"Overview," Guidance for Governance: Comparing Alternative Sources of Public Policy Advice; (ed. R.Kent Weaver and Paul B. Stares), Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 2001, pp. 71-88)

Guidance for Governance: An Overview

R. Kent Weaver and Paul B. Stares

The need for "good governance" has become a common exhortation in a wide variety of contexts from corporate boardrooms to international organizations. What makes for "good" as distinct from "bad" governance—used here in the context of the nation-state to mean "the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised for the common good" (World Bank Institute 2001)—has understandably received considerable attention. Indeed, it is fair to say that there is now general consensus on the desired qualities of good governance. Those most frequently cited are "accountability," "inclusiveness," "transparency," and "legitimacy."

All of these are attractive and necessary attributes to be encouraged in any system of governance. But good governance should also be judged in terms of the quality of the decisions taken and policies adopted, specifically whether they produce outcomes that are broadly efficient, equitable, sustainable, and cost effective. What makes such outcomes more likely, however, clearly depends to a large extent on the quality of the policy advice that is injected into the governance process to help guide key decision makers. Yet the role of policy expertise is largely missing from most discussions of effective governance even though it can be helpful—even critical—at every stage of the policymaking process.

Thus, at the earliest stages of defining the nature of a problem and getting politicians' attention to put it on the agenda for governmental action, policy experts can help to outline just how serious a problem is and elucidate the causes of that problem in a way that sets the parameters for governmental action. As policy responses to a problem are being formulated, policy expertise can be critical in identifying the most important alternatives, evaluating their advantages and disadvantages, and suggesting a reformulation of proposals if leading candidates have important flaws. When governments must finally accept or reject a proposal for policy change, expertise can help policymakers decide whether to move forward, fine tune the proposal, or go back to the drawing board. Finally and perhaps most important, once a policy is in place, policy expertise can be critical in evaluating that policy and deciding whether to leave it alone, revise it, or make major changes. This is not to say that policy expertise is always supplied or

used in a disinterested manner; on the contrary, policymakers' use of expertise "takes place in a busy public setting, in a swelling-information-rich environment fed continually by many interested parties, all intending to have some bearing on the activities of government" (Lacey and Furner 1993, 4).

In seeking to balance societal interests, governments have traditionally sought policy advice from primarily "line" government departments or ministries that have direct responsibility for supervising specific programs. Transport ministry bureaucrats provide the dominant repository for expertise on railways and airline policy, for example, and health ministry bureaucrats for expertise on issues like immunization policy, health care user-fees, and the closing of redundant hospitals.

Politicians and scholars of the policymaking process have long been uneasy about these relationships, however. Relying on line agencies for policy advice poses several potential problems (Weller 1987, 156). First, these agencies are unlikely to take a holistic view of society's—or even a particular government's—policy needs. Highway bureaucrats in a transport ministry, for example, might not pay sufficient attention to the impact of their advice and their actions on urban sprawl. Agricultural bureaucracies may be insufficiently attentive to broader trade policy considerations in government policy. Navy bureaucracies may be concerned primarily with their own objectives rather than those of other military services or the most efficient allocation of scarce defense expenditures.

Second, line government agencies may develop close relationships with, and even be "captured" by, the societal interests that they oversee. Agriculture bureaucracies may take as their central mission the welfare of farmers, banking agencies the welfare of banks, transport regulatory agencies the welfare of airlines and railways, and so on. Such relationships are understandable, but they may not be desirable for good governance. Even where bureaucracies are not guided by their own interests or "captured" by the interests of those they are supposed to supervise, they may be blinded by "conventional wisdom" in their sector and fail to think creatively about the nature of policy problems and potential solutions.

The impact of various social, political, and economic trends on the task of governance, moreover, has increased the need for policymakers to draw on alternative sources of policy advice to those traditionally relied upon. One critical trend is the growing complexity of issues. This has led both to a greater segmentation of bureaucracies in order to manage a widening set of

issues and to a proliferation of nongovernmental actors and interests that must be taken into account and engaged in the policy process. The net result is to make the tasks of consensus building, policy coordination, and implementation increasingly difficult. Those responsible for managing the policy process have to comprehend both highly specialized forms of knowledge—whether it be scientific, technical, or legal in nature—as well as the complex linkages that exist among different issues, which often transcend disciplinary, bureaucratic, and administrative boundaries.

The nature of representative government is changing as well. The democratic process in many countries has become quite fractured, with the number of political parties growing and minority or coalition governments becoming commonplace. As a consequence, there is a now much greater demand for independent advice from the legislative branch of many governments to assess the policies advanced by the executive branch and, if deemed necessary, to help in formulating alternatives.

Demands from civil society have also grown. These take several forms. One is that governments are under increasing pressure, as indicated earlier, to make the policy process open, inclusive, and above all accountable to the general public. This has increased the demand for impartial and imaginative new sources of public policy advice. At the same time, public expectations for immediate results have risen. Short-term considerations thus predominate to an even greater extent than before, with the result that medium- and long-term concerns may be neglected.

Finally, global economic competition and recurrent fiscal imbalances in many countries, heightened by regional economic crises in Asia and elsewhere, have intensified concerns over governmental performance. Cozy relationships between bureaucracies and industries as well as inefficiencies in government programs, which once were tolerable and tolerated, are increasingly seen as unacceptable—if not by governments and citizens, then by international lending agencies.

Expert advice can, and often is, sought from individual experts on an ad hoc basis. Government leaders may assemble informal “kitchen cabinets,” some members of which may be legitimate policy experts, while others are valued more for their political know-how. And legislatures may solicit expert advice by holding hearings, although without adequate staff they may have difficulty in aggregating conflicting testimony into a coherent portrait of the status

quo, let alone a cogent proposal for change. Because of the limits of ad hoc advice, however, the executive and legislative branches frequently seek out, and in some cases even create, specialized organizations that have as a major objective the provision of policy advice. The focus of this study is on the role played by such entities, which we call alternative policy advisory organizations (APAOs): organizations outside of line government departments which serve as institutionalized sources of policy expertise for government policymakers (see Seymour-Ure 1987).

Of course, there are factors that work against the institutionalization of alternative policy advice especially within government. Line bureaucracies may resist the growth of bureaucratic rivals that challenge their programs or embarrass them politically. And central executives may feel overwhelmed by the mountains of information that they have to absorb from line agencies without creating new sources of expertise to provide information that may prove to be redundant or contradictory.

Although there is a growing acceptance of the role and value of alternative sources of public policy advice to improve the quality of governance, the availability and use made of such organizations varies considerably between countries. These variations reflect not only differences in governmental receptivity to alternative policy advice, but also such factors as political culture, legal provisions, the availability of funding, and human resources. As a consequence, there exists in some countries a plethora of alternative sources of public policy advice while in others there is a dearth. More is not necessarily better, however. Policymakers can become overwhelmed or confused by alternative sources of policy advice to the point that they ignore much of what they receive, including some that might be useful.

The broad purpose of this study is to assess the current state and role of alternative sources of policy advice in eight democratic countries in different regions of the world and in different stages of political and economic development. Each national case study follows a broadly similar analytical framework to facilitate comparison. Besides shedding light on how particular constellations of APAOs have evolved and function under different conditions, the individual case studies also permit us to reach some general conclusions about the relative influence of public policy advice in specific national contexts and, moreover, to make recommendations for how it can be improved drawing on the experience, where relevant, of other countries.

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This introductory chapter provides an overview to the subject of APAOs and previews some of the findings of the case studies about the advantages and limitations of specific APAO types and the constraints that various environmental conditions impose on them. We begin by delineating our subject: What do we mean by alternative policy advisory organizations?

APAOs: A Definition

While the boundaries of what constitutes an APAO are not entirely clear, they share these general characteristics:

(1) APAOs are institutionalized. Informal advisory networks, or even individuals, may be an important source of policy expertise for government leaders, and many political leaders surround themselves with kitchen cabinets, which provide political or policy advice (Bakvis 1997). So long as they remain as informal bodies, they are outside our definition of APAOs.

(2) APAOs have a significant organizational life span, but not necessarily presumed perpetuity. Most APAOs have no sunset provisions that limit their life span. For our purposes, even a body with a predetermined endpoint—for example, a commission established to investigate a particular problem of tragic event—falls within our definition of an APAO. However, organizations with a very short life span—for example, a task force that is set up to investigate a particular problem, reports to political executives within a week, and then dissolves—are not considered here.

(3) APAOs are outside of or autonomous within line government departments. An independent advisory organization is sometimes placed within a government department for administrative convenience; yet this organization, by virtue of its independently appointed membership with fixed terms, has almost complete autonomy in offering policy advice. While APAOs must be fully independent of line agencies, formal independence is of course no guarantee of real independence. If a formally independent APAO is staffed by bureaucrats of a particular government agency, its independence may be nominal.

(4) APAOs may be based in either civil society or government. Governments clearly do not have a monopoly on policy expertise. Moreover, distance from government is a

continuum rather than dichotomous: Expertise-bearing organizations that receive most of their funding from government—contract research think tanks, for example—are neither entirely of civil society or of government.

(5) APAOs offer policy advice as their central mission, although this may not necessarily be their exclusive mission. Most university-based research centers and service- and action-oriented nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), for example, do not fit our definition of APAOs because offering policy advice to government is usually a peripheral mission for them. Similarly, government statistical agencies, which provide data for analysis of social and economic trends, usually do not have policy advice as part of their mandate and thus would not be included in our definition. Central banks, likewise, play a key policy advisory role in many countries, but once again, this is not their central function.

(6) APAOs base their claim to legitimacy largely on their policy expertise and technical skills rather than on their representation of a specific societal interest. Although an organization may have substantive expertise in policy areas and may in fact provide information to government, to be considered an APAO, its main credential must be its policy expertise, not its ideological point of view. Thus, organizations like employer and labor confederations, industry associations, trade unions, or environmental groups may be able to make a compelling case to the government, but their main credential is their representation of a social interest that the government should not ignore.

(7) Finally, APAOs provide substantive policy expertise rather than expertise on politics, management, or the policymaking process. Politicians and governments, especially in wealthier countries, draw on an array of individuals who claim expertise on gauging public opinion, explaining policies to the public, and winning elections. These pollsters, consultants, and political professionals will offer advice on policy issues, but that advice is generally based on their estimation of the political salability of policy, not on its substantive merits. Within government, a parliamentary system may have an office of the prime minister whose primary function is to offer political advice or to manage the process of governance (see, for example, Bakvis 1997). Management consultants may be engaged similarly to reorganize government agencies or to make them run more efficiently. However, unless these organizations have a substantial internal capacity for policy expertise, they do not fit within our definition of APAOs.

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APAOs: A Typology

Alternative sources of policy advice come in a variety of organizational forms. As seen in table 1, they can be grouped along two dimensions: the organization's degree of autonomy from government and the centrality of policy advice to the organization's mission. But APAOs vary greatly in their organizational proximity to government: Some clearly are a part of government, others clearly are not, and still others—for example, contract research think tanks which are heavily financed by government but organizationally independent, and temporary blue-ribbon commissions, which are generally appointed by government but operate at an arm's length—are somewhere in between.

It is apparent from table 1 that the distinctions between the organizations that have been categorized as APAOs and those that have not are hazy. NGOs, for example, may have both substantial research agendas and action-oriented agendas, and they may not distinguish or see conflict between these agendas. If their research does not meet the standard of value-neutral social science research, neither does the research of many organizations that fit more clearly within our definition of an APAO.

Table 1. Alternative Sources of Institutionalized Policy Advice and Expertise for Government

		Degree of Autonomy from Government		
		Government	Intermediate	Civil Society
Centrality of policy advice to organizational mission	Central	**Central policy review and advisory organizations within the executive**	**Temporary blue-ribbon government commissions**	**Academic think tanks**
		Legislative support agencies	**Permanent independent advisory bodies**	**Advocacy think tanks**
		Legislative committee staffs	**Contract research and ministerial think tanks**	
		Independent government audit agencies		
		Central banks	**Political party think tanks and research bureaus**	**Research-oriented NGOs**
		Treasury and Finance ministries		
	Peripheral	Government statistical agencies	Consulting firms to government	Corporate think tanks
			International lending agencies (e.g., International Monetary Fund, World Bank)	Interest groups
				University research centers
				Action- and service-oriented NGOs
			Supra-national organizations	Professional associations
				Personal staffs or legislation

Note: Organizations defined as alternative policy advisory organizations are shown in boldface.
NGOs: nongovernmental organizations.

It is nevertheless helpful to think in terms of types of APAOs even as we recognize that some organizations will not fit neatly into a single category. We outline the major types here, and we attempt to identify the advantages and limitations associated with each. Table 2 lists seven modal attributes that may be useful in providing policy advice and translating it into policy change: access to key decision makers, capacity for providing independent advice, responsiveness to the agenda of the government, credibility with policymakers, credibility with the public, capacity to offer a career path for policy experts, and institutional capacity to follow through on policy advice. Types of APAOs are rated—albeit very roughly—according to these attributes.

Table 2. Attributes Associated with Specific APAO Types

APAO Type	APAO Attributes						
	Access to key decision makers	Capacity for providing independent policy advice	Responsive-ness to agenda of government	Credibility with policy-makers	Credibility with public	Capacity to offer stable career path	Institutional capacity to follow through on policy advice
Governmental							
Legislative support agencies	?	?	+++	+++	+	++	+
Legislative committee staffs	?	?	++	?	0		
Independent audit agencies	++	+++	+	+++	+++	+++	++
Central policy review organizations	+++	?	+++	+++	+	?	+++
Intermediate							
Temporary blue-ribbon commissions	?	++	++	++	+++	0	0
Permanent advisory bodies	++	+	++	+++	++	+	+
Contract research and ministerial think tanks	++	+	+++	++	+	++	+
Political party think tanks and research bureaus	?	?	?	?	0	0	?
Civil Society APAOs							
Academic think tanks	?	+++	?	++	+	?	?
Advocacy think tanks	?	++	?	?	?	?	?
Research-oriented NGOs	0	++	?	0	+	0	?

+++ Potential to embody this attribute is extremely high.
++ Potential to embody this attribute is fairly high.
+ Potential to embody this attribute is modest.
0 Potential to embody this attribute is almost always limited.
? Potential to embody this attribute is highly variable; generalization is difficult.
APAO: alternative policy advisory organization; NGOs: nongovernmental organizations.

Obviously, significant variation can be found within each type of APAO, as extremely weak organizations with very few resources would not exhibit the potential advantages associated with their APAO type. Idiosyncratic relationships can be critical as well: For example, civil society–based APAOs may have relationships with particular politicians that can give them an

unusually high degree of access to policymakers. The ratings in table 2 are intended, therefore, not to suggest a rigid set of APAO attributes, but to illustrate that there is no single preferred form of APAO. Actual advantages are rather the result of a series of trade-offs. Most government APAOs, for example, are likely to rank high in terms of responsiveness to the government's agenda and institutional capacity to follow through on advice, while civil society–based organizations are likely to produce advice that is truly independent. Given the distinctive advantages and limitations of specific APAO types, it is little wonder that wealthy, more democratic societies have many more APAOs of multiple types.

Central Policy Review and Advisory Organizations

Organizations that exist within the executive branch to provide a central policy review and advisory function are one of the most important, and most common, type of APAO. Central executives recognize the need for a broader—and sometimes longer-term—perspective than they are likely to get from the advice of line government agencies. The form that a central policy review and advisory organization may take varies widely in terms of whom it serves (the head of government personally or the cabinet collectively), its staffing (semipermanent, seconded from line agencies, or political appointment), the breadth of its policy mandate (all policy, domestic or foreign policy, or sector policy), the degree to which it offers political as well as policy advice, and—most critical for our purposes—the extent to which it relies upon its own independent policy expertise, rather than simply coordinating, managing, and acting as a gatekeeper for information from line government agencies.

Many of the advantages and disadvantages of central policy review and advisory organizations are a consequence of their position. For example, because of their proximity to central decision makers, they are often called upon to address crises of the moment. Thus, their advice is more likely to be characterized by option evaluation of current and pressing issues, superficial analysis, discrete issues, and limited innovativeness, rather than by a fundamental rethinking of issues (Dror 1987, 200).

Other characteristics are dependent on the ways that particular central agencies are comprised. Organizations heavily made up of political appointees, like the Domestic Policy Council in the United States, may have the ear of their political masters, but when the central

administration and organizational staff turn over, institutional memory is poor and the learning curve steep. Organizations relying on secondment from line bureaucracies may find their staff reluctant to stray from the views of their primary past and likely future employers. While having a permanent staff provides continuity for an organization, it may become so committed to its institutional point of view that it is no longer innovative (Seymour-Ure 1987, 183; Dror 1987, 197). The point is that there is no single best staffing arrangement for these organizations; rather there are a series of trade-offs to be resolved in the broader logic of governmental structure. Deviations from that logic are difficult to sustain—but also most useful in providing distinctive alternative policy advice.

Legislative Support Organizations and Independent Audit Agencies

Legislative support organizations (LSOs) can take many forms, but their overarching objective is to offer members of the legislature alternative sources of information to that provided by the executive. The most common type of these organizations is a parliamentary library of reference bureau that answers questions and provides information requested by legislators (Robinson 1998). In this capacity, legislative support organizations are simply repositories for published expertise. This role has been expanded in many countries, however. Legislative support organizations frequently go beyond providing materials produced elsewhere to summarizing and critiquing those materials, perhaps also performing independent policy analysis, preparing independent budget estimates, and holding seminars to bring legislators up to speed on issues.

Closely related to and partially overlapping with LSOs are organizations that can be called independent audit agencies, accountable to the legislature rather than the executive, which provide an independent oversight and watchdog function to ensure that government money is not being misallocated, wasted, or stolen. Auditing organizations may also expand their roles by looking beyond the question of proper expenditure of funds to consider whether a program is cost-effective or meets its goals. The U.S. General Accounting office, which now performs policy analysis at the behest of Congress, is a classic example of an audit organization whose role has expanded (Mosher 1979).

As alternative sources of policy advice, LSOs and audit agencies have the advantage of their proximity to decision makers (see Robinson 1992). Their research agenda, as opposed to that of

APAOs outside of government, is likely to be determined by the legislative agenda, and thus their potential for having timely impact is increased. Moreover, because LSOs and independent audit agencies provide a direct service to legislators, they may be viewed more sympathetically when it comes to funding. And as long as they are nonpartisan, for policy experts they may represent a reasonably secure career path in public service.

In many parliamentary systems, however, the legislature is not at all important to the policymaking process, existing merely as a vehicle for expressing a mandate to the governing party. In this situation, supporting an independent policy advisory organization for the legislature may be seen by the governing party as unnecessary at best and a potential nuisance at worst. LSOs and audit agencies may gain financial support only if the governing party is willing to take the long view toward a time when it will be in opposition and need expertise independent of the executive.

Legislative Committee Staffs

Policy expertise may also be diffused among individual legislative committees or, in the case of a bicameral legislature, individual chambers. Clearly, the biggest advantage of legislative committee staffs is that their expertise is imbedded directly into the lawmaking process and, at least theoretically, outside of executive control.

Legislative committee staffs face limitations, however, primarily involving accountability and hiring. Should they be accountable to the committee chair (who usually is a member of the majority party), to senior members of each political party on the committee, or to all members? Each option has its drawbacks. If members of a legislative committee staff are hired by and accountable to the committee chair, their expertise is not likely to be truly autonomous. Where a single party holds a legislative majority in a parliamentary system, there will be pressure not to take too independent a line from that of the government. Indeed, in this volume, it is only with the two countries with presidential systems, Brazil and the United States, that the case study authors have rated legislative committee staffs as highly institutionalized and highly influential.

Even within the U.S. Congress, where committee staffs are larger and perhaps more consequential to policymaking than anywhere else, there is substantial variation in their composition. A few committee staffs have been organized in a relatively bipartisan fashion, but

the dominant pattern, especially in recent years, has been toward majority and minority party staffs. Because the majority party generally gets more committee staff members than does the minority party, turnover can be significant when the partisan makeup of the legislature changes.

Obviously, these issues grow more complex in multiparty systems, whether parliamentary or presidential. Should committee staffs be divided on a partisan basis, or should they be divided between the governing party or coalition and those in opposition? Having separate staffs for each party is likely to be problematic when committee staffs are small and the number of parties is large, as staff may be spread across too many issues to provide in-depth expertise. And dividing committee staffs between the governing and opposition coalitions may lead to staff instability when the makeup of coalitions reshuffles.

Another alternative is to have committee staffs composed of nonpartisan civil servants, with stable career paths similar to those in the executive branch. This is the pattern adopted in Brazil, where, as Amaury de Souza indicates in his chapter, legislative committee staff members are nonpartisan, are hired by Assessoria Legislativa, the legislative support service, and hold permanent job tenure. There is no single answer to this question. What is clear, however, is that partisan legislative committee staffing patterns found in the U.S. Congress are probably not appropriate elsewhere, especially in countries with multiparty systems.

Permanent Advisory Bodies

Governments sometimes appoint permanent advisory bodies for independent advice on policy issues. These advisory bodies vary in mandate, agenda, and appointment. Germany's Council of Economic Experts is charged with a broad mandate, while many advisory bodies are limited to single issues, such as the arts or science policy. Sometimes advisory bodies are afforded substantial leeway over their own agenda; sometimes studies are undertaken only on request of government. In some cases, members of these bodies are appointed solely by the government, while in others interest groups have input as well.

Temporary Blue-Ribbon Commissions

Rather than create a permanent advisory body, governments sometimes opt for temporary blue-ribbon commissions to investigate a particular problem (see Pross et al. 1990; Weller 1994).

Membership of these commissions frequently includes, at least in part, prominent citizens with some claim to expertise, alongside representatives of groups affected by the policy area. Generally, commissions are assisted by a special staff, which may be seconded from government departments or brought in from consulting firms or universities. It is these staff members who usually do the bulk of the actual work, gathering material and drafting the final report.

Again, the breadth of mandate of these commissions can vary. At one extreme is the Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada, which was appointed in the early 1980s. Its resulting three-volume report of almost 2,000 pages, with more than seventy volumes of supporting research, was thought to exceed even the vastness of its name. At the other end are commissions with a much narrower scope, created to study, for example, a prison riot, an accident at a nuclear power plant, or the government's response to a flood.

How blue-ribbon commissions are used by governments also has wide variety. In Sweden, for example, such commissions have become an integral, regularized part of the policymaking process: They help to develop an expert consensus before the governing party begins to formulate legislation. In many countries, however, special commissions are sometimes used as a cynical ploy to deflect public pressure on the government to act on a salient issue. Indeed, the ploy is often successful, mollifying the public until such time that the issue becomes less salient.

By their very nature, these temporary special commissions usually have a clear mission and almost always have a limited time frame within which to achieve it. Self-perpetuation of the body thus does not become an end in itself.

Despite these advantages as a source of alternative policy advice, the effectiveness of temporary commissions of inquiry is compromised by the fact that their existence is at the will of the government, which determines the organization's membership, mandate, budget, and timetable. In many countries, the government will even decide whether or not the final report is to be released to the public. A variation on this theme has been known to occur when the governing party, which appointed the commission, loses power and a new government ushers in a very different set of priorities. The holdover commission may find itself facing a quick and quiet burial.

An equally serious, and more common, shortcoming of special commissions is lack of follow-through. Once their report is completed, special commissions are usually disbanded.

Commission members may be called to testify before the legislature and to consult with bureaucrats and politicians, but there is no institutional capacity, or obligation, to keep the commission's findings and recommendations before the public. Unless the report finds an institutional champion in the bureaucracy or a powerful and committed backer among elected politicians, the half-life of the commission's work will be brief.

More fundamentally, the logic by which a temporary commission is appointed can wreak its own havoc. Sometimes members of a commission are appointed so as to represent all relevant interests on an issue. But by virtue of this, the commission may simply be a re-creation of the divided state of affairs that led the government to appoint a neutral, expert body in the first place. If commission members try to reach a unanimous agreement, which gives a report greater credibility, they may do so at the cost of all but the lowest common denominator that offends no one and is unlikely to deviate much from the status quo.

Another difficulty these commissions face is recruitment of expert staff. Because a temporary commission by definition does not offer stable, long-term employment, attracting qualified staff is not easy. The best personnel may be unwilling to relocate if there is no guarantee that they will be able to return to their prior jobs with salary and seniority intact. Many governments try to get around this by staffing temporary commissions with bureaucrats seconded from government ministries. But, as has been stated above, this approach has its drawbacks: Bureaucrats whose future livelihood depends on the goodwill of certain entities may be less than fully enthusiastic about policy recommendations that will be an anathema to their former department or clientele.

Contract Research and Ministerial Think Tanks

Like special temporary commissions, contract research and ministerial think tanks exist outside the formal structure of government, even as their research agenda is determined largely by government. Perhaps the earliest, and best-known, example of a contract research think tank is the RAND Corporation, which was created in the aftermath of World War II to provide expertise for the U.S. Department of Defense. Of course, government contracts with other organizations as well—for example, university research centers and academic think tanks. In Korea, think tanks have taken similar form to contract think tanks. Mo Jongryn in his chapter calls these

organizations ministerial think tanks, enjoying the sponsorship and support of a specific government ministry but operating outside that ministry.

For government, the major advantage of contract research and ministerial think tanks is that because they rely on government funding, they are very responsive to requests for studies relevant to government's agenda. Thus their agenda is likely to focus on policy options that government is actually considering rather than on options that have little chance of enactment. At the same time, the fact that these think tanks are outside of government gives them added independence and credibility.

Yet, to the extent that think tanks are dependent on a single government agency for contracts, they may find themselves reluctant to criticize that agency, which would effectively be to bite the hand that feeds them. Even if think tanks do not engage in self-censorship, they may be perceived as biased, which hurts the credibility of their work (Weaver and McGann 2000). Moreover, they are likely to shy away from important issues that their sponsoring agency is anxious to keep off the policy agenda.

Academic Think Tanks

Academic think tanks, sometimes referred to as universities without students, are research organizations based outside of government that have as their major, if not sole, mission the work of policy-relevant research. They are similar to contract research think tanks in their emphasis on the social science norms of objectivity and completeness. They are supported primarily by nongovernmental sources such as philanthropies and corporations. Because of this, however, their research agenda is likely to be determined by the organization itself and by its donors rather than by government.

Academic think tanks that nurture and conform to the norms of social science are less likely than contract research or ministerial think tanks to avoid sensitive political issues, and at the same time they are less likely to be excluded from access to policymakers after a change in government. On the other hand, while academic think tanks produce studies within the scope of their experts' training, policymakers may find the research to be irrelevant, dense, long, theoretical, or poorly timed. And because of their nongovernmental nature, academic think tanks tend to lack a natural partisan constituency among policymakers.

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Political Party Think Tanks and Research Bureaus

Research bureaus and think tanks affiliated with a political party represent another source of expert policy advice, especially in the agenda-setting and policy-formulation stages. These organizations, which may take several forms, vary in the degree to which they are financed by government. In a few countries, like Germany and the Netherlands, political party foundations are financed largely by government in rough proportion to the party's share of the vote in the preceding election. These organizations perform a variety of functions—civic education more prominently than policy research (see, for example, Weilemann 2000). In other cases, government financing is indirect or nonexistent, and the links between a party and its affiliated think tank are less formal.

By tapping their own expertise, political parties are able to develop more realistic and coherent electoral platforms and to act as a policy counterweight to government bureaucracies. This can be useful for political parties that have been out of power and have not had access to the expertise available to governmental bureaucracies. But in countries where political parties are themselves unstable, or undergoing regular realignment between elections (for example, Japan in the late 1990s), donors may have a hard time deciding which organizations to fund. Moreover, in such an environment, party-based research organizations do not provide the kind of secure career path attractive to highly qualified experts. And in political parties of all types, efforts to increase policy-research capacity must contend with politicians eager to devote resources to party building and electoral purposes instead.

Advocacy Think Tanks

Advocacy think tanks begin from a well-defined ideological point of view rather than from the social science norms of objectivity and completeness. Thus, they are frequently similar to party think tanks in their missions, although without close organizational links to a specific party or party and/or government financing. Again, the progenitors are largely American. The perceived success of the Washington, D.C.–based Heritage Foundation in influencing policy during the Reagan administration spawned a number of other advocacy tanks in the United States and

abroad. Noteworthy has been the growth of conservative, free-market institutions, such as the Adam Smith Institute in the United Kingdom and the Frankfurt Institute in Germany.

The boundaries of this category of organization, as with other types of APAOs, are not entirely clear. In a number of countries, for example, there are business-oriented organizations (such as the Committee for Economic Development in the United States and the Studieforbundet Naringsliv och Samhalle in Sweden) that do not directly represent the interests of business but have close links to business. Some advocacy tanks also have linkages to organized labor. And some advocacy tanks have close informal links to a specific political party, even though they lack formal ties. The advantages and limitations of these organizations are fairly clear: When political parties sympathetic to the ideology espoused by an advocacy tank are in power, that organization may be looked to as a source of ideas and perhaps even personnel. When political parties hostile to that organization are in power, however, it may be consigned to the political wilderness.

Research-Oriented NGOs

Distinguishing NGOs that devote most of their resources to advocacy and social action from advocacy tanks that have expert policy research and advice as their central function is not easily accomplished. This category of research-oriented NGOs, then, describes where the two intersect, that is, organizations for which advocacy and policy advice are closely linked. Frequently, the policy advice offered by these organizations flows directly from the experience of their staff or clients in grass-roots social groups. Such groups are especially important in India where, as Kuldeep Mathur notes in his chapter, they have been active on issues such as women's rights and disabilities. In other cases, as with groups associated with the U.S. consumer advocate Ralph Nader (on health and auto safety issues, for example), social activism and research may be more distinct but also complementary.

The linkages of research-oriented NGOs to civil society may provide additional sources of information and financing, as well as political clout. On the other hand, their research may be perceived as less objective than that of academic think tanks, and they may have limited access to policymakers when parties hostile to their interests are in power.

"Overview," Guidance for Governance: Comparing Alternative Sources of Public Policy Advice; (ed. R.Kent Weaver and Paul B. Stares), Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 2001, pp. 71-88)

CROSS-NATIONAL VARIATIONS IN APAO ACTIVITY

While APAOs come in many different forms, there are different levels of APAO activity and influence on the policymaking process across countries. Table 3 represents a rough assessment of the level of APAO activity in each of the countries studied in this volume, as determined by their respective authors. Activity ranges from nonexistent to stable, highly institutionalized, and influential. Indices for these determinations include organizational longevity, organizational turnover, and evidence suggesting impact on policymaking.

Table 3. Scorecard of APAO Activity

	Country Ratings							
APAO Type	U.S.	U.K.	Germany	Brazil	Poland	Japan	Korea	India
Governmental								
Legislative support agencies	+++	0	++	+++	+++	+	+	0
Legislative committee staffs	+++	+	++	+++	0	+	+	+
Independent audit agencies	+++	++	+++	+++	+++	+	0	0
Central policy review organizations	++	++	+	+++	+++	+	0	0
Intermediate								
Temporary blue-ribbon commissions	++	++	+++	0	+	++	++	++
Permanent advisory bodies	+++	+++	+++	+++	++	++	+	++
Contract research and ministerial think tanks	+++	+	++	++	+	++	+++	+
Political party think tanks and research bureaus	0	++	+++	+	0	0	+	+
Civil Society APAOs								
Academic think tanks	+++	+++	+++	+	0	+	+	++
Advocacy think tanks	+++	+++	++	++	+	+	+	+
Research-oriented NGOs	++	++	++	+	+	0	++	++

0 APAOs of this type are absent or almost nonexistent.

+ APAOs of this type are weak in numbers and resources. They are characterized by high organizational and/or staff turnover. Few if any of these organizations are more than a decade old and have survived at least one transition in top organizational leadership. Organizational survival is a real concern for most APAOs of this type. for civil society–based APAOs, only one or a very few APAOs of this type exist. Organizational visibility, access to policymakers, and evidence of impact on policymaking are all limited.

++ At least some APAOs of this type appear to be well-established, with stable financial support and acceptance of their role in the political process. However, for civil society–based APAOs, there are still significant questions about the long-term viability of a substantial share of APAOs of this type. Evidence of policy impact is sporadic or mixed.

+++ APAOs of this type are mostly well-established, with stable financing. Some have been around for a long time, and have experienced at least one successful transition in their organizational leadership. They have also experienced several changes in government without a marked decline in the role played by the APAO type as a whole, although specific organizations may have lost visibility, access, or influence. They are accepted participants in the policymaking process. Although their influence is frequently hard to evaluate, it is possible to point to numerous instances where they have had an influence. For civil society–based APAOs, these characteristics hold for a number of organizations and not just one or two atypical ones.

APAO: alternative policy advisory organization; NGOs: nongovernmental organizations.

While these assessments are necessarily very rough, they suggest several interesting patterns, looking either across columns (countries) or across rows (APAO types). In a comparison of the surveyed countries, the United States stands out for its rich array of APAOs of

almost every type, with Germany second. In their range of intermediate and civil society–based APAOs, the United Kingdom and Germany are fairly similar to the United States, but their APAOs within government are less institutionalized and less influential. Brazil, on the other hand, has a strong complement of government APAOs, but a relatively weak assortment based in civil society. Poland, Japan, Korea, and India share a pattern of much weaker APAO presence, although each has areas of some strength.

An equally interesting set of patterns emerges looking across APAO types. Some APAO types are widely diffused, showing up in nearly all countries, while others appear in only a few. Among government APAOs, none of the organizational subtypes is a substantial actor across all countries, but independent audit agencies are the most common. Among the intermediate APAOs, permanent advisory bodies appear frequently, while temporary blue-ribbon commissions and contract research and ministerial think tanks show a more mixed pattern. Political party think tanks and research bureaus, on the other hand, are weak or nonexistent in all of the countries studied with the exception of Germany and, to a lesser extent, the United Kingdom. Activity by civil society–based APAOs is also quite uneven across countries; they tend to be stronger in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany—the three countries that combine high gross domestic (GDP) per capita, uninterrupted democracy for at least forty years, and a fairly strong tradition of civil society.

EXPLAINING THE VARIATIONS IN APAO ACTIVITY

A country's political, legal, and economic environment helps to explain the cross-national differences in levels of APAO activity. Some of these environmental factors can be viewed as structural conditions that affect APAO development—that is to say, they are fairly stable over time in their effect. But APAO development may also be influenced by windows of opportunity—temporary conjunctions of events that stimulate the founding or growth of APAOs and that may leave organizational legacies even after those conditions have disappeared or been weakened.

Among structural conditions, the *legal environment* is particularly important for civil society–based APAOs. Long-standing freedom of political association in countries like the United States and United Kingdom has provided the time for these organizations to develop and

diversify. In countries like Korea and Poland, the weakening of restrictions on freedom of association are of relatively recent origin, but it is clear that it has stimulated the growth of civil society–based APAOs. Even where these restrictions do not exist, there may be limitations on incorporation of nonprofit organizations without the sponsorship of a government ministry or limitations on donations to nonprofit organizations, and the effect has been to discourage the development of civil society–based APAOs. In Japan, as Yamamoto Tadashi points out in his chapter, the requirements for ministry sponsorship of NGOs have only recently been loosened (see also Ueno 1998).

The *financial environment* in a country is clearly relevant for APAO development as well, All other things being equal, we should expect that the more economically developed countries will have a higher level of activity by both governmental and nongovernmental APAOs. Greater social wealth both creates slack resources for investment in such activities and induces greater demand for higher quality policy advice, as it does for other things that may be considered unaffordable luxuries in poor countries, such as a clean environment. But this overall effect of wealth is mediated by other features of the financial environment. The cultural norms regarding corporate and individual philanthropy, for example, are likely to have a major impact on the activity of civil society–based APAOs. If corporations, foundations, and other sources of philanthropy donate to organizations that provide social services (for example, museums, hospitals, and universities) rather than to civil society–based APAOs, then the APAO environment is likely to be less rich. Studies of the United States have highlighted the role of philanthropy as a guiding force in the evolution of its dense network of think tanks (Smith 1991).

Laws that provide tax incentives for gifts to civil society–based APAOs as well as other nonprofit organizations are also likely to stimulate their development. In an increasingly globalized world, however, funding from governments, foundations, and multinational agencies can be a further source of assistance (Stone 2000b). In fact, the rapid growth and recent financial woes of East European think tanks can be attributed largely to the giving and subsequent withdrawal of financial support by Western foundations and aid agencies—a classic opening and closing of a window of opportunity that has nonetheless left a substantial organizational legacy (Struyk 1999, chapter 5).

A country's *political institutions* may also influence the development of APAOs. Institutional arrangements are especially important for APAOs within the governmental orbit. In

general, we might expect that political systems where the legislature plays a policymaking role independent of the executive are more likely to develop a policy-advisory capacity responsive to the legislature (notably, legislative support organizations and committee staffs) than those where it does not. In such countries, legislatures not only have the need for independent policy advice, they are also likely to have sufficient leverage over the budget and other aspects of policymaking to ensure that they can obtain it. Indeed, both the United States and Brazil, with separation-of-powers institutions, have the strongest roles for legislature-based APAOs.

Windows of opportunity for the creation of new APAOs may open when the legislature feels a need to protect its institutional prerogatives vis-à-vis the executive, as with the creation of the Congressional Budget Office in the wake of struggles between President Richard Nixon and the Democratic-controlled Congress in 1974. Periods of minority government in parliamentary systems may also open windows of opportunity for expansion of activity by governmental APAOs, as legislators outside the governing party gain institutional leverage to win approval for new APAOs or funding for existing APAOs responsive to their needs. However, the Korean experience, as Mo relates in his chapter, suggests a chicken-or-the-egg problem in fostering APAOs responsive to the legislature: Even when there is a formal separation of powers between the executive and the legislature, a legislature with a history of subordination to the executive is unlikely to have either the leverage to obtain additional APAO resources or the political incentive to develop an autonomous policymaking capacity.

Several authors here note that legislators in parliamentary systems have few incentives to demand more resources for LSOs or legislative committee staffs because (1) reelection and prospects for career advancement are more important than policy activism, and (2) reelection and prospects for career advancement objectives are determined more by party loyalty and constituency than by policy activism. Indeed, the latter may be seen as detrimental to their careers. Moreover, opposition parties in parliamentary systems tend to concentrate on criticizing the government rather than on proposing constructive alternatives based on policy expertise, because they know the low probability of enacting them. Martin Thunert writes in his chapter that the expansion of legislative service organizations for the Bundestag in Germany can be attributed in part to a political window of opportunity in the early 1970s, when both major parties had recently experienced opposition status and thus saw the value of the expertise available to parties outside the governing coalition.

Federalism may also engender a richer array of APAOs, because it increases the number of governments seeking information and the number of sponsors of APAO activity. Thunert observes that *Länder* governments have been important sponsors and co-donors of academic think tanks, as well as of permanent advisory councils and (less frequently) temporary blue-ribbon commissions. In recent years in the United States, a huge number of advisory tanks focused on the state level have been founded (Rich and Weaver 1998). Yet, state legislatures vary widely in the degree to which they have developed legislative support organizations, legislative committee staffs, and other sources of institutionalized alternative policy expertise.

The relative weakness of political party think tanks in almost all the countries studied here is, on the surface, a somewhat surprising finding. But there appear to be several reasons that reflect common institutional and financial constraints. First, as indicated above, there are strong electoral incentives for political parties to devote their resources to electoral and party-building purposes rather than policy development; Germany, where government earmarks funds for policy research, proves the exception. Indeed, policy research that conflicts with positions already taken by a party could pose problems for party leaders.

Second, the advocacy think tanks that abound in many countries, especially the United States and United Kingdom, and that have an ideological affinity to a particular party serve as de facto party think tanks. The organizational independence and close informal links of these advocacy tanks may allow them to enjoy the advantages of proximity when their affiliated party is in power without entirely losing access or credibility when it is out of power.

Third, there may be financing advantages to being an independent advocacy tank rather than a party organ. Individuals, corporations, and foundations within the country may receive more favorable tax treatment for donations to independent organizations than donations to party bodies. Advocacy tanks in the developing and transitional economies may also be more likely to receive donations from foreign foundations than party-linked bodies.

The *labor market environment* for experts can affect APAO activity as well. If personnel with substantive and analytical skills in analyzing public policy are in short supply, as is the case in developing countries, finding staff for APAOs in addition to line government departments is not easy. But more subtle factors may also be at work. Particularly important is the capacity of APAOs to offer attractive career paths to potential staff. This is largely a matter of financial resources: NGOs, political party think tanks, and small advocacy tanks may not be able to offer

policy experts the salary, prestige, or job security that comes with working for the government bureaucracy. Cultural and institutional factors are also relevant: In countries where lifetime employment with a single employer is the norm—and the desideratum for most workers—accepting short- or medium-term employment with an APAO may not be attractive.

The development of APAOs can also be affected by a broad set of factors that comprise the *information/expertise environment*. Obviously, the work of APAOs, especially nongovernmental groups, is likely to be inhibited if government is restrictive in disseminating the basic data necessary to perform independent policy analysis. APAO growth may also be inhibited if non-APAO organizations are already providing policy advice. A vibrant sector of policy-focused university research sectors, for example, may function as a substitute for independent academic think tanks. But if such organizations are nonexistent or lack adequate resources or have a weak focus on public policy, demand for APAOs may actually increase. Finally, there is the so-called emulation effect: If policymakers perceive APAOs to have been successful in the past, either at home or abroad, they may aspire to that success by creating new APAOs. Indeed, the chapters in this volume demonstrate that the rich array of APAOs in the United States has served as a model in other countries where policy elites and policy entrepreneurs are eager to have their own Council of Economic Advisors, Congressional Research Service, Heritage Foundation, Brookings Institution, or RAND Corporation.

The *cultural environment* is no less important. In particular, countries that have a high regard for neutral expertise tend to be hospitable to academic think tanks and permanent advisory bodies with heavy representation of academic experts. Germany stands out in this regard. On the other hand, in countries that are highly partisan and ideologically divided, civil society–based APAOs may have trouble gaining acceptance as neutral experts.

ARE APAOS IMMORTAL?

Among the countries in this study, prospects for creation of new APAOs vary greatly. But that is only part of the story Equally important is whether APAOs, once created, can be sustained politically and economically.

APAOs are not immortal. Temporary blue-ribbon commissions, by their very nature, have limited duration. Even APAOs with presumed perpetuity may turn out to have limited tenure,

Different types of APAOs face different hazards, but all seem to reflect structural conditions and windows of vulnerability moments when an APAO may be particularly exposed. Government-based APAOs have natural enemies: bureaucrats who see a threat to their own policy priorities and their control over policy. In the United Kingdom, organizations such as the Central Policy Review Staff appear to have succumbed to this kind of bureaucratic opposition. Further, under pressure to reduce the size of government during periods of fiscal stress, government APAOs are uniquely vulnerable. It is much easier to abolish a small advisory commission or a legislative support organization with no service-delivery function than it is a large government ministry like Defense or Health. Nor are APAOs likely to have strong constituencies that will fight to protect them. The demise of the U.S. Office of Technology Assessment as part of the budget-cutting fever of the new Republican congressional majority in 1995 is a good case in point (Bimber 1996).

In a similar way, Mo points out, the incoming Kim Dae Jung government in Korea abolished 117 advisory commissions and merged twenty-seven others. Government APAOs that are strongly associated with a political party also encounter a window of vulnerability when their party loses power. Overall, however, such instances appear to be the exception rather than the rule. A more common pattern is that government APAOs which fail to secure powerful patrons are ignored and become irrelevant, at least for a while, or are downgraded in status and function. Thunert's discussion of the fate of the planning bureau in the German chancellor's office in the 1960s and 1970s is an example of this.

Intermediate and civil society-based APAOs face somewhat different threats. Funding problems are usually central to their demise. Research-oriented NGOs seldom enjoy a strong financial base and are vulnerable to a decline in membership, foundation support, or government subsidies. In developing and transitional economies, changes in the funding priorities of foundations and national and multinational aid agencies may also lead to serious retrenchment or organizational demise. In practice, however, organizational shrinkage—cutbacks in staff, expenditures, and product lines—appears to be a more common fate for APAOs than outright death.

ASSESSING THE INFLUENCE OF APAOS

Whether alternative sources of policy advice have an impact on policymaking depends on three broad factors. First, there must be an adequate supply of such advice. This in turn is likely to reflect matters such as the availability of financing and the adequate supply of policy experts. Second, there must be effective demand from policymakers for such advice; they must listen to, understand, and act upon that advice. Third, governments must have institutional capacity to change policy. If government elites perceive the wisdom of new policy ideas but are paralyzed by conflicting interest group pressures or veto points in governmental structure, governments may be no better off than if the advice had not been offered in the first place.

Assessing the influence and impact of APAOs on policymaking is difficult, as most of the authors here acknowledge (see also Stone 1996, chapter 7). Many APAOs can point to instances when their policy advice was taken and transformed into policy, but assessing and measuring the overall influence of APAOs is almost impossible. First, the process through which issues get—and lose—the attention of politicians is fluid. The leading analysis of agenda setting, by John Kingdon, suggests that issues and ideas get on the agenda when there is a conjunction of what he calls problem, policy, and political streams (Kingdon 1995; see also Baumgartner and Jones 1993). In the problem stream, increased attention may be drawn to a problem by a highly visible focusing event (for example, the Asian financial crisis) or by a newly developed indicator or an indicator that pushes through a highly visible threshold (see Stone 1989). APAOs may play a critical role in this process by producing indicators (for example, estimates of government expenditures wasted in a particular program, or the economic cost of failed policies) that help to redefine the nature of the problem.

In the policy stream, alternatives are frequently developed within communities of experts in a particular sector. Over time, proposals are refined, revised, and recombined. Proposals survive what is usually a long process of winnowing only if they appear to be technically feasible (having some prospect of being implemented and addressing the problem without making it worse), affordable, and congruent with the values of policymakers and the public (Kingdon 1995, 131-139). The political stream is equally complex. The attention of politicians is focused when they sense a national mood of concern on an issue or when an issue offers an opportunity for claiming credit. An election that brings new personnel into government with different values, perspectives, and priorities may also bring new issues to the agenda. Kingdon argues that brief opportunities to introduce change occur when the three policy streams come together and are

joined, often through the efforts of a skilled political entrepreneur. Indeed, "advocates lie in wait, in and around government with their solutions in hand, waiting for problems to float by to which they can attach their solutions, waiting for a development in the political stream they can use to their advantage" (Kingdon 1995, 165).

Even if a problem is seen as pressing, it may not remain on the agenda long if no plausible policy alternative is available. Issues may fade from agendas for other reasons as well: The public and policymakers may become inured to the situation, especially if it is perceived to be insoluble, or they may lose interest as the memories of a visible event fade. Politicians may also feel that a problem has been "solved" after new legislation is passed; only if problems persist, or appear in a new form, will an issue reappear on the agenda. All of this would suggest that the influence of APAOs is likely to be intermittent rather than consistent, and as dependent on the interests of policymakers as on the characteristics of specific APAOs.

Policy choices, moreover, have complex parentage—only rarely is it said that advice from an APAO was the necessary, sufficient, and exclusive cause of that policy choice. In addition, APAO influence may take the role of policy brokerage rather than actual policy innovation (see Stone 1996). APAOs, especially those within government, may help to advance policy paradigms or proposals devised elsewhere by bringing them to the attention of policymakers or by adding their own support, thus giving ideas greater legitimacy.

A second reason why assessing the influence of APAOs is difficult, as noted at the outset of this overview and by several of the authors here, is that policy advice takes different forms at different stages of the policymaking process. This can range from broad paradigmatic rethinking of policy problems, causes, and solutions, to the development of specific policy alternatives, judgment on whether to accept proffered alternatives, and evaluation of current policies, which may or may not include the posing of alternatives if the status quo is found wanting. Aggregating measures of influence across these policymaking stages and types of advice is impossible to do in a meaningful way, even if the problem of attribution could be solved.

Third, policy influence may take place through multiple means. Whispering into the ear of politicians, when an APAO enjoys direct access to executive branch politicians, is one means. Another is working with opposition politicians and backbench legislators. This is not likely to lead to immediate policy change, but over the longer term a new party in power of new cabinet ministers moved up from back benches may look elsewhere for specific proposals. A window of

opportunity might also occur whereby the legislature can make policy with substantial autonomy. Yamamoto's discussion of financial services reform in Japan is one such example.

Influence might also be realized through working with civil society groups, interest groups, or the media to push changes in policy. Even if political executives are resistant to change, they may be convinced when confronted with external pressure, especially during times of electoral vulnerability.

Obviously, APAOs with ties to politicians and officials within the executive are most likely to whisper in the ears of politicians. Advocacy tanks, party think tanks, and research-oriented NGOs are most likely to use indirect approaches, especially if their political ideology or party identification is distant from that of the governing party

The difficulties in measuring APAO influence leads us to reformulate the question of APAO influence by asking under what conditions APAOs are likely to make contributions to policymaking? In which countries? Which types of APAOs? Which types of advice? And through which channels? Here the case studies of countries offer a rich set of data. Although the patterns they suggest are far from simple, they are consistent with the arguments made earlier about the advantages and disadvantages of specific types of APAOs and the conditions that facilitate or hinder their development. They indicate, for example, that even where they exist, legislative support organizations and legislative committee staffs have relatively little influence in political systems where legislators themselves have little independent leverage to bring about policy change. In terms of types of policy advice, broad paradigmatic rethinking of policy problems and policy solutions is rare in almost all the countries examined here. Short-term policy concerns and putting out the fires of political crises are more the norm in both consolidated democracies and where free and open political contests are recent phenomena.

The case studies also suggest that APAO influence depends heavily on the opening of windows of opportunity that are largely beyond APAOs' control. Even the personal taste of political leaders can be a factor. Diane Stone notes in her chapter, for example, that the three most recent British prime ministers—Margaret Thatcher, John Major, and Tony Blair—have differed markedly in their overall openness toward alternative sources of policy advice and in the types of sources that they listened to. While marketing is becoming an increasing focus of many APAOs, especially those based in civil society (see the chapter by Andrew Rich), APAO influence is still frequently a matter of being in the right place at the right time.

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PROSPECTS

While there appear to be general trends in the structural conditions that are likely to increase the supply of and demand for APAOs in the future, their overall prospects will still vary widely internationally. In the legal sphere, protections on freedom of association and speech are being loosened in many new democracies. Legal restrictions on the establishment of civil society–based organizations are being eased as well in Japan and Eastern Europe. Economically, increased per capita wealth will provide greater resources for APAO activity—but only in countries where growth is strong. Great differences will remain across countries in the capacity of philanthropies to support APAO activity and in their cultural inclination to do so. Support from the developed countries and multilateral sources for APAO activity in the developing world remains a large question mark.

The political environment can also be expected to encourage further APAO development, although unevenly. As indicated above, building demand for the services provided by alternative sources of policy advice remains a critical challenge in many countries. Politicians outside the executive (for example, backbench parliamentarians) have neither the incentive to seek out alternative policy advice in order to propose different policy options nor the opportunity to press those alternatives forward. Nevertheless, the growing assertiveness of legislatures in countries like Japan and Korea is likely to stimulate further APAO development, especially among APAO types directly responsive to the needs of legislators.

In addition, there are critical windows of opportunity—for example, periods of minority government in parliamentary systems—when APAO activity can be expanded and institutionalized. Even if those initiatives are partially reversed, they are likely to lead to an institutional legacy and to increased demand once conditions become favorable again. The supply of technically trained experts can also be expected to increase in most countries over time, as can the availability of data needed for policy analysis. But major differences are likely to remain across institutions and countries in the kinds of career paths that facilitate APAO recruitment.

In short, while we can expect a continued general growth in APAO activity, we should not expect a convergence toward high levels of APAO activity, or APAO influence on

policymaking, across all countries. Major differentials are likely to remain—between rich countries and poor, between those with consolidated democracies and a strong civil society and those where democratic institutions and civil society are weaker, and between those where political institutions consolidate power in a single branch of government and those where power is diffused. Government financing is likely to be the major funding source for alternative policy in most emerging democracies, both because funding for civil society–based organizations is weak and because government employment can potentially offer greater career stability for the few experts than can most civil society–based APAOs.

Finally, as several authors in this volume state, much of the growth of alternative policy advice in the future is likely to be from sources that are transnational in nature rather than from sources that have an identifiable base in a single country (Stone 2000b). Indeed, the major multilateral lending agencies, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), are likely to have a far greater influence on economic policy in most of the developing and transitional economies than domestic APAOs because their advice carries with it both a carrot and a stick: Follow it and financial assistance will be forthcoming, fail to do so and risk being categorized as an economic rogue state.

OPPORTUNITY FOR DRAWING LESSONS

The very different national experiences outlined in the following chapters suggest some important lessons for governments and civil society organizations seeking to improve the quality of alternative policy advice. The first is really a caveat: There is no single model of APAO appropriate for all societies. APAOs grow out of distinctive national environments, including differences in funding sources, the market among politicians for policy expertise, and the labor market for experts. Because these factors vary across countries, the types of APAOs that might be effective in some countries might, in others, find difficulty sustaining funding, an audience, or staff. Efforts to improve a country's capacity for alternative policy advice should be tailored to each nation's distinctive environment.

A second, and related, lesson is that the United States has unique conditions for nurturing and sustaining APAOs. These include a strong philanthropic tradition, an extensive university system for training experts, separation of powers, weak legislative parties, and federalism, all of

which increase the demand for alternative sources of expertise. In no other country are all of these conditions present. Thus, simply copying U.S. institutions is not likely to work; lessons drawn from the U.S. experience will be of limited applicability elsewhere.

Third, having more APAOs in a country does not necessarily mean that these organizations as a whole have greater influence in that country. Indeed, a serious problem with civil society–based APAOs is that they are large in number but weak in resources, visibility, and credibility. Consolidating APAOs, securing a stable funding base, and achieving critical mass within organizations constitute the most important challenges for many APAOs in the years ahead.

In conclusion, it is appropriate to end with some general advice about policy advice. Despite the importance of specific national contexts in promoting APAO development, countries that currently discourage the creation of civil society–based APAOs by placing roadblocks in their path should consider changing those laws. In addition, multilateral lending agencies like the World Bank and IMF should encourage the development of alternative policy advisory capacity within governments and sponsor country-specific evaluations of that capacity (see Stone 2000a). In doing so, they will not only increase the salience of policy advice for governments, but will also signal the importance of a freer flow of information, which is essential for an effective democracy and, with it, good governance.

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