR certifications. He also holds a Bachelor’s degree from Bloomsburg University and a Master’s degree in Business Administration from Robert Morris University.

**Paul McALLISTER | United States**  
President | Global Leaders in Unity and Involvement

Paul Alan McAllister is founder and president of Global Leaders in Unity and Evolvement (GLUE), an expanding network of both young and experienced career professionals and scholars from multiple disciplines (e.g., engineering, economics, faith and science). Prior to GLUE, he enjoyed a twenty year career as a R&D engineer and senior project manager with the United States Departments of Defense, Commerce, and Transportation, overseeing multimillion dollar programs. He also worked for several Fortune 100 companies in the financial services sector on data migration activities and in the automotive arena on active safety sensor applications. He has also taught in U.S. colleges and universities as an adjunct engineering instructor. In 2020, he joined The Dietrich Bonhoeffer Institute based in Washington, D.C. as a postdoctoral Senior Fellow. His current areas of focus are on domestic and international violence, the spread of global nationalism and racism, and the relationship between the 5G-artificial intelligence revolution and preservation of the social safety net.

**James G. MCGANN | United States**  
Director | Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program

James G. McGann is a Senior Lecturer of International Studies at the Lauder Institute, Director of the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program and a Senior Fellow at the Fels Institute of Government at the University of Pennsylvania. Prior to assuming his current post, Dr. McGann was Assistant Director of the International Relations Program at the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. McGann has served as a consultant and advisor to the World Bank; the United Nations; the Asian Development Bank; the United States Agency for International Development; the Soros, Rockefeller, MacArthur, Hewlett and Gates foundations; the Carnegie Corporation; and foreign governments on the role of non-governmental, public policy and public engagement organizations in civil society. He was an assistant professor of Political Science at Villanova University where he taught international relations, international organizations and international law. He has served as the Senior Vice President for the Executive Council on Foreign Diplomats, the Public Policy Program Officer for the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Assistant Director of the Institute of Politics, John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He also served as a Senior Advisor to the Citizens’ Network for Foreign Affairs and the Society for International Development.

Dr. McGann earned his M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania. He was a National Fellow at Stanford University while writing his doctoral thesis, which examined the nature and evolution of public policy research organizations in the United States such as Brookings Institution, Heritage Foundation, RAND, Urban Institute and others. He compared and contrasted the mission, structure and operating principles of these leading think tanks to determine how those factors influenced the institutions’ role in policymaking. His research and consulting have enabled him to work with governments and civil society organizations in over 100 countries. He has authored over 15 books on think tanks and is the creator and editor of the annual Global Go To Think Tank Index.

**Kunihiro MIYAKE | Japan**
Research Director | Canon Institute for Global Studies

Kunihiko Miyake is a Research Director at The Canon Institute for Global Studies, since 2009. He is also a Visiting Professor at Ritsumeikan University since 2006. He joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan in 1978. In 2004, he served as Deputy Director-General of the Middle East Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs after having served as Minister at the Embassy of Japan in Iraq and Japan's Representative to the CPA. In 2000 he was Minister at the Embassy of Japan in China. He graduated from the Law Faculty of the University of Tokyo.

Khuloud ODEH | United States
Vice President, Technology and Data Science Chief Information Officer | Urban Institute

Khuloud Odeh is Vice president for Technology and Data Science and Chief Information Officer (CIO) at the Urban Institute, where she leads the strategic planning and implementation of research, operations, and communications technology. Odeh is not your typical technologist: she brings a unique blend of education, IT organization leadership, change management experience, and understanding of global and local sustainability challenges. Over the course of her career, she has helped various organizations develop and implement strategic IT roadmaps that align with and support business process improvements, innovation, and organizational growth.

Before joining Urban, Odeh was IT director for the Grameen Foundation, a global poverty-fighting organization. She served previously as the CIO of CHF International (now Global Communities) and as senior IT advisor to Jhieigo's Maternal and Child Health Integrated Program.

Odeh has a BS in computer science from the University of Jordan in Amman, Jordan; an MS in computer science from American University; and a PhD in information technology from George Mason University, where her research focused on the social, environmental, and economic sustainability of an IT organization's practices. She also has a master's degree in strategic leadership toward sustainability from the Blekinge Institute of Technology in Karlskrona, Sweden, where her research focused on the enabling role of IT and broadband connectivity in sustainable urban development.

David O'BRIEN | United States
Vice President for External Affairs | Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE)

David O'Brien joined the Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE) as Vice President for External Affairs in October 2020. For more than a decade, he has closely collaborated with PIIE on a host of research and policy initiatives on immigration, gender equity, and the extension of PIIE insights. O'Brien joins PIIE from EY, having recently retired after a 33-year career, where he served as a partner and member of the executive team with responsibilities as the Americas Chief Communications Officer, Chief Marketing Officer, Chief of Staff to the Chairman, and a range of client service roles. While at EY, he positioned the brand as a market leader in talent engagement, culture, inclusion, quality, and business insights, helping to drive broad recognition of EY as among the best places to work, top professional service brand, thought leader, and top growth performer. He serves on a number of not-for-profit boards promoting education, inclusion, human welfare, and US-China relations. O'Brien has an MBA from the University of Pennsylvania, Wharton School of Business, and an undergraduate degree from Wheeling Jesuit University.

Strahinja SUBOTIC | Serbia
Programme Manager & Senior Researcher | European Policy Centre

Strahinja Subotic joined the CEP team in January 2017 as a Research Fellow within the Europe&Us programme area, dealing with the EU politics and institutional setup, in the context of Serbia's EU accession negotiations. From March 2021, he holds the position of a Senior Researcher and Programme Manager of the Europe&Us programme area. Now, his key responsibilities include the preparation and implementation of research projects; research and production of policy products; supervision of junior colleagues and interns; and organisation of public debates and other events on EU-related topics in CEP.
Strahinja is also currently pursuing a Ph.D. degree at the Faculty of Political Science (University of Belgrade), where he originally graduated as the best student of his class at the Department of Political Science. At the Central European University (CEU) in Hungary he obtained an MA degree in Political Science, acquiring a certificate in Social and Political Theory, with a special focus on Transitional Justice in the post-Yugoslav space. Prior to that, he had studied at the University of Missouri during his junior year, as part of a programme funded by the US State Department.

Charles Powell | Spain
Director | Elcano Royal Institute

Charles Powell has been Director of the Elcano Royal Institute since 2012, and a Professor of Contemporary History at CEU San Pablo University (Madrid) since 2001.

Born in 1960 to an English father and a Spanish mother, he read History and Modern Languages at Oxford University, which also awarded him a Doctorate in History. While at Oxford, he was a lecturer at Corpus Christi College, a J. A. Pye Fellow at University College, and a Junior Research Fellow at St. Antony's College. He has also been a visiting professor at the Catholic University of Portugal and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

From 1997 to 2000, he was deputy director of the European Studies programme of the Ortega y Gasset University Institute, and was later appointed Deputy Director of the José Ortega y Gasset Foundation's Spanish Centre for International Relations (CERI). In 2001 he joined the Elcano Royal Institute as Senior Analyst for Europe, and in 2004 he was appointed Deputy Director for Research and Analysis. He is the author of six books and numerous articles on Spanish and European history and politics. In the course of his career, he has supervised eight doctoral theses and taught and lectured in more than 40 countries in Europe, Africa, America and Asia.

Charles Powell is an Officer of the Order of the Star of Italy (2015), a Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George (2017), a Commander of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Romania (2020), and a Knight of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland (2021).

Linda Roth | United States
Vice President of External Relations | Wilson Center

Linda Roth is an award-winning journalist currently managing a broad portfolio of communications and outreach activities at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, a key non-partisan policy forum for tackling global issues. As Vice President of External Relations, she directs and oversees the organization’s branding, digital content creation, partnerships, media relations, social media, print publications and audio visual support services. The Center is ranked one of the top think tanks in the world by the University of Pennsylvania. Previously, Roth was Wolf Blitzer’s trusted producer at CNN, responsible for management of nearly every aspect of his editorial projects, trips and newsmaker interviews. As one of the top producers on The Situation Room and as the executive producer of CNN’s Sunday political talk show Late Edition, Roth covered every major domestic and international news story of the last two decades. Her honors include Emmy, Peabody and Headliner awards.

Lydia Ruddy | Indonesia
Director of Communications | Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia

Lydia Ruddy is a seasoned policy, development, and communications professional who has worked at the nexus of public and private sectors for over 20 years. Fluent in Indonesian, she has advised international businesses and organizations on strategic planning, communications and outreach, and policy across the ASEAN region. Trained in Law (J.D.) at Georgetown University and Urban Planning and Geography (M.U.P, A.B.D.) at the University of Washington, Ms. Ruddy has lived and worked in Indonesia since 2006 when she came as a Fulbright scholar. Before coming to Indonesia, Ms. Ruddy’s career focused on legal practice and land conservation.

Samir Saran | India
President | Observer Research Foundation

Samir Saran is the President of Observer Research Foundation (ORF), India’s premiere think tank, headquartered in New Delhi. His research focuses on issues of global governance, climate change and energy policy, technology and new media, and India’s foreign policy. Samir completed his doctoral studies at the Global Sustainability Institute, UK. He holds a Masters in Media Studies from the London School of Economics and Political Science, UK, and a Bachelors in Electrical and Electronics Engineering from Manipal Institute of Technology, India.

As ORF’s President and member of the board, he provides strategic direction and leadership to the foundation’s multiple centres on fundraising, research projects, platform design and outreach initiatives including stakeholder engagement. He curates the Raisina Dialogue, India’s annual flagship platform on geopolitics and geo-economics, and is the founder of CyFy, India’s annual conference on cybersecurity and internet governance. He spearheads the foundation’s efforts to foster new international partnerships and globalise its platforms. Samir is a member of the Regional Action Group of the World Economic Forum (WEF), a part of WEF’s Global Future Council on Geopolitics, and served as a Commissioner of The Global Commission on the Stability of Cyberspace. He is a member of the Board of Directors at ORF America, and serves on the board of Microsoft’s Digital Peace Now Initiative.

He has authored four books, several academic papers, and is featured regularly in Indian and international print and broadcast media. He has recently co-authored two books on geopolitics: The New World Disorder And The Indian Imperative with Shashi Tharoor and Pax Sinica: Implications for the Indian Dawn with Akhil Deo.

Antonio VILLAFRANCA | Italy
Director of Studies | Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI)

Antonio Villafranca is ISPI Director of Studies and Co-Head of the Europe and Global Governance Centre. He is lecturer of International Relations at the Bocconi University (Milan), where he was also lecturer of European Economic Policies (2016-2018), and of ‘Structure of International Society’ at the IULM University. At ISPI he has coordinated several research projects funded by Italian Institutions (such as the “Osservatorio di Politica Internazionale” of the Italian Parliament) and by the EU Commission and Parliament (including Green, Rastanews, Trade and Economic Relations with Asia, and Parltrade).

He has extensively published on global and European governance and on EU policies. Selected publications include: Europe in Identity Crisis. The Future of the EU in the Age of Nationalism (edited with C. Altomonte), ISPI, 2020; The Quest for Global Monetary Policy Coordination (with F. Bruni and J. Siaba Serrate), Economics E-Journal, Kiel Institute, 2019; Global Governance and the Role of the EU. Assessing the Future Balance of Power (edited with C. Secchi), Edward Elgar Publishing, 2011. He is an economist by training and received his MA from the Catholic University of Milan where he also specialised in Economics and International Relations.

La Toya WAHA | Germany
Analysis and Consulting, Migration and Flight | Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS)

Dr. La Toya Waha is responsible for the topics related to migration and flight in the KAS Analysis and Consulting Division. Prior, she was Deputy Director of the KAS Political Dialogue Asia Programme in Singapore. Dr. Waha’s research focus areas are transnational networks, the emergence of political violence, the relation between religion, politics and the state as well as the relation between migration, organised crime and politics. Her major publications are her book, Religion and State-Formation in Transitional Societies: Sri Lanka in a Comparative Perspective, and her edited book, United by Violence, Divided by Cause? – A Comparison of Drivers of Radicalisation and Violence in Asia and Europe.
About the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program

The Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP) at the Lauder Institute of the University of Pennsylvania conducts research on the role policy institutes play in governments and civil societies around the world. Often referred to as the “think tanks’ think tank,” TTCSP examines the evolving role and character of public policy research organizations.

Since its formation, TTCSP has laid the foundation for a global initiative that will help bridge the gap between knowledge and policy in critical policy areas such as international peace and security, globalization and governance, international economics, environment, information and society, poverty alleviation and health. This international collaborative effort is designed to establish regional and international networks of policy institutes and communities that will improve policy making as well as strengthen democratic institutions and civil societies around the world. TTCSP at the Lauder Institute works with leading scholars and practitioners from think tanks and universities in a variety of collaborative efforts and programs.

About the Lauder Institute:

Founded by brothers Leonard and Ronald Lauder in 1983 in honor of their father, Joseph, the Joseph H. Lauder Institute for Management and International Studies provides a fully integrated business education to a new generation of leaders coming of age in a rapidly globalizing world.

About the University of Pennsylvania:

The University of Pennsylvania (Penn) is an Ivy League school with highly selective admissions and a history of innovation in interdisciplinary education and scholarship. As a world-class research institution, The University of Pennsylvania peer institutions are Stanford, Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Dartmouth, Cornell, Cambridge and Oxford. Penn was founded by Benjamin Franklin in 1740 to push the frontiers of knowledge and benefit society by integrating study in the liberal arts and sciences with opportunities for research and practical, pre-professional training at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Penn is committed to meeting the full demonstrated need of all undergraduates with grant-based financial aid, making this intellectually compelling integration of liberal and professional education accessible to talented students of all backgrounds and empowering them to make an impact on the world. Penn boasts a picturesque campus in the middle of Philadelphia, a dynamic city that is conveniently located between Washington, D.C. and New York, New York.
About the Director:

James G. McGann, Ph.D., is a Senior Lecturer at the Lauder Institute of the Wharton School and the School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania. He is also the Director of the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP) at the University of Pennsylvania. He conducts research on developments and problems that think tanks and policymakers around the world face, and offers guidance and technical assistance to think tanks, governments and public and private donors on how to enhance the quality and effect of policy analysis. He is also a Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, a think tank based in Philadelphia. Prior to joining the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. McGann was an Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Villanova, where he taught international relations, international organizations and international law.

His main research priorities include: analyzing global developments in research on safety and international affairs; influencing United States’ foreign and domestic policies through think tanks; strategic advice to BRICS and G20 countries from think tanks and transnational and regional public policy challenges. He is the creator and author of the annual Global Go To Think Tank Index which ranks think tanks in every region of the world.

Dr. McGann has served as a consultant and advisor to the World Bank; the United Nations; the United States Agency for International Development; the Soros, Rockefeller, MacArthur, Hewlett and Gates foundations; the Carnegie Corporation; and foreign governments on the role of nongovernmental, public policy and public engagement organizations in the US and developing and transitional countries. He has also served as the Senior Vice President for the Executive Council on Foreign Diplomats, the Public Policy Program Officer for the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Assistant Director of the Institute of Politics, John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He has also served as a Senior Advisor to the Citizens’ Network for Foreign Affairs and the Society for International Development.

“Helping to bridge the gap between knowledge and policy”

The mission of TTCSP is to increase the profile, capacity and performance of think tanks at the national, regional and global levels so they can better serve policymakers and the public.

TTCSP conducts research on the relationship between think tanks, politics and public policy, produces the annual Global Go To Think Tank Index, develops capacity-building resources and programs, manages and
supports a global network of over 8,000 think tanks and trains future think tank scholars and executives. TTCSP is often referred to as the “think tanks’ think tank.”

Contact:

James G. McGann, Ph.D.
Senior Lecturer, International Studies, Lauder Institute
Director, Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program
Wharton School and School of Arts and Sciences
University of Pennsylvania
256 S. 37th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104
Main Office: (215) 573-6267
Direct Line: (215) 746-2928
Mobile: (215) 206-1799
Email: jmcgann@wharton.upenn.edu
Website: gotothinktank.com

Recognizing the TTCSP interns involved:

Alisa Wadsworth, TTCSP Summit Coordinator, University of Pennsylvania

Zuha Noor, TTCSP Summit Coordinator, University of Pennsylvania

Elie El Kefraoui, TTCSP Research Intern, University of Pennsylvania

Angela De Santis, TTCSP Research Intern, University of Pennsylvania