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## **THE ROLE OF THINKTANKS IN THE DEFINITION AND APPLICATION OF DEFENCE POLICIES AND STRATEGIES**

*This article aims to analyse the role of think tanks (organisations that produce ideas or solutions for the implementation of public policies) in the field of defence and international relations. Think tanks are key players in managing defence policies and developing operational military strategies in a complex and globalized environment; an environment marked by a democracy of opinion which is increasingly conditioned by the importance of mass media, shared governance, consensus, negotiation and balance of powers. Creating an analytical definition of their structures (nature, type, historical conditions for their appearance, activities and aims) in order to examine their role in the area of defence and security, the article will define the field of study by comparing the situation in the United States, the cradle of the think tank, France, and Spain through the use of case studies. The choice of France and Spain, two middle powers, is in the interest of comparing two models with profound differences that share borders, history, culture and the European project.*

*Think tank, War of Ideas, Defence, Influence, Soft power*

## THE ROLE OF THINK TANKS IN THE DEFINITION AND APPLICATION OF DEFENCE POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

### I: INTRODUCTION

In a globalised world faced with increasingly complex relations and interactions, a world that generates an environment of risks and opportunities, the model of the Nation-State has changed and political governance has opened the door to other socio-political players. Think tanks – just like lobby groups, NGOs, public relations agencies, multinationals or transnational institutions – are being launched, at an exponential rate and with great authority, into the debate on and design of public policies in all areas: health, education, culture, law, economics, security, defence, environment, natural resources, energy and international relations. Think tanks influence national and international decision-making and are an additional resource for the political management of states.

The combination of a context of different threats (terrorism, urban guerrillas, cyber wars, multiple trafficking, industrial espionage, knowledge wars, economic wars etc.) together with the economic crisis that has swept the globe since 2007, has led to a rethinking of the classic model of defence and security policies and of their economic management. Against this backdrop, new information and communications technologies (NICT) have revolutionised the traditional paradigm of the vertical construction of society: state – institutions – media – population. Instead, a step has been taken towards a more grid-like structuring of the world.<sup>1</sup> The transformation process in the management of a state towards a more collaborative approach is a key point when facing up to these threats. The crisis has brought into question the governance model and the nature of the different uses of public or private expertise, essential when defining, evaluating, implementing or communicating appropriate global strategies. Think tanks are gaining importance as private expertise resources that influence national and international policies and public opinion, creating a space for dialogue between governments and civil society, and playing a role as mediator. We will look at how the intellectual diplomacy process is developing through the presence of think tanks in the most representative geographical areas as regards centres of political and legislative power – mainly Brussels and New York.

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1 CASTELLS, Manuel. *La galaxie Internet*, Paris : Fayard, 2002

What is a think tank? What do they do and what is their aim? How have they developed and evolved? What types of think tanks exist? What is their impact? What is their role in defining and applying defence strategies? This chapter will aim to answer these questions and to undertake an analysis of think tanks, particularly in the area of defence policies and international relations. Think tanks emerge from civil society and are involved in the debate on public policies. Against this main backdrop, questions arise on the pairing of think tanks and defence. These questions allow us to understand to what extent organic links exist between the two. Bearing in mind the different aspects of the relationship between think tanks and defence – historical, semiotic, strategic –, the idea is to define different guiding principles as regards the capacity of think tanks to influence the diplomatic activities of states, their legitimacy to intervene forcibly and their vision on the debate on defence spending in the United States, France and Spain.

The relationship between think tanks and defence reveals a symbiotic history that could go a long way towards explaining their interdependency. Underestimating or ignoring the historical and cultural dimension of the think tank phenomenon would mean reducing them to a simple symptom of the Americanisation of the world or to a mere fad, leading to the risk of misunderstanding the new paradigm of power management. In this way, recognising and studying the ecosystem of think tanks, their conditions and their *modus operandi* allows us to understand the role that these organisations play in managing and implementing public policies, particularly international relations and defence policies.

This article does not aim to judge the relevance of the existence of think tanks, nor does it intend to give an opinion on their activities and contents. Rather, it focuses on presenting the state of the subject through factual elements and sources from expert authors in the field, allowing the reader to interpret what has been presented. Think tanks are not the solution to a defined challenge, nor are they the only response to a state's needs; but they *are* an additional tool, both different and complimentary, in the technical and strategic range of tools a state has at its disposal. A detailed description of the subject and its mechanisms is the key to better understanding power games in today's society.

## I. DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

### **What is a think tank?**

It is very difficult to give a precise and comprehensive definition of a *think tank*, as a think tank is characterised by being a shifting object, idiosyncratic in finding its own form within its environment (cultural, political, economic and historical) and to a certain degree subjective due to the lack of qualifying criteria at the academic level.

Experts themselves are unable to agree on a definition as there are differences from country to country. Think tanks vary enormously in size, in the resources they have available to them, in their areas of research, in their legal structure and in their management models. Many works defining think tanks were published in the 90s; among them, works by certain North American pioneers such as James McGann, Ken Weaver and Donald Abelson. These authors identified the following criteria for the definition of a think tank:

- An independent organisation. The level of independence is determined by its statutes and financing sources (private or public/private and mixed) or its direct links with state powers (active politicians who occupy a position in the organisation).
- Dedication to general interest.
- A permanent work team focusing on research.
- The production of innovative proposals and prospective public policies, with the aim of participating in the debate.
- A non-profit organisation.
- An organisation that has its own freely-accessible communication resources (website, blogs, publications, conferences etc.) in order to disseminate information to as broad an audience as possible.

Due to the non-fulfilment of some of these criteria, NGOs, philanthropic foundations, platforms of political parties or political figures, and lobby groups are excluded. As explained by Thomas Medvetz, think tanks face an eternal cycle of the double movement of rapprochement and withdrawal, which allows them to obtain the balance they need for their legitimacy. While withdrawal tends to differentiate think tanks from the institutions closest to them (or to distance them from those who finance them) and thus affirm their independence, rapprochement, on the other hand, re-establishes a dependency with regard to these institutions so that the think tank can enjoy the symbolic and material resources they have to offer. This balance allows the existence of academic, political and business ties, and each link ensures the legitimacy that then guarantees independence in relation to other institutions. The positioning of think tanks in the field of expert opinion on public policies can be summarised as follows: a think tank is more academic than a lobby, more business-like than a university, and more political than a business.<sup>2</sup> As a differentiating criterion, it can be said that a think tank organizes research tasks, anticipating actions from the side of lobby groups. Think tanks use bi-directional communication, mixing influence with informative

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<sup>2</sup> MEDVETZ, Thomas, *Terra Obscura: Vers une théorie des think tanks américains*, in Yann Bérard, Renaud Crespin, *Aux Frontières de L'expertise : Dialogues entre Savoirs et Pouvoirs*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010, Chapter II, p. 157. Also available under: <http://sociology.ucsd.edu/faculty/bio/documents/Medvetz.10.Terra.pdf> p. 8

education. Most think tanks use an associative structure, with the *sine qua non* condition of preserving general interest.

However, the notion of independence from political, administrative and economic powers that allows for the identification of a think tank has to be put into perspective. First of all because it excludes bodies which are part of an administrative apparatus with the ability to give statutory guarantees and independence policies – guarantees and policies that are more effective than private think tanks with exclusively private sources of financing and that therefore depend on the interests of their clients and donors. And secondly, because the notion of independence is a requirement that is much characterised by the history and culture of the United States. The debate in Europe on material independence encompasses part of the public scepticism on the credibility of think tanks.

In this regard, the essential prerequisite is to influence the political agenda, decision-making and public opinion.<sup>3</sup> The production of ideas, as well as the ability to influence, are inherent characteristics of think tanks.

### **Military tropism**

This paragraph will take a semiotic approach to present correlations between semantic elements and operative aspects of think tanks, thus making the link between meaning and significance more effective.<sup>4</sup> There is an analogy between the physical war in its military acceptance and the war of ideas in which intellectual players are involved. We also emphasise the capacity for pragmatic adaptation from the side of the think tank to its environment, plunged into a fierce competition – which constitutes a reserve of intelligence of strategic value. In the final part of this paper we will look in greater depth at the key factor of influence inherent in this type of structure, in order to ensure continuity in the research on think tanks as intelligent objects.

#### A semiotic path

In this paragraph it is useful to underline the importance of semantics. The vocabulary related to the ecosystem of think tanks is, to a large extent, American English - showing its leadership and command in the construction and subsequent development of the subject. Although it is possible to translate most terms into Spanish, we frequently prefer to use the original form in English, defending, in this case, the claim which attaches symbolic and practical meaning to semantics.

Starting from the basic definition of the subject, the terminology reveals a DNA

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<sup>3</sup> ABELSON, Donald, *A Capitol Idea: Think Tanks and US Foreign Policy*, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006

<sup>4</sup> DE SAUSSURE, Ferdinand, *Cours de linguistique Générale*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2, 1968, p. 272

with military shading. The expression *think tank* already existed at the end of the 19th century in English, however its meaning as an organisation dedicated to reflection is dated at 1959, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The meaning really spread as of the period of the Second World War with the development of military and strategic planning organisations, with the *Rand Corporation* as the flagship.<sup>5</sup> The original meaning of *tank* was that of a container, until it was extended to mean a combat vehicle, a silo (missile launcher), or a nuclear warhead. So the origin of the term *think tank* referring to organisations dedicated to reflection, research and promotion of proposals and solutions for public policies can be found in the military field. During the Second World War the term *war room* was used as a clear reference to issues linked to security and defence: a closed and protected space where civilian and military experts would meet to draw up strategies and find solutions to issues of defence and security or of international relations. There was then a semantic derivation of *war room* to the meaning of intelligence reserves.

Likewise, all of the organisational semantics have a clear American basis and imitate military vocabulary, underlining the existing organic ties. The director of the structure is the *strategist* or the *Chief Officer*, the head office the *Headquarters*, the organisational chart the *Organization and Divisions*, the research departments the *Research Unit Management*. The context itself in which think tanks function has a military undertone – this context being defined as the *war of ideas*. Here, the intellectual space is the battle field. The traditional tools of think tanks – social networks, media, publications, events – could be defined by analogy as their weapons.

Thus, initially the military tropism, and subsequently the political tropism, of think tank vocabulary can be explained through successive historical contexts. We feel that the agreed translation in Spanish of *war of ideas* (*laboratorio de ideas* – *laboratory of ideas*) falls short and is misleading as regards the overall activities of think tanks, and “betrays” their essence: it is not just a case of experimenting and researching, but also of creating an efficient tool based on the strategy available to political decision-makers. Think tanks are organised around two interrelated axes: investigation/reflection on the one hand, and influence/impact on the other. Think tank terminology expanded to research centres on public policies due to the similarities between their *modus operandi* and those of military planning institutes.

### **Information versus Knowledge**

Think tanks are a leading strategic tool for the management of knowledge. In a globalised framework characterised by new information and communication technologies (NICT), there is an overload of damaging information that can lead to an incorrect understanding of events and subsequent treatment by political, economic

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<sup>5</sup> MEDVETZ, Thomas, *Think tanks in America*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2012, p.70-75

and military leaders. The exponential expansion of changing information requires keys for interpretation in order to ensure reactive and accurate decision-making. Think tanks, as hybrid organisations, are founded on the management of information and knowledge, drawing on the processes of *knowledge management* and on expert researchers. The *continuum* data – information – knowledge – strategy, is part of a medium or long term cycle and needs methods for the management of available and appropriate resources. Thanks to their many years of experience, their vast resources and their smooth relations with the state and the army, American think tanks – and particularly those that deal with defence, security and international relations –, carry out the task of tracking the information galaxy, suggesting solutions. Knowledge is the result of the link between information and its interpretation through the framework of references (experience, beliefs, theories, models, culture) by the researcher or the think tank that is organising and giving meaning to the set of data. Think tanks favour the communication-participation dimension, from which arises intelligence – a mix of understanding and knowledge. *Rand Corporation* is the gold standard among think tanks as far as terminology and ontology are concerned, making use of a recursive methodology: information, organisation, communication.

The benefit that the existence of a think tank can bring to a state, company or army lies in the possibility of obtaining supplies of information, knowledge and innovation. Research work is focused on three time dimensions: past, present and future; “knowledge to foresee in order to be able”.<sup>6</sup> Knowledge is not required to be true, fair or attractive, but to be effective. The triptych vigilance, research and formulation in the strategic intelligence process<sup>7</sup> allows for adjustments of the present to the future, based on the knowledge of past events. Think tanks, due to their very nature, are oriented towards the future. Their research activities are firmly placed between foresight and strategy. The relevance, both of their analyses and their proposals, can be seen as lying in their ability to understand the present from the perspective of the past, in order to produce foresight:

“Proactive intelligence aims to act in, or model, reality to avoid risks and threats from arising”.<sup>8</sup>

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6 COMTE, Auguste, *Cours de Philosophie Positive*, 1830-1842

7 See the definition on the Portail de l'Intelligence Economique, Centre national de ressources et d'information sur l'intelligence économique et stratégique, <http://www.portail-ie.fr/article/572/Les-definitions-de-l-intelligence-economique> (viewed 01/08/2013)

8 SERRA DEL PINO Jordi, “*Inteligencia proactiva*”, *Inteligencia y seguridad: revista de análisis y prospectiva*, 10, 2011, p. 55-74 en: NAVARRO BONILLA, Diego, *Lecciones aprendidas (y por aprender)*, Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos, N°0, 2012, p.68. [http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/Revista\\_Digital/RevistaIEEE\\_Num\\_o.pdf](http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/Revista_Digital/RevistaIEEE_Num_o.pdf)

Due to their level of intellectual independence and to the mix of experts from the public and private sectors, the processes activated by think tanks align them with intelligence organisations.<sup>9</sup> If we look at the working methods that are applied within these structures, we see that foresight is a crucial feature of their activity. Formulating forecasts and hypotheses is a complicated—even risky—and expensive activity. Companies, governments and political parties are somewhat limited as far as foresight goes, as they tend to be bound to working in the short-term, with their activities being determined by elections, annual accounts, lack of time, and disapproval or penalties from the side of shareholders or citizens if the forecasts turn out to be wrong. Then we have the long-term – the usual way of working among think tanks.

As a general conclusion then, it can be said that while there may indeed exist certain criteria for the identification of a think tank with common objectives and research activities, it is also true that there are different structural forms which have an impact on the method of management and on the declination of the strategy of influence.

### Type

Think tanks can be defined as *sui generis* organisations due to the fact that there are very few countries where they have their own specific legal category. In the United States, they are regulated by article 501(c) of the Tax Code, together with other organisations that cannot be considered as being think tanks.

They can either be classified by their organisational structure or by the activity that they carry out:

- I. Generalists who deal with most public policy areas (health, education, citizenship, economics, ecology, defence and security, energy, and international relations)
- II. Universities without students
- III. *Advocacy Groups*, that carry out activist activities, similar to lobby groups
- IV. Experts who focus on one subject and issues related to that subject

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<sup>9</sup> SENGE, Peter, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of The Learning Organization*, N. York [etc.]. Random House, 2006.

Table I. - Examples of Think Tanks by type in the USA, France and Spain

	POLITICAL ISSUES	UNIVERSITIES	ADVOCACY GROUPS	EXPERTS
USA	Center for American Progress	Hoover Institution	Cato	Council for Foreign Policy
FRANCE	Terra Nova	CERI	IFRAP	IFRI
SPAIN	FAES	CIDOB	FAES	IEEE

Source: L'Observatoire des think tanks

The phenomenon of advocacy groups, accentuated by the unprecedented development in the area of communication in the 21st century, deserves a separate paragraph. NICTs and the growing power of the media have had a profound impact on the structure of think tanks. Without media visibility, it is extremely difficult to place thoughts on the market of ideas. In this regard, advocacy groups are a type of activist organisation with excellent communicative efficiency. When considering the huge level of competition among think tanks to gain access to sources of finance and to opportunities, the advocacy group formula seems to be the most effective as regards the ability to influence decision-making. The concept is, therefore, one further element; not just terminological but also ontological, due to its inherent influencing function. In reality, the advocacy group terminology would appear to be the most appropriate in achieving the original objective: influence, convince, justify, argue, litigate.

We can quote the following elements as being the main reasons for the high level of ongoing growth of think tanks globally:<sup>10</sup>

- Information and technological revolution
- End of national governments' monopoly on information
- Increasing complexity and technical nature of policy problems
- Increasingly large and fragmented government
- Crisis of confidence in government and elected officials
- Globalization and the growth of state and non-state actors
- Need for timely and concise information and analysis "in the right form at the

<sup>10</sup> MCGANN, James, Global Go to Think Tank, 2012: [http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=think\\_tanks](http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=think_tanks)

right time and in the right hands”<sup>11</sup>

There are also certain contextual elements that explain the recent and current stagnation in the number of new think tanks established worldwide:

- Political and regulatory environment hostile to think tanks and NGOs: economic crisis, lack of philanthropic culture, dictatorships, etc.
- A decrease in the number of public and private donors for policy research
- Lack of institutional development which leads to an inability to adapt to change
- Increased competition from consulting firms, law firms and electronic media
- Institutions that have served their purpose and have discontinued their operations

A cultural “cooling off” can be observed from the side of the southern Europeans as regards the financing of think tanks, which may be due to them considering think tanks as being intangible as far as their content is concerned: research, reflection, ideas. Public and private donors are interested in short-term expertise and advice, and favour specific projects, instead of investing in long-term ideas.

## II. ORIGIN

A comparative but non-exhaustive presentation of the Spanish, French and American models (historical, cultural and political), as well as papers written by experts on think tanks in the area of defence and security, help to understand the think tank-defence link. A modelling exercise using papers produced by certain think tanks in the area of defence allows us to broadly pinpoint the differentiating impact that culture and the historical and political context have on these organisations.

### United States

It is just as complicated and risky to try and identify with any precision the contextual elements that lead to the emergence of a think tank as it is to define what a think tank is. However, it is essential to identify the conditions for emergence in order to better understand how and why think tanks influence defence policies. Some experts date the precedent of the current phenomenon to the end of the 19th century when reformist assemblies were created in certain states (Massachusetts), from which the *American Social Science Association*<sup>12</sup> was born. Other experts pinpoint the main

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<sup>11</sup> Expression used by François-Bernard Huyghe, permanent researcher at the *Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques*

<sup>12</sup> A. SMITH, James, *Idea Brokers: Think Tanks And The Rise Of The New Policy Elite*, New York :

historical reference as being the National Conference on Social Welfare (1873)<sup>13</sup>, the *Brookings Institution* (1916)<sup>14</sup> or the *Russell Sage Foundation* (1906)<sup>15</sup>. The *SAF-Agriculteurs de France* (1867) or the *Fabian Society* (1884), founded in England, are also often considered to be institutions that influenced in the structural model preceding the modern think tank.

Think tanks were born in the exhausted United States of 1865, following the Civil War. The origin of these structures can be found in the post-crisis context as a response to a cycle of reconstruction. Back then they were research institutions in the area of social sciences, financed by foundations, corporations and private donors, with the aim of working with the government on institutional reform policy programmes, mainly for the development of new management processes. The American culture of philanthropy had a decisive impact on the success of the think tanks. The rise of these think tanks coincided with the emergence of philanthropic foundations and the eagerness to better manage social issues through the sciences. In this way, the institutes of expert knowledge contributed to the design of the United States' current political model and to its democratic culture. The oldest and most relevant are the *US Industrial Commission* (1892), the *New York Bureau of Municipal Research* (1906), the *Russell Sage Foundation* (1906) and the *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* (1910). They advise governments, institutions and companies, with a certain level of independence, and focus their research on long-term cycles. The establishment of a space for think tanks in the United States was due to various waves of organisational development related to public policies and supported by research in the social sciences. The first was at the end of the 19th century from the side of the civic federations, which brought together entrepreneurs, trade union leaders and journalists. The second phase – the emergence of municipal offices at the start of the 20th century – came about thanks to the new administrative accounting techniques and to the problems with local administration. The “*proto-think tanks*”<sup>16</sup> erupted into a space that was favourable to the work of the first groups dedicated to research and the management of international relations: the *Carnegie* and the *Council on Foreign Relations*.<sup>17</sup>

During the 1970s, the use of the term *think tank* became more widespread, just

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Free Press, 1991

13 LINDEN, Patricia, *Powerhouses of Policy*, Town and Country, January 1987

14 McGann, James G. and R. Kent Weaver, eds. *Think Tanks and Civil Societies: Catalysts for Ideas and Action*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2000.

15 ABELSON, Donald, *Do Think Tanks Matter? Assessing the Impact of Public Policy Institutes*. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002, p.17-47

16 MEDVETZ, Thomas. *Think tanks in America*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2012, 45-47

17 *Ibid.*

as the number of research organisations dedicated to planning and public policies was multiplying at an exponential rate. Thanks to the semantic conventions of the period, more and more attention was being paid to military planning organisations following the Second World War (*Rand Corporation*). The first registers and directories of think tanks were published during the 1980s and 1990s, and alongside these, the first academic initiatives to codify the term and the entire subject. While it is true that think tanks were influential in American society right from the start, their desire to be recognised was really rewarded in the 1980s with the boom of the conservative revolution and the presidency of Ronald Reagan. Conservative think tanks like the *Heritage Foundation* and the *American Enterprise Institute* were very active in supplying expertise on economic, social and military issues to the administration in office. Thus, relations between the political powers and think tanks were intensified, giving a greater role to private expert opinion.

The number of think tanks in the United States multiplied as of the period of the Second World War. A new geopolitical context emerged, in which the United States took on the role of a global power with full leadership (military, political, economic and cultural), and expenditure on federal development and research increased accordingly. The government and its administration found they needed numerous new competencies to face up to the differing and changing challenges. The Cold War that followed the Second World War, and the threat from nuclear weapons, favoured the creation of think tanks focusing on the field of defence and security, like *Rand Corporation*, the *Hudson Institute*, the *Center for Naval Analyses* and the *Mitre Corporation*. All of these organisations were founded by military personnel and businessmen, with the objective of working with scientists and engineers; and they were focused on research and innovation in issues of defence.

In such a favourable climate, think tanks, and particularly the *Project for a New American Century* (PNAC), took on a great deal of importance when designing military strategies like during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, or when designing a plan for the global war on terror and for the defence of the interests of the United States. And it wasn't just issues of defence that think tanks were working on, but also issues of domestic security. To give an example, the Zero Tolerance policy, known as Windows 0, that prevailed in New York during the 1980s was a proposal from the side of the *Manhattan Institute*; a proposal that confirmed the increasing influence think tanks were taking on.

Defence issues reached a climax due to the combination of the end of the Cold War and the United States' transition from the role of superpower to that of hyperpower,<sup>18</sup> the advent of a new globalised and communicated world, and international terrorism. The effects on American society were multiple: the neoconservative revolution of the

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18 VEDRINE, Hubert, French Minister for Foreign Affairs 1997-2002, Speech, 1999

1980s focused the US political agenda on problems related to foreign affairs. Between this decade and the start of the 21st century, there was a reflective agreement among conservative think tanks, who thought that the *Pax Americana* depended on the international leadership of the United States as a result of its military capacities. During this period, the country saw a great increase in the number of think tanks working on security and defence, as well as an ongoing increase in defence expenditure.<sup>19</sup>

Two think tanks stand out because of the totally opposite courses they took and because of their differing results. The *Rand Corporation*, an organisation that stands out for its capacity for innovation in dual technologies and its proven and varied analyses, represents the paragon of think tanks. It is interesting to compare this organisation with the defunct *Project for a New American Century*, the most radical activist model and which managed to achieve a high level of ephemeral influence. How were they organised? What were their contributions? This paper offers keys to understand which methods and mechanisms are synonymous with success or failure.

*The Project for a New American Century* (PNAC),<sup>20</sup> which worked exclusively on issues of defence and security, aimed to promote *American Global Leadership* and staunchly defend the *Pax Americana*. Between 1997 and 2002, its analysts produced 600 articles on weaponry, military interventions and international relations. Its declared proposals at operational level were the use of military force and an influential diplomatic strategy. After witnessing the positive transformations Germany and Japan underwent under the auspices of the United States following the Second World War, the *PNAC* sought to prolong the political, economic, military and cultural domination – the four pillars of the *Pax Americana*. Its main proposals to Congress and to the Clinton and G.W. Bush administrations were focused on the rejection of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; the military conquest of outer space; the multiplication of American military bases in geostrategic zones, creating a *Global Constabulary*; technological updating of military tools and weaponry; an increase in the defence budget; support for agreements with allies to combat regimes considered to be hostile to the American model. The determining document, symbol of *PNAC*'s activities, is the paper *Rebuilding America's Defenses*<sup>21</sup>, a 90 page programme report,

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19 See the report by the Swedish think tank SIPRI on the evolution of defence expenditure in the major countries in the world. Available under: <http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/resultoutput/worldreg2011>

20 Founded in 1997, officially disbanded in 2006. Its work was divided into geostrategic zones of relevance for the United States: Europe, the Balkans, Asia and the Middle East. It was financed by the *Bradley Foundation*, *Scalf Foundation* and *J.M. Olin Foundation*; foundations linked to weaponry, banking, energy, raw materials and chemicals sectors.

21 DONNELLY, Thomas, KAGAN, Donald, SCHMITT, Gary, *Rebuilding America's Defenses, Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century*, Washington: PNAC, 09/2000

a summary of neoconservative ideology. Its effectiveness, although fleeting, can be attributed to various cornerstones: an iterative and aggressive discourse on the subject of defence and security, powerful corporate support, the prestige of its members, and broad social networks. The exceptional format of the policy papers and working papers that were directed at political leaders matched the marketing criteria developed by the *Heritage Foundation* in the 1990s, and it was this that revolutionised the relationship with politicians. The production of clear and concise specialised documents – that drew unambiguous conclusions – together with publicity slogans, had the aim of keeping politicians' attention and convincing them of their ideas. Founding members of the *PNAC*, like Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Richard Perle, Jeb Bush and Paul Wolfowitz, held senior posts in the G.W. Bush administration. One particularity of the American political system – the *revolving door*<sup>22</sup> – favoured the success of neoconservative ideology and of several *PNAC* proposals. The subsequent crash was due to several factors, including: the expensive financing of the war in Iraq, the collapse of neoconservative ideology in the war of ideas, the organisation's very clear bias, and internal management that was more focused on communication strategy than on research.

The *Rand Corporation*<sup>23</sup>, on the contrary, was born from a public/private agreement and focused on academic research and innovation. One of its first projects involved studying the possibility of launching an artificial satellite into orbit. In 1948, Rand separated completely from the Douglas Aircraft Company so as to be more independent. Rand then extended its activities to the areas of aeronautics, outer space, information technology, defence, security, and artificial intelligence. It has published more than 10,000 reports since 1945. The organisation regards itself as being independent and non-political – a neutral positioning that lends an image of accuracy and pragmatism to its works. Despite the fact that it has developed further areas of research, its main focus continues to be on defence and security. 50% of its budget (from a total of US\$263 million in 2012) is destined for use in this field. Many former Secretaries of Defence and former National Security Advisors work together with the think tank: Harold Brown, Donald Rumsfeld, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Franck Carlucci. Rand stands out for its capacity for innovation and development of dual technology systems. The combination of civilian and military needs has led the corporation to

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22 Movement of experts between roles in think tanks and roles in Government and its administration. This recycling of personnel allows for a strengthening of public administration through competencies gained in the private sector.

23 *Rand Corporation* was founded in 1945 by the U.S. Air Force and incorporated into Douglas Aircraft Company in order to strengthen its Research and Development department. The think tank owes its name to its activities: "Research and Development". It has had huge levels of success in R+D – the Internet being one of them. (See article "*Paul Baran and the Origins of the Internet*", <http://www.rand.org/about/history/baran.html> (viewed 23/05/2013), Its budget is made up from public grants and commercial contracts with institutions, businesses and administrations.

develop technologies for aerospace systems, information technology systems, artificial intelligence systems, as well as military systems. Further examples of Rand's contributions are: the internet; the electronic recording system; an analysis of the problems the US Army was facing when hiring personnel; an evaluation of US interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan; an analysis of the effectiveness of alternative schools; stocktaking of the strategies in the War on Drugs; identification of the fundamentals for the creation of a Palestinian State; report on the financial impact of public transport delays on companies. The Government and different state departments are the organisation's main clients and make up two thirds of all contracts signed by this think tank. The Pentagon, the Department of Homeland Security, the State Secretaries of Health, of Justice and of Energy are its main partners and clients. This massive economic and institutional support allows it to have offices in London, Brussels and Doha, with 1500 members of staff, half of whom are civilian or military researchers with permanent contracts.

### Spain

The think tank phenomenon in Spain is still in its beginning stages compared to the United States, and is lagging far behind certain European neighbours (France, Germany or England). According to a study by [James McGann](#), the *Global Go to Think Tank*,<sup>24</sup> Spain, with 55 think tanks, is rated number 18 in world rankings. Battered by the economic crisis and submerged in austerity policies and cut-backs, there has been a clear stagnation as regards the creation of think tanks since 2011. The analysis of this phenomenon translates into a high level of financial dependency on public subsidies from the side of Spanish think tanks, despite the fact that 60% of think tanks claim to be non-profit and independent foundations.<sup>25</sup> Spanish think tanks have developed well since the end of the 20th century due to favourable environmental conditions: democracy, a structured state, fragmentation of administrative power among the autonomous regions, and EU integration.

Other elements, however, acted as a brake. An omnipresent public administration, a certain level of mistrust as regards what think tanks do, a recently-emerging organised and autonomous civil society, a non-existent corporate and individual philanthropic culture, and a lack of strategic vision for geopolitical relations from the side of political and economic leaders. On top of this was the absence of understanding of the

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24 MCGANN, James, *Global Go to Think Tank*, 2012: [http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=think\\_tanks](http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=think_tanks)

25 PONSA, Francesc, *Los embriones de think tanks en España*, L'Observatoire des think tanks, 29/07/2012, <http://www.oftt.eu/thematiques/europe/article/los-embriones-de-los-think-tanks-en-espana>

concepts of intellectual diplomacy, war of ideas, *soft power*<sup>26</sup>, and *soft law*.<sup>27</sup>

The *National Statistics Institute*, created in 1877 and the *Junta para Ampliación de Estudios e Investigaciones Científicas* (Council for the Promotion of Scientific Studies and Research), in 1907, were the first organisations to use planning and information bodies in Spain. Just like in the United States, these institutes were not in line with the modern definition of think tanks; but they did constitute the basis of this type of structure. The Franco regime did not forbid research and information centres but rather centralised them in order to maintain control over them. The *Institute for Political Studies* (1939), the *Institute for Social Agriculture Studies* (1947) and the *Institute for Public Opinion Studies* (1964) were created to strengthen the regime, and this led to a deviation from the original research and investigation activities that governed think tanks. Two clear phases followed in Spain. Two think tanks emerged between the 1980s and the end of the 20th century – the *Circle of Entrepreneurs* (1970) and the *Institute for Economic Studies* (1979). Both focused their work on Spain's accession to the EU and the need to adapt the Spanish model, however neither had a great impact on public policies. At the beginning of the 21st century, several organisations came into being that were closer to the American model but only had limited means, such as the *Juan de Mariana Institute* (2005) and the *Burke Foundation* (2006).<sup>28</sup> From the 1980s onward, Spain started to open up to the international community and regain prominence in the field of international relations. These were the conditions that led to the appearance of think tanks specialised in international relations and defence and security: the *Group for Strategic Studies* (1986), the *Foundation for International Relations and Foreign Dialogue* (1999) and the *Elcano Royal Institute* (2001). The *Barcelona Centre for International Information and Documentation* (1973) and the *European Institute of the Mediterranean* (1989) reinforced studies on international relations and defence. However, the *Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies (IEEE)* (1970) was the first organisation to truly focus on research in the field of defence.

The *Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies (IEEE)*,<sup>29</sup> created in 1970, fulfils most of the requirements to allow it to be considered a think tank. The fact of being a public body dependent on the National Defence Higher Studies Centre and the Ministry of Defence at both a programme and financial level is not a strong enough argument for excluding it from the list of Spanish think tanks. The Institute carries out various

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26 S. NYE, Joseph, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, Basic Books, New Editions, 1991

27 See the definition of *soft law* put forward by the Portail de l'Intelligence Economique, <http://www.portail-ie.fr/lexiques/read/90> (viewed 12/06/2013)

28 PONSÁ, Francesc y XIFRA, Jordi, *El marketing de las ideas : Los « think tanks » en España y en el mundo*, Barcelona : Niberta, 2009, p. 25-34

29 See 'About' page on the website of the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies under <http://www.ieee.es/quienes-somos/que-es-ieee/> (viewed 10/07/2013)

activities and sets objectives with a degree of organisation similar to that of think tanks. And as outlined above, the Institute – thanks to its statutes –, is, like other similar organisations, actually more autonomous in its internal financial and intellectual management than some private think tanks; private think tanks often being excessively dependent on their founders, partners or patrons. The official objectives of the Institute, as set out by the National Defence Directive, can clearly be classed as those of a think tank: free thought (intellectual independence criteria) and nonpartisan thought (criteria of general interest, educational and accessible dissemination of information, promotion and development of the field, advice to leaders and politicians). Staying true to the very make-up of think tanks, the *Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies* took its inspiration from the model used by the *International Institute for Strategic Studies*, an English think tank. The *IEEE* sets its objectives as being to research, develop, propose and communicate on issues surrounding the subject of defence. A highly varied communication and dissemination strategy for its publications has allowed this think tank to multiply its audience: Strategic Dossiers, the Strategic Panorama, information documents, opinion documents and analysis documents. The *IEEE* is a good example of state participation in the development of civil society organisations so as to ensure that appropriate instruments are available, specialised in new situations that may require a different type of expert opinion from that provided by large administrations. On a statutory level, this model is similar to that of the French organisation – the *Centre d'analyse, de prévision et de stratégie*.

### France

The French Jacobin system is the legacy of a state apparatus built progressively through a very marked central administration. Political parties are not everlasting and are very heterogeneous. French administration and public bodies provide advice and expert opinion to political decision-makers. In France there is a certain level of mistrust of anything political with Anglo-Saxon characteristics. In addition, the conflation of lobby groups (understood as groups who act to manipulate for the benefit of their own interests) and think tanks has been rejected by the people and has led to investors backing away. France, with its historical tradition of *clubs* and *salons* and with the recognised figure of the dedicated intellectual, has seen a strong momentum in the creation of think tanks since 2000 – and particularly since the presidential elections in 2012.<sup>30</sup> This brief period of time has witnessed the creation of as many think tanks as during the whole period between 1950 and 2000. In France, the think tanks dealing with issues of international relations and defence are the ones that most resemble the American model in terms of structure: permanent researchers with contracts, varied publications, distinguished journals, mixed budgets (public/private) and political neutrality. With a long diplomatic tradition, France

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30 URRUTIA, Olivier, *La France des think tanks*, L'Observatoire des think tanks, 21/07/2011, <http://www.oftt.eu/press/our-contributions/article/la-france-des-think-tanks>

participates actively in the creation and subsequent development of several think tanks, like the *Institut Français des Relations Internationales* (IFRI, 1979) and the *Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique* (FRS, 1992). We can also mention here the administrative centre directly related with the Prime Minister, the *Commissariat Général au Plan* (1946) transformed into the *Centre d'Analyse Stratégique* (2006) and today the *Commissariat Général à la Stratégie et à la Prospective* (2013). In parallel, the *Institut des Relations Internationales et Stratégiques* (IRIS, 1991) was born of a private initiative and was the only organisation out of all the French think tanks to offer vocational training in defence, international relations and economic intelligence at post-graduate and master level – qualifications recognised by the state.

In 1973, Thierry de Montbrial was given the task by the minister for Foreign Affairs, Michel Jobert, to create the *Centre d'analyse et de prévision* (CAP) to analyse the system of international relations. Montbrial saw this as being an opportunity to equip France with a private think tank focused on international relations. In 1979, the *Institut français des Relations Internationales* was created with the institutional support of Prime Minister Raymond Barre and the ministers for Foreign Affairs Louis de Guiringaud and his successor Jean François-Poncet. Now in 2013, the *IFRI* has the support of more than 100 partner companies and 500 members (individuals and institutions). It employs 80 people, 30 of whom are permanent researchers from several different countries. The *IFRI* also works frequently with other think tanks, such as *Brookings*, *Rand*, *The Council on Foreign Relations*, *Carnegie*, *The Center for International and Strategic Studies* and *The Japan Institute for International Affairs*, among others.

From the information presented above, it is clear that think tanks emerge during different periods in different states. And what is also clear is that there are peaks that come about as consequences of political or economic crises and which coincide with action cycles for modernisation, organisational streamlining and administrative activities. Evidently, what the French call the *autopoïétique*<sup>31</sup> structure of these organisations makes them essential, both for political leaders as well as economic stakeholders – and has done from the time of the very first *proto think tanks* through to today and the modern structures we now see

As an indicator, the table below lists think tanks in the USA, Spain and France that deal exclusively with issues of defence and international relations, be they political, university, expert or advocacy think tanks. The result is overwhelming when you look at the sheer number of think tanks in the United States compared with the other two countries, even when taking the demographic difference into account. Obviously, if the simple fact of just having large numbers of think tanks doesn't actually translate into practice the expected efficiency of a think tank culture, without even considering

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<sup>31</sup> The word *autopoïèse* (from Greek *auto*, meaning self, and *poièse*, meaning production, creation) refers to a system capable of reproducing itself in a permanent way and in interaction with its environment, thus maintaining its organisation despite changes in components.

the quality criteria, then the quantity is merely synonymous with occupied space, social networks, numerous literary references, maximum media coverage, and optimization of opportunities for forming part of expert commissions and of breaking into international institutions. From this list, only American think tanks and a couple of French think tanks can boast offices abroad, developing the concept of intellectual diplomacy. It is not easy to get access to information on financing sources and budgets in France and Spain as the organisations in these countries do not communicate their data. But this would suggest the lack of resources on the side of French and Spanish structures<sup>32</sup> like the *IFRI* (6.6), *IRIS* (2.5), *FRS* (3.6), *CERI* (6) compared to their American equivalents - *Brookings* (90), *NED* (135), *Rand* (263), *Heritage* (81), *Hoover* (40), *Hudson* (12).

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32 These are the 2012 budgets, in millions of Euros for France and millions of Dollars for the United States.

Table II - List of think tanks that work on issues related to defence, security and international relations

THINK TANKS SPECIALISED IN DEFENCE, SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	
USA	- American Enterprise Institute
	- American Foreign Policy Council
	- American-Iranian Council
	- American Israel Public Affairs Committee
	- American Security Council Foundation
	- Aspen strategy Group
	- Atlantic Council
	- British American Security Information Council
	- Brookings Institution
	- Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
	- Cato Institute
	- Center for a New American Security
	- Center for Advanced Defense Studies
	- Center for International Policy
	- Center for Security Policy
	- Center for Strategic and International Studies
	- Center for Naval Analyses
	- Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation
	- Chemical and Biological Arms Control Institute
	- Center for the National Interest
	- The Century Foundation
	- Combating Terrorism Center
	- Committee on the Present Danger
	- Conflict Solutions International
	- Council on Foreign Relations
	- Council on Hemispheric Affairs
	- Foreign Policy in Focus
	- Foreign Policy Research Institute
	- German Marshall Fund of the United States
	- Halifax International Security Forum
	- The Heritage Foundation
	- Hoover Institution
- Hudson Institute	
- India, China & America Institute	
- Iran Policy Committee	
- The Independent Institute	
- Institute for the Study of War	
- Inter-American Dialogue	
- Jamestown Foundation	
- Keck Institute for Space Studies	
- Middle East Forum	
- National Bureau of Asian Research	
- National Endowment for Democracy	
- National Security Network	
- Miter Corporation	
- Pacific Institute	
- Project 2049 Institute	
- RAND Corporation	
- Strategic Studies Institute	
- United States Institute of Peace	
- Washington Institute for Near East Policy	
- Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars	



As pointed out by Abelson,<sup>33</sup> think tanks develop their activities and exercise their influence either directly – through the *revolving door* mechanism and through connections with important political movers and shakers – or indirectly – through publications, meetings and seminars. Here, we should underline the fact that the process of bi-directional influence guarantees think tanks the opportunity to participate in decision making, to set priorities on the political agenda, and to contribute to the climate of opinion. It is worth pointing out at this juncture that American think tanks specialised in defence, security, and international relations have links to various government bodies – the Committee on Science, the Administrative Conference, the Consultative Council - with a wide variety of different prestigious players, both military and civilian (ex-politicians, professors, journalists, businessmen). Part of the success of think tanks, as well as the effectiveness of their influence strategies, comes from their internal construction.

The philosopher Auguste Comte said that “ideas govern and disrupt the world; that is to say that the entire social mechanism is built on opinions”.<sup>34</sup> So, with conscious influence being an indirect and asymmetric strategy to gain the approval of the “other” through prestige and attractiveness based on image and reputation, think tanks, NGOs, lobbies or public relations firms (influential organisations) are familiar with this process. Standard resources for influence involve the use of signs and symbols (words, images) opposing violence. Think tanks turn to discursive techniques like rhetoric, propaganda, publicity, applied social psychology, public relations, public diplomacy and storytelling. It is within this framework that military influence brings together methods - other than just force and threats - that help an army achieve victory, by, for example, playing on public opinion. Demoralising the enemy, motivating its own troops, gaining the support of the people, and positively selling its cause at the international level.<sup>35</sup>

Propaganda, rhetoric, diplomacy and storytelling are weapons than can mean success or failure. The concept of *soft power*, a strategic tool of influence, is not an antonym of force but rather relies on it to validate its potential.

### **The War of Ideas**

In 1993, the analyst James A. Phillips, from the *Heritage Foundation*, used the term “*war of ideas*” in a paper on the role and important activities of the *National Endowment for Democracy* in the ideological battle against communist regimes in China, Cuba,

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33 ABELSON, Donald, *Do Think Tanks Matter? Assessing the Impact of Public Policy Institutes*. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002, p.88-122

34 COMTE, Auguste, *Cours de Philosophie Positive*, 1830-1842

35 HUYGHE, François-Bernard, *Société d’influence*, Think tanks, lobbies, NGOs,... 31 August 2012, [http://www.huyghe.fr/actu\\_303.htm](http://www.huyghe.fr/actu_303.htm) (viewed 15/01/2013)

North Korea and Vietnam. The scepticism as regards the power of think tanks in Spain and France makes the esteem that they are held in by high-ranking politicians in the United States even more remarkable:

“Heritage Foundation is without question the most far-reaching conservative organization in the country in the war of ideas, and one that has had a tremendous impact not just in Washington, but literally across the planet”.<sup>36</sup>

Another relevant point is that the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States unmistakably took on the leadership of a think tank from his political camp in an official speech. In Spain, by contrast, the subject remains unknown or relegated to the background by political decision-makers.

In the war of ideas – allegory of physical confrontation –, think tanks are the intellectual army of a state, defending their ideological model – product of the framework of references composed of beliefs, values, culture and history. The information revolution has created an ever-increasingly connected world; a world in which the public perception of values and motivations of a state can create an environment, and activate or deactivate the search for international support for its policies. The more than 40 American think tanks working in the areas of defence, security, and international relations invade and occupy the intellectual and cognitive space, taking ownership of the marketplace of ideas.

The war of ideas describes a confrontation between opposing ideals, ideologies, representations and concepts. In this modern war, nations or interest groups turn to strategic influence to defend and promote their interests at national and international level. The military objective is to reach the hearts and minds of the citizens, while the weapons are the think tanks, television programmes, articles in the press, the internet, secret documents, radio transmissions and public diplomacy:<sup>37</sup>

“One resists the invasion of armies; one does not resist the invasion of ideas”.<sup>38</sup>

*Soft power*<sup>39</sup> describes methods of influence developed by a state that opts for cultural and ideological methods of influence, leaving aside all recourse to violence. Credibility and legitimacy are indispensable for soft power to be effective. International institutions, NGOs, lobby groups and think tanks are both players and resources for its development and for the implementation of positive perceptions. Joseph Nye

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36 GRINGRICH, Newt, Speaker of the House, Speech from 15 November 1994

37 ECHEVARRIA, Antulio Joseph, *Wars of Ideas and the War of Ideas*, SSI Monographs. Carlisle, United States: Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College (SSI). p. 63

38 HUGO, Victor, *The History of a Crime*, New York: Mondial, 2005

39 S. NYE, Joseph, *Bound to Lead: the changing nature of American power*, Basic Books, New Editions, 1991

defines three main types of resources that a state needs to affirm its leadership: military, economic and intangible resources.<sup>40</sup> As regards military resources, the United States has a marked advantage over its direct competitors – China and Russia. As for economic resources, the emerging countries of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) are becoming more and more competitive. Intangible resources like culture are the most generalised. Spain stands out thanks to its industry, language, food, culture, tourism,<sup>41</sup> sport<sup>42</sup> and schools.<sup>43</sup> The result is the conversion of the enemy into a consumer and the creation of an affective dependency. *Soft power* has become part of the process of a renewed and global diplomatic exercise directed at the entire population and no longer simply at the elite.

Within this conceptual framework, think tanks are a soft power instrument and represent an alternative for a state to be able to develop its leadership at the international level. It has been proven that American, German and French think tanks have managed to export themselves beyond their national borders using *in situ* offices and teams. Unlike their German and American counterparts, French think tanks are only to be found in Brussels due to their limited financial capacities. However, the Spanish think tank culture lacks this strategic vision and pays the price for its lack of material resources when trying to share its vision and get its voice heard. Think tanks with a physical presence abroad act, through their experts, as intellectual embassies when defining standards – economic, cultural, political, legal – by integrating working groups into the bodies of supranational institutions. The phenomenon of the internationalisation of think tanks “*opens possibilities for international and global leadership and for the production of global thinking in order to find solutions to global problems, along with creating global “hubs” or capitals of thought*”.<sup>44</sup> The United States and its think tanks “occupy” Brussels, Ankara, Berlin, Paris, Bucharest, Warsaw, Tunis, Cambridge, London and Doha, running the global intellectual arena. The United States has a greater presence in Brussels than France or Spain does, demonstrating far more active intellectual diplomacy.

*Soft law*, the strategy for the code, involves influencing the adoption of norms,

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40 *Ibid.*

41 See Marca España for all information: <http://marcaespana.es>

42 See *La industria del deporte*, Geoeconomía, Instituto Choiseul, N°7

43 See the 2010 Forbes global ranking of Business Schools. Spain has 4 of the top 10 schools: <http://etudiant.aujourd'hui.fr/etudiant/info/classement-des-mba-le-classement-mondial-selon-forbes.html>

44 MONTORBIO, Manuel, *La geopolítica del pensamiento: los think tanks y política exterior*, Barcelona: Producción CIDOB Edicions, 01/2013, p.19-26, Available under: [http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/wcm/connect/94f9dcoo4e4455a6ac4abd1063f90368/DT2-013\\_Montobbio\\_Geopolitica\\_think-tanks\\_politica\\_exterior\\_Spain\\_Espana.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=94f9dcoo4e4455a6ac4abd1063f90368](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/wcm/connect/94f9dcoo4e4455a6ac4abd1063f90368/DT2-013_Montobbio_Geopolitica_think-tanks_politica_exterior_Spain_Espana.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=94f9dcoo4e4455a6ac4abd1063f90368)

processes and customs through the use of a language and vocabulary, a culture, a set of technical and legal standards etc. The framework of references includes culture, education, the system of values, beliefs, and experience. Whoever wins the war of ideas imposes his system on the defeated party – who then has to adapt to new game rules which aren't his own and which perhaps do not suit him. By way of example, we can quote the initiative of George Soros' *Open Society Foundations* which finances, with a very obvious proselytising objective, think tanks and NGOs that promote the liberal model of democracy in eastern European countries.

As a conclusion, the description by Federico Aznar Fernandez-Montesinos of the role of the media in times of war as an analogy for the actions of think tanks is, we feel, particularly relevant:

“It is worth pointing out that if the international community can legalise an armed intervention through the Security Council – a political and not a legal body – then it is public opinion that confers legitimacy, which is precisely the root of legality. The position that many countries on the continent took during the second Iraq war or during the Vietnam conflict is a good example on a global scale.

This is why they are called upon to be important players in conflicts, by influencing the emotional consciousness of millions of people. And in fact they can even tilt victory towards one of the parties because victory is very often – particularly in limited wars which seem to have returned in the 21st century – just a question of perception.

*And morals are based on trust, legitimacy and justice of the own cause – elements which must be protected within our own environment and achieved in the rival one. It is essential to protect one's own society to avoid the breakdown of hope”.*<sup>45</sup>

### **A new paradigm: welfare vs. warfare**

In times of economic crisis, repercussions on the army are multiple, differing and complex: on the budget and related annual expenditure (military interventions, maintenance, infrastructure, pensions, resources, renewal of equipment), on society's perception of humanitarian or armed interventions, on knowledge from the side of the people as regards defence, economic interests or national firms carrying out economic intelligence activities, etc. It is thus essential for the military to have a global and precise strategic vision of the role that think tanks play and of the influence that they have on policy-making and on the acceptance (or not) of defence policies.

The recent political context has complicated the management of defence policies. The economic crisis that spawns major budget cuts; the new real-time media that details the agonies of war, causing a flood of pacifist movements since the 60s; as well

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<sup>45</sup> AZNAR FERNANDEZ\_MONTESINOS, Federico, *Conflicto y opinion publica*, Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos, Opinion Paper 35/2013, 06/2013, p1-13

as the worsening of counterinsurgency acts; all of these elements lead to a questioning of the traditional strategies of military intervention. We see, on the one hand, the situation in the United States and Spain where austerity policies lead to passionate debates on defence spending, rocking the boat in the arena of the drastic cuts that imply a redefinition of the concept of defence. In France, on the other hand, where the defence budget is maintained or increased, there is a serious debate centred on a strategic reform to decide which option to choose (NATO, EU or alone).

Let us analyse in broad terms the current situation in the United States in order to stress the relationship between think tanks and defence policy. Within the context of the intense debate between Republicans and Democrats on the annual federal budget, we can see that there has been a threat of cuts to the defence budget since 2011. The focus seems to be on the argument of *welfare versus warfare*. The main think tanks in the United States (*Brookings, Heritage, AEI, CFR*) defend an ambitious defence policy upon which economic and security policies depend.<sup>46</sup> There is broad consensus among think tanks regarding the need to maintain or increase the defence budget. The risks related to cuts are considered to be: sending out a sign of weakness to hostile regimes, running the risk of losing the military technological advantage, authorising attacks on US strategic interests, and losing leadership at a global level. For *soft power* and *soft law* to be effective, most experts are of the opinion that there must also be an existent *hard power*. For conservative and liberal think tanks alike, the roots of the *Pax Americana* are to be found in it being a military hyperpower.

The recent creation of the *Institute for the Study of War*<sup>47</sup> is the most direct example of the strategic potential of an *advocacy tank* in this case. The initiative was taken in response to the 2007 stagnation in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. A group of companies from the military sector make up the core founders and donors of the *ISW*, which deploys an aggressive strategy reminiscent of the defunct *PNAC*:

- Direct links with political leaders thanks to the make-up of the board
- Storytelling practices, producing, for example, *the Surge: the untold story*, a feature documentary on the importance of increasing the dispatch of troops to Iraq
- Use of all possible communication techniques: rhetoric, slogans
- Conferences and events attended by high-ranking politicians and military leaders

46 URRUTIA, Olivier, *Les think tanks américains face à la crise: Dette, Leadership et Défense*, L'Observatoire des think tanks, 7/10/2011

47 *The Institute for the Study of War* is a clone of the PNAC. For access to information on its founders & donors, details of its activities, and the budget of the think tank, see the *Institute for Policy Studies'* blog under: [http://rightweb.irc-online.org/profile/institute\\_for\\_the\\_study\\_of\\_war](http://rightweb.irc-online.org/profile/institute_for_the_study_of_war)

- Agreements with the media

Defence and national security have always been subjects deeply rooted in American culture. The mobilisation of most of the progressive and conservative think tanks in favour of an ambitious defence policy highlights several points:

- The military-industrial complex; since the Second World War this has been one of the principal players in the subsidies given to think tanks, creating a favourable trend for their interests
- The consensus that exists among think tanks shows us that the subject of defence in the United States rises above party quarrels
- Think tanks show true independence from political parties, the government and the federal administration, contradicting the political manoeuvres of the two main parties which would imply giving up the *Pax Americana*

However, some think tanks like *Rand* envisage techniques, methods and cognitive processes which are more appropriate when dealing with the issue of expenditure or awareness among civil society. Or when *shaping* replaces *kinetic focus*.

### **Case Study: War and marketing strategy**

Moving away from any moral evaluation of the methods of influence designed by the *Rand Corporation* for the US Army, we think it could be interesting to describe the current trend towards a relationship between psychological concepts and techniques and new types of military intervention.

Hollywood has been mobilised to make war seem more attractive, and the US Army could copy the advertising methods, the image war, and the information used by the Madison Avenue publicity agencies. The *Rand Corporation* suggested that the Pentagon and the Ministry of Defence start thinking about logos, branding, marketing and a communication plan. The think tank has noted that anti-American sentiment has increased since 2001, and with it threats.<sup>48</sup> Its method of dealing with these threats is to make people understand – in their hearts and in their minds – just how fair and moral the US military interventions are, and in this way promote cohesion between civil society and the military – a fundamental task in order to address major challenges and obtain the necessary political and economic support.

The report entitled *Enlisting Madison Avenue. The Marketing Approach to Earning Popular Support in Theaters of Operations*<sup>49</sup> theorises on the shaping of indigenous

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48 HUYGHE, François-Bernard, *Plans de guerre et stratégies marketing*, 22/08/2007, Blog, [http://www.huyghe.fr/actu\\_451.htm](http://www.huyghe.fr/actu_451.htm), (viewed 15/01/2013)

49 HELMUS, Todd C., PAUL, Christopher, GLENN, Russell W., *Enlisting Madison Avenue. The Marketing Approach to Earning Popular Support in Theaters of Operations*, Rand Corporation, 2007,

audiences, synchronising word and action until the necessary persuasive communication is achieved. Shaping is implemented through forming, convincing, controlling and establishing norms. The notion of *shaping* is a central topic in American geopolitics – part of strategic intelligence and military strategy, with think tanks promoting this type of activity:

“Modern propaganda describes a coherent and long-term effort to provoke or reorient events in order to influence the way in which a people relates to a company, an idea or a group”.<sup>50</sup>

*Rand* doesn't limit itself to mere theorising, but rather offers specific data and “solutions” that can be applied to the army: create a publicity strategy through the rebuilding of a nation, show strategic influence via public diplomacy, and develop civilian social services. Basically anything that is not military force. The aim is to see the cause of war as a consumer product and the citizens as clients who need to be seduced. In this way, marketing strategies and techniques that companies use to sell their products could be used by the US military to link in field operations with the overall objective of shaping. The report offers a multitude of business models that could be used by the military, in keeping with the three main pillars of marketing:

- a) Manage expectations
- b) Know the client
- c) Have after-sales service

The USA uses influence as a technique in a global strategy: converting the enemy into a sympathiser or into a partner. Influence as a tool for awareness-raising global and social communication could be defined as propaganda. H.D. Lasswell, in his renowned work *Propaganda Technique in the World War*,<sup>51</sup> develops the idea of the process of scientific propaganda, which he defines as the *government management of opinion*. For Lasswell, the psychological war is a pre-condition and a complementary condition to the economic or military war. He considers Wilsonian theory as being a forerunner; a theory that states that rejection of military war in modern societies lies at such a level as to invalidate peoples' possibilities of recourse to force – thus making persuasion the key element.

The incorporation of strategic communication for influence by the US Army into its armed conflicts started off as an experimental tactic during the first Iraq war (1991) when the agency *Hill & Knowlton* worked together with the federal government. The idea was to complement the use of physical force with an ideological war, using the

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p.53-123

50 BERNAYS, Edward, *Propaganda*, Paris, la Découverte, Zones, 2007, P.43

51 LASSWELL, Harold.D., *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, the MIT Press, 1971

methods of public relations and publicities agencies, in order to influence the local populations. The objective set out for the US and its armed forces was to adapt to a new context: an increase in counter-insurgency actions against the deployed troops, more appropriate management both of the image and of the perception that soldiers and local populations have of military operations, saving lives, budgetary control, and international political pressure from the side of partner states and enemies.

“Fighting and winning in battle is not a sign of excellence; rather, breaking the resistance of the enemy without having to fight is excellence”.<sup>52</sup>

Propaganda is a global range of means of communication that do not resort to the use of force, and that modify the opinion, the behaviour and the emotions of any social group with the aim of directly or indirectly benefiting the instigator of said propaganda. The strategic use of signs and symbols serves to transmit a message. The similarities between propagandists and advertisers have been clearly defined by E. Bernays in his work *Propaganda*. In the context of the economic crisis and the ideological debate on defence spending policy in the United States, *Rand Corporation*, as historical expert in the area of defence and security and located in Santa Monica (California) close to Palo Alto University – a university that has developed many different methods of psychology, psycho-sociology, communication and information sciences – propounds the implementation and use of communication processes for propaganda. Propaganda used as a weapon to prevent and resolve conflicts, with think tanks as players who conceptualise and employ this weapon, is the current paradigm à la mode in the United States.

## CONCLUSION

The symbiotic relationship that exists between think tanks and defence is based on the origin itself of these structures. The history, designation, semantics, organisation, objectives, strategies, usefulness, and field of action of think tanks align them with the broad concept of defence. Think tanks are a weapon in the war of ideas, as well as in modern classic wars, by facilitating reflection and competencies; they also encourage technological innovation and strategies, and are essential players when generating support or rejection for an intervention. Just as an army assures the physical defence of a state, a think tank defends the essence of it.

By observing the phenomenon of the combination of think tank and defence in the United States, it is clear to see that, just as civil society organises to influence the direction of its own destiny during periods of crisis and change, the military-industrial

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52 TZU, Sun, *L'Art de la guerre*, Paris: Flammarion, 1999

complex is equipped with its own tool to defend its interests in the war of ideas. War is won not only in the field, but also in the minds of people, and that is why it is necessary to have a broad and varied arsenal. A large part of the success of the war of ideas and the war for knowledge depends on state initiatives like the *IEEE* (Spain), the *Strategic Studies Institute* (USA) and the *Institut des Hautes Etudes de Défense Nationales* (France) combined with civil society initiatives like the *IFRI* (France), the *GEES* (Spain) and the *Center for Strategic and International Studies* (USA).

And hence it is clear that intellectual diplomacy can be considered to be a manifestation of national power, as it shows the foreign public all aspects of the culture, including wealth, scientific and technological advances, economic competitiveness (from sport through to industry), military power, and the general trust of the nation. The perception of power clearly has important implications for the ability of a country to guarantee its security. Also because intellectual diplomacy includes political and ideological arguments, and uses the language of persuasion and defence – which could be used as an instrument for the political war and could be useful in achieving the traditional goals of war. Ideas, beliefs, emotions all have an influence in world views, adapting reality to own interests – meaning that think tanks, as producers of ideas and formulae, are an effective tool in the war of ideas.

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