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Unaccountable goes far beyond the usual targets of K Street wizards and money’s corrupting effect on politics. While purporting to serve the public interest, a variety of organizations today do anything but: “Nonprofits” choose innocuous names even as they channel the secret influence of billionaires and their “grassroots” organizations. Think tanks, once sober-minded, often now act as bullhorns for the powerful. Banks, unbowed, remain free to “innovate” us into the next financial disaster.

Players at the apex of this new world—former top government officials and heads of state; retired generals; and star economists, academics, and physicians—use these organizations, laundering influence to serve private agendas, and exploit their prestige as if it were a commodity.

Wedel, author of Shadow Elite and other books and a George Mason University Professor, ties together these and other strands using the tools of anthropology and decades of experience documenting informal power both in Eastern Europe and the West. Topics include:

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