Measuring Think Tank Performance

An Index of Public Profile

Julia Clark and David Roodman

Abstract

Think tanks, defined as organizations engaged in public policy research and analysis, operate all over the world, study every imaginable topic, and exercise influence publicly and behind the scenes. Billions of dollars are spent each year in support of these tanks, and that level of spending raises questions of effectiveness. Such questions are difficult to answer because the influence a think tank may have on the thinking of communities and policymakers is inherently difficult to measure.

But that has not stopped researchers from trying, with various methods. Each—quantitative metrics, qualitative assessments, and expert rankings—has advantages and limitations.

In this paper, Julia Clark and David Roodman investigate whether better ranking is possible by exploiting modern tools for measuring citations in both traditional and new media, as well as in academe. They do not claim to have a comprehensive or perfect method, but they do find that with modest effort the status quo of ranking the tanks can be improved.

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Introduction

The term "think tank" emerged in the 1940s and 1950s as slang for a room full of war strategists (Smith 1991, p. xiii). Since then, the term's meaning has expanded and the number of entities under its rubric has exploded. Think tanks, now better defined as organizations engaged in public policy research and analysis, operate all over the world, study every imaginable topic, and exercise influence publicly and behind the scenes.

Foundations, political parties, corporations, tycoons, and governments spend billions of dollars each year supporting the thinking at all these tanks. This spending naturally raises questions of effectiveness. Are think tanks achieving their and their funders' ends? What can tanks learn from their peers in order to become more effective? These questions are in general hard to answer because think tanks aim to shift the thinking of communities and policymakers—attempting influence that is inherently challenging to measure.

But that has not stopped researchers from trying. Indeed, ranking exercises can be powerful attention-getters for both their subjects (think tanks) and for third parties such as the media, policymakers and funders. We are aware of three main approaches that have been used to assess think tank performance: quantitative metrics, qualitative assessments, and expert rankings. Each has advantages and limitations. Several authors have completed quantitative assessments of think tank influence (Ruble 2000; Posen 2002; Trimbath 2005; FAIR 2012). The main indicator in these efforts has been the number of citations in traditional mass media. This metric has the benefit of being low-cost and relatively easy to collect, which means these indices can be frequently updated and designed to be comparable over time. However, relying on news media citations alone limits the scope of these studies, particularly given the ever-expanding role that non-traditional media play in engaging the public and in the dissemination of information and ideas.

As an example of the second approach, *Prospect Magazine* has demonstrated the feasibility of a qualitative assessment that more closely resembles the selection process for an elite scholarship (*Prospect Magazine* 2012). An expert panel reviews a small number of nominees in depth and honors those deemed to have contributed significantly to the year's discourse. Its final judgments are transparently subjective, but backed by specific, well-researched award citations that may indeed help other tanks learn. Here, the advantage is the ability to reward specific achievements and through this recognition both publicize and incentivize good performance. The downside, of course, is that this exercise is much more time consuming than the first option, and ends up evaluating the performance of only a few tanks—those tanks that are not finalists receive no constructive feedback on their performance.

The third method has been to compile the perceptions of experts who are familiar with the work of think tanks. The paramount example of a perceptions-based assessment is the Global Go To Think Tank (GGTTT) rankings compiled by the University of Pennsylvania's Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (McGann 2013). Each year, the GGTTT rates more than 5,000 institutions around the world in categories such as "Top Think Tanks in

Sub-Saharan Africa," "Top International Development Think Tanks," and "Think Tanks with Outstanding Policy-Oriented Public Programs." The rankings are derived from a multistage nomination and review process involving hundreds of academics, journalists, donors, and think tank staff. Quantitative indexes based on perception surveys are well established in economics, political science, and public policy discourses. For example, the Corruption Perceptions Index vaulted Transparency International to fame and influence.

The GGTT is by far the largest, more frequent, best known attempt to rank think tanks. At the Center for Global Development, we take note of the GGTTT each year; it is hard not to care about our grades and tempting to celebrate (and publicize) favorable results. However, expert perceptions of the expert-perception-based GGTTT appear to be predominantly negative (Seiler and Wohlrabe 2010; Buldiowksi 2010, 2011; Mendizabal 2011, 2012). Criticisms relate to ambiguity about the definition of "think tank," opacity about who ranks, lack of information about well-ranked tanks that would allow others to learn, errors in the tallying process, and the doubtful capacity of experts to assess which among such institutions—so diverse in purpose and tactics—is "top."

As consumers of these rankings, we also find the GGTTT lacking. One of the stated goals of the exercise is to encourage "think tanks to aspire to the ideal criteria along which the nomination and selection process is conducted" (McGann 2012: 14).[1] Unfortunately, the nature of the GGTTT leaves us with little meaningful information about how we could improve our performance. Though the rankings may be intended to incentivize tanks to improve their strategies and practices as a means to a higher score, the fact remains that the rankings are tied to the opinion of experts—opinions whose rationales are never recorded—rather than concrete metrics over which think tanks themselves exercise control.

We thus worry that the GGTTT's imprecision and opacity may distort the behavior of other think tanks and their funders. Funders, especially those that are not specialists in the industry, may lean on the rankings when making grants. That in turn will encourage think tanks to change their behavior. Because the rankings are largely based on multiple waves of public nomination and peer ranking; the quickest way to rise in the Index could be to focus outreach on "get out the vote" type campaigns—or even to collaborate with other tanks to game the voting system.

This state of affairs inspired us to investigate whether a better ranking tool is possible. As think tank staff, we lack the objectivity and credibility that would be ideal for such an exercise. It would be almost futile for us to approximate the high-quality but costly review process of *Prospect Magazine*. We therefore temper our ambitions and opt for a low-cost quantitative approach. We expand on previous quantitative assessments by exploiting

[1] These ideal criteria include a number of policy proposals and conferences, publications in peer-reviewed journals, media citations, financial resources, etc. Though the GGTTT asks reviewers to keep these criteria in mind during the ranking process, they are not quantified or measured specifically.

modern tools for measuring citations in both traditional and new media, as well as in academe.

Structurally then we are led to a focus on the *public profile* of think tanks. This focus brings the benefit of specificity: we doubt that it is generally meaningful to ask which tanks are "best," for that begs the question, "best at what?" In the case of public profile, we answer "best at garnering public attention." We focus on indicators of such attention, including scholarly citations, media mentions, web traffic, and social network followers. These can be channels of impact in themselves—ideas need to be noticed to be adopted—and can indicate subtler influence behind the scenes, as when reporters quote researchers known to hold the most sway (Posen 2002). Still, the focus on profile may reflect a bias born of where we work. Public outreach is an important part of CGD's overall strategy for impact. This makes public profile more interesting to us than it might be if worked at, say, the Center for Studying Health Systems Change or the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), both of which put proportionally more effort into cultivating relationships with key government officials. To that extent, our focus is biased in favor of our employer. Similar comments apply to our choice, as a small think tank in a large, rich nation, to adjust for budget but not country size or wealth.

Our experience with building policy indexes such as the Commitment to Development Index (Roodman 2012) makes us keenly aware of the limitations of any such exercise. But the operative question for us is not whether we can achieve perfection. It is whether the status quo can be improved upon. Seemingly, it can be: it only took a modest effort for us to choose the metrics and gather the data presented here and thus to produce additional, meaningful knowledge.

In the sections that follow, we describe the indicators we considered and those we chose; present results for a set of American institutions and an multinational set of "international development" think tanks; then discuss implications.

Design

Ideally, think tank assessments will capture both quality of work and the degree to which institutions affect policymaking or other societal processes. However, an assessment like ours based purely on off-the-shelf metrics is ill-suited to this goal. Impact is difficult to attribute and measure. Quality is subjective, particularly when research is normative and shaped by ideology. Should a think tank get more points for shaping the U.S. government's position on Iran or for helping to reform the World Bank's lending facilities? Which produces better quality material: the left-leaning Center for American Progress or the

conservative Cato Institute? These are questions better left to in-depth reviews of think tanks' specific work.[2]

Accepting the need to search for the keys under the lamppost, one option is to count outputs: how many publications, blog posts, or outreach events does a think tank produce? A few useful output metrics, including number of publications, are readily available. Others, such as counts of conferences, public events, private meetings, and contact with policymakers—spaces where think tank influence is often concentrated—would be laborious or impossible to gather. And though the quantity of an organization's output may indicate something about the tank's relative capacity, it says little about its impact.

We thus chose to focus on something closer to influence than outputs: how much others publicly refer to the work of a think tank. Focusing on the *profile* of tanks is useful not only because references to and citations of an organization indicate influence to some degree, but because they are also channels of influence (Posen 2002). We also look at the size of each tank, in terms of operational expenses, compared with the size of its profile. In choosing indicators, we consider meaningfulness, practicality, and replicability. Because of a strong emphasis on practicality (ease of collection), initial data collection took a few weeks, and the figures can be updated in less time.[3] With a greater investment of time and money, other metrics could be added, including data from surveys, interviews, and fee-based analytic services. We encourage others to pick up where we have left off.

At the micro level, think tank rankings could focus either on the organizations themselves or on the individual work of the scholars they employ (or perhaps a combination of both).[4] There are advantages to looking at the performance of individual scholars, and this approach might capture more influence. For example, author searches in Google Scholar may catch more than publisher searches. However, tracking and aggregating data on scholars presents an additional layer of complication. How to incorporate different types of scholars, such as visiting versus permanent fellows? How to count citations for co-authored papers? How to address multiple affiliations and transfers from one institution to another? For this analysis, we have chosen simplicity and collected data at the institutional level only.

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2 The National Education Policy Center (NEPC) has a project to evaluate think tank publications for accuracy that, though currently limited in scope, could become valuable for assessing quality (nepc.colorado.edu/think-tank-review-project). The NEPC is also tempting to proxy quality by weighting indicators (e.g., counting peer-reviewed articles more than working papers because they are "higher quality"). However, this seems inappropriate for policy-oriented research. Think tank outputs are targeted to policymakers who need accessible, concise information quickly, and for whom academic journals may be gated or otherwise inconvenient.

3 In comparison, the GGTTT reportedly takes eight months to compile with the help of 30 interns. Over 1,500 rankers participate in the process each year.

4 This issue is well-discussed by Posen (2002), who opted to collect data by scholar and then aggregate it to calculate institutional scores.

Table 1 lists the indicators we include. For this exercise, we favor areas where data is readily available: utilization by the general public online, in news media, and in scholarly work.

Table 1. Selected Indicators

	INFLUENCE					*EFFICIENCY*
	Social Media Fans	*Website traffic*	*Incoming links*	*Media Citations*	*Scholarly Citations*	*Organization Size*
Metric	Facebook likes + Twitter followers	Relative global web traffic rank	Number of sites that link to the website	Mentions in global news sources, all languages	Google Scholar citations	Annual operating expenses
Timeline	Snapshot (9 Jan 2013)	3-month avg. (9 Jan 2013)	Weekly count (9 Jan 2013)	1–2 year total (2012)	Total for 2010 publications (taken 11 Jan 2013)	Most recent fiscal year (often 2011)
Source	facebook.com twitter.com	alexa.com	alexa.com	lexisnexis.com	Harzing's Publish or Perish	charitynavigator.org or annual reports
Access	Free	Free	Free	Subscription required	Free	Free

Online

The internet has made think tanks' work available to a wide audience of policymakers, researchers, and students. The public now has instant and often free access to myriad online publications and analyses via organizations' websites, and new research is often disseminated rapidly through blogs and social media. Hallway conversations have gone online can now be tracked. The availability of new alternative metrics—or "altmetrics"—to assess online footprint and interactions is changing how people look at and measure research impact.[5]

Thanks in part to these and other analytics, we can measure one aspect of public profile by looking at the degree to which users access a think tank's web content. We consider indicators under three headings:

- **Social media fans:** number of "likes" on Facebook and number of followers on Twitter[6]

[5] Altmetrics loosely refers to a growing set of web- and social media-based metrics for measuring the impact of scholarly work; used as an alternative to traditional citation counts, the Journal Impact Factor (JIF), etc. For more, see http://altmetrics.org/manifesto/.

[6] We also collected data on the number of YouTube subscribers and views but chose not to include this in the final analysis. However, it is included in the accompanying spreadsheet.

- **Website traffic:** relative global web traffic rank
- **Incoming links**: number of sites that link to the organization's website

The social media data are simple counts from the organizations' official Facebook and Twitter accounts, taken on January 9, 2013. We used accounts linked to the corporate website (or in the absence of such links, conducted a Google search to find existing accounts).[7]

Data on web traffic rank and incoming links come from Alexa.com and are for the tanks' principal domain (for example, cgdev.org), also captured on January 9. Alexa.com's traffic ranks are based on three-month averages of the website's reach (percent of internet users that visit the site) and the number of pages viewed by site visitors. Its counts of incoming links are updated weekly.[8]

Our treatment of the web traffic ranks requires further explanation. Being ranks, these data differ in a mathematical sense from the other indicators. Lower is better: Google.com, for example, currently ranks number 1. This creates a challenge when it comes to combining ranks with other indicators into a single index. In addition, ranking destroys information. We do not know the estimated traffic flows that lead to a rank of 5,000 or 50,000, but it seems likely that the difference between rank 5,001 and 5,002 is much smaller than that between 1 and 2. Our response is to assume that web traffic obeys Zipf's Law, which is a kind of power law distribution. Statistics that obey Zipf's Law are inversely proportional to ranks based on them. For example, the most common word in written English, "the," is about twice as common as the second-most-common one, "and." Thus a doubling in rank, from 1 to 2, corresponds to a halving of frequency.[9] This justifies taking the inverse of ranks to make them comparable to readings on other indicators. The result is an indicator of *relative* web traffic levels. In fact, for presentability, instead of dividing web traffic rank into 1, we divide into 1 billion.

All the data described above are relatively simple to collect. However, they have limitations. The social media indicator is based on snapshots of fans taken on a single day. As such, it is subject to the volatility of current events, around which think tanks base much of their work—for example, it is likely that US domestic policy tanks got a boost in advance of the 2012 presidential election. There are services, such as Twitter Counter, Facebook Insights, Social Mention, and Klout that provide more detailed analytics and trends; however detailed data are available only to account and content owners.[10] For example, CGD could use Klout

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[7] Where more than one account exists (for example, Brookings, Cato, and CGD all have multiple official Twitter handles), the main account was used.

[8] For details on the Alexa.com web traffic calculations, see http://www.alexa.com/help/traffic-learn-more. More information on incoming links can be found at alexa.com/faqs/?p=91.

[9] "Zipf's law," Wikipedia, viewed January 25, 2013.

[10] Social Mention (socialmention.com) does provide free information on an organization's social media presence. However, it likely captures a high level of self-promotion as it would be difficult to separate out mentions from staff or affiliates.

to measure its social media popularity, but we cannot access the same data on the Center for a New American Security. Similarly, it is difficult to find detailed and accurate website analytics that are free and available to third parties. Google Analytics, for example, is available only to domain owners: as with Klout, we have access to detailed information on the CGD website, but are limited in assessing the visitor trends of other think tanks. Though web traffic ranks from Alexa.com are free, they are estimates based on Alexa Toolbar users and other data sources, and are not calculated from actual counts of traffic. The estimates decrease in accuracy with rank, and are unavailable for some sites with low traffic.

We considered but did not use a handful of other metrics to assess online influence, including Google PageRank and Google Trends. PageRank is Google's patented algorithm for measuring the importance of a site based on incoming links to its pages. In principle it is an alternative to the Alexa.com web traffic ranks and tallies of income links. However, the actual rank numbers are not public. Third party websites such as prchecker.info give only low-resolution versions of the real rank; most tanks' sites scored between 6 and 8 on a scale of 10.[11]

Google's Trends feature is useful for measuring the popularity of various search terms (like "American Enterprise Institute") over time. Unfortunately, it only displays trends for widely searched terms, excluding many of the international think tanks we hoped to rank. Still, it may be a useful option for future analyses. Other social networks—including YouTube, Delicious, Meetup, etc.—could also be included in the future.

News media

Media citations have long been used as an indicator of think tank influence (Ruble 2000; Posen 2002; Trimbath 2005; and Fair 2012). Posen's analysis, for example, looked at citations in major new publications (Washington Post, New York Times, Financial Times, the Economist, etc.) for 16 US-based think tanks and their top scholars over a five-year period. The Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting think tank survey also looks at major newspapers, along with radio and TV transcript databases.

We experimented with two search engines for counting media citations: Nexis and Google News**.** Each has advantages. Nexis offers more customization of search options, and results have proved stable from week to week. However it also requires a paid subscription, making replication by those without institutional access difficult. Conversely, Google News is free, and has the advantage of searching in a greater number of languages than Nexis.[12] However, we found that its results are not stable from month to month.

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[11] For more information, see en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PageRank.

12 Languages available in Nexis include Arabic, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Malay, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, and Turkish.

Using Nexis, we searched for mentions of each tank in articles from all news sources in all available languages for 2012.[13] We tested common variations of tanks' names in order to balance sensitivity and specificity. For example, test queries for "RAND" returned many articles un-related to the think tank, so we searched only for "RAND Corporation" or "RAND Corp." We also used local language versions of the non-US organizations' names, such as "Konrad Adenauer Stiftung" and "Consortium pour la Recherche Economique en Afrique." However, we did not go so far as to comb all search results in order to verify attribution, so the counts should be treated as approximations. The search terms used for each institution are documented in the spreadsheet that accompanies this paper.

Scholarly work

Scholarly citations indicate influence among academics and other researchers, and are commonly used to measure the performance of individual academics and university departments. To our knowledge, however, they have not been used to measure think tank performance, likely in part because think tank-based researchers are less focused on publication in peer-reviewed journals. Still, we believe that utilization by scholars is a meaningful indicator of think tank credibility and influence.

There are a number of citation indices to choose from. The best-known is the ISI (Institute for Scientific Information), which is now run by Thompson Reuters and has been rebranded as the "Web of Knowledge." Another is Elsevier's Scopus service. Unfortunately, these databases are only available to those with subscription access. Google Scholar is an obvious, free alternative, and can be easily queried using Professor Anne-Wil Harzing's Publish or Perish software, available for free at www.harzing.com. This desktop application pulls data from Google Scholar, yet the ability to save and export queries improves its usability over direct Google searches.[14]

For our citations indicator, we ran searches in Publish or Perish using the same search terms used in Nexis, for all publications for which the think tank is listed as the publisher. This excludes articles or books authored by an affiliated fellow but published through another organization.[15] Publish or Perish allows the user to specify a timeframe for the date of publication, but not the date of citation. Choosing the publication date range forces a trade-off: too early and the results will not be relevant for current performance; too late and the papers will hardly have had time to be cited in peer-reviewed journals. Seeking a balance, we

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[13] We excluded newswires and non-business news, and used Nexis' option to avoid double-counting duplicate articles.

[14] A drawback to using Publish or Perish is that the software does not automatically exclude self-citations.

[15] One theoretical way to reduce these exclusions would be to search for publications by author for scholars at think tanks. Unfortunately this is one of the limitations of Google Scholar, which unlike ISI, does not include a field for affiliation. For a longer discussion of the comparative advantages of Google Scholar over ISI and the limitations of Publish or Perish, see Harzing (2007).

limited publication dates to 2010, meaning an average date of about June 30, 2010, and an average period of 2.5 years for citation.[16]

Results

We compute aggregate indicators for two sets of institutions. Both sets are defined from listings in the 2011 GGTTT, the latest available at the time of our initial work. The GGTTT groupings have been criticized on a number of fronts (Seiler and Wohlrabe 2010; Buldiowksi 2010, 2011; Mendizabal 2011, 2012). However, beginning with these lists helps to avoid the bias we might introduce by picking and choosing tanks ourselves.

Aggregate Profile

The first set of rankings consists of American think tanks that were listed as a "Top Think Tank in the World" or in any of the GGTTT's "special achievement" categories.[17] This is our preferred grouping because of its relative homogeneity. Most of the institutions are based in Washington, DC, are non-profit, aim at an American audience, and put similar emphasis on building public profile. Still, from this list, we delete two institutions that are too distinct for comparisons to be meaningful: the campaign group Human Rights Watch, and the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), essentially a publishing club. The resulting list of 18 institutions appears in Table 2, along with results for the indicators.

Next, in order to compare and rank the institutions, we transform the indicator results onto a standardized scale. In particular, we rescale the results on each indicator so that they average 5.0 for the listed institutions. We then take the simple average of the five indicators to obtain overall scores. The choice of 5 is purely aesthetic. Any other non-zero value would produce the same relative results. Using 5 puts most scores on an intuitive 0–10 scale, with the average at the middle of that range. (See Table 3.)

We repeat this exercise for 30 international development think tanks ranked by the 2011 GGTTT. Of these, seven are excluded due to insufficient or inaccurate data. For example, a number of organizations, such as United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UN-WIDER) and the Harvard Center for International Development (CID) share internet domain names with much trafficked websites (un.org and

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[16] Future iterations of these ratings could add summary metrics such as the h-index score which is also captured by Publish or Perish. Google Scholar profiles could be useful once more scholars are added; even large think tanks like Brookings only have a handful of fellows with profiles. It is also worth considering how publication and citation social media networks like Mendeley, Zotero and citeUlike might provide deeper information about how publications are used. ImpactStory (www.impactstory.org) could also be highly useful. It offers the ability to track profile across man of these scholarly networks and other platforms, though it currently requires entering each organization's outputs individually.

[17] Most Innovative Policy Ideas/Proposals, Outstanding Policy-Oriented Public Policy Research Programs, Best Use of the Internet or Social Media to Engage the Public, Best Use of Media (Print or Electronic) to Communicate Programs and Research, Best External Relations/Public Engagement Programs, and Greatest Impact on Public Policy (Global).

harvard.edu), so their web statistics are distorted. Most others that were excluded lacked budget data. The 23 that remain are a more diverse—and less comparable—lot than the American tanks. (See Table 4 and Table 5.)

Table 2. Aggregate profile for US think tanks

Name	Expenses ($ million/ year)	Age (years)	Social media fans	Web traffic	Incoming links	Media mentions	Scholarly citations
American Enterprise Institute	29.0	69	110,786	6,422	6,873	3,955	191
Brookings Institution	88.9	96	45,918	19,430	12,626	11,626	1,960
Carnegie Endowment for Int'l Peace	27.4	102	49,702	7,736	3,885	1,804	339
Cato Institute	23.6	35	289,868	22,345	12,675	4,241	93
Center for a New American Security	5.2	5	12,918	3,818	1,789	545	240
Center for American Progress	33.7	9	58,333	10,641	9,513	3,089	340
Center for Global Development	9.8	11	32,864	3,991	2,737	398	682
Center for Strategic and Int'l Studies	32.9	50	155,224	7,364	5,459	3,058	244
Council on Foreign Relations	52.8	91	124,060	24,284	11,741	4,395	442
German Marshall Fund	37.5	40	27,282	2,773	1,522	452	87
Heritage Foundation	80.4	39	765,655	63,918	17,279	6,868	122
International Food Policy Research Inst.	79.5	37	24,761	3,115	2,485	601	713
New America Foundation	15.8	13	16,780	4,873	5,214	1,542	108
Peterson Inst. for International Economics	11.4	31	6,817	5,298	2,986	1,300	501
Pew Research Center	25.4	8	116,080	14,779	8,670	7,214	434
RAND Corporation	266.9	64	29,227	14,541	9,380	1,778	577
Urban Institute	73.3	44	17,083	8,579	5,202	1,475	954
Woodrow Wilson Center	20.2	44	6,831	3,880	4,172	547	146
Minimum	5.2	5	6,817	2,773	1,522	398.0	87.0
Median	31.0	40	39,391	7,550	5,337	1,791	340
Mean	50.8	44	105,011	12,655	6,900	3,049.3	454.1
Maximum	266.9	102	765,655	63,918	17,279	11,626.0	1,960.0

Table 3. Aggregate scores for US think tanks

Name	Social media fans	Web traffic	Incoming links	Media mentions	Scholarly citations	Overall	Rank
American Enterprise Institute	5.3	2.5	5.0	6.5	2.1	4.3	9
Brookings Institution	2.2	7.7	9.1	19.1	21.6	11.9	2
Carnegie Endowment for Int'l Peace	2.4	3.1	2.8	3.0	3.7	3.0	11
Cato Institute	13.8	8.8	9.2	7.0	1.0	8.0	3
Center for a New American Security	0.6	1.5	1.3	0.9	2.6	1.4	17
Center for American Progress	2.8	4.2	6.9	5.1	3.7	4.5	7
Center for Global Development	1.6	1.6	2.0	0.7	7.5	2.7	12
Center for Strategic and Int'l Studies	7.4	2.9	4.0	5.0	2.7	4.4	8
Council on Foreign Relations	5.9	9.6	8.5	7.2	4.9	7.2	4
German Marshall Fund	1.3	1.1	1.1	0.7	1.0	1.0	18
Heritage Foundation	36.5	25.3	12.5	11.3	1.3	17.4	1
International Food Policy Research Inst.	1.2	1.2	1.8	1.0	7.9	2.6	13
New America Foundation	0.8	1.9	3.8	2.5	1.2	2.0	15
Peterson Inst. for International Economics	0.3	2.1	2.2	2.1	5.5	2.4	14
Pew Research Center	5.5	5.8	6.3	11.8	4.8	6.9	5
RAND Corporation	1.4	5.7	6.8	2.9	6.4	4.6	6
Urban Institute	0.8	3.4	3.8	2.4	10.5	4.2	10
Woodrow Wilson Center	0.3	1.5	3.0	0.9	1.6	1.5	16
Minimum	0.3	1.1	1.1	0.7	1.0	1.0	1
Median	1.9	3.0	3.9	2.9	3.7	4.2	10
Mean	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	10
Maximum	36.5	25.3	12.5	19.1	21.6	17.4	18
Weight	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%		

Table 4. Aggregate profile for international development think tanks

Name	Expenses ($ million/ year)	Age (years)	Social media fans	Web traffic	Incoming links	Media mentions	Scholarly citations
African Economic Research Consortium	15.6	24	0	871	192	25	3
Bangladesh Inst. of Development Studies	0.7	41	406	103	73	104	0
Brookings Institution	88.9	96	45,918	19,430	12,626	11,626	1,960
Cato Institute	23.6	35	289,868	22,345	12,675	4,241	93
Ctr. for Development & the Environment	4.7	22	936		0	1	0
Center for Global Development	9.8	11	32,864	3,991	2,737	398	682
Ctr. for Strategic and International Studies	32.9	50	155,224	7,364	5,459	3,058	244
Ctr. for Int'l Governance Innovation	37.3	11	5,293	936	499	216	110
Council for Dev. of Social Science Research in A	5.5	39	3,443	1,373	577	21	103
Danish Institute for International Studies	14.1	9	1,638	596	548	29	15
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung	191.1	87	16,843	6,372	4,008	1,293	277
Institute of Development Studies	29.2	46	18,859	2,043	1,925	102	38
Int'l Development Research Centre	212.9	42	11,622	3,920	3,955	128	69
Int'l Food Policy Research Institute	79.5	37	24,761	3,115	2,485	601	713
Int'l Inst. for Environment & Development	31.5	41	10,085	1,963	1,723	184	249
Int'l Inst. for Sustainable Development	15.3	22	5,580	6,527	3,895	143	110
Konrad Adenauer Foundation	167.3	57	12,426	7,030	3,570	1,533	45
Korea Development Institute	59.4	41	120	1,139	196	189	4
North-South Institute (L'Institut Nord-Sud)	3.3	36	1,890	120	214	14	1
Norwegian Inst. of International Affairs	11.7	53	6,298	1,801	470	116	233
Overseas Development Institute	27.9	52	28,618	4,109	1,985	437	298
South African Inst. of International Affairs	3.7	78	1,942	797	283	196	511
Woodrow Wilson Int'l Center for Scholars	20.2	44	6,831	3,880	4,172	547	146
Minimum	0.7	9	0	0	0	1	0
Median	23.6	41	6,831	2,043	1,925	189	110
Mean	47.2	42	29,629	4,340	2,794	1,096	257
Maximum	212.9	96	289,868	22,345	12,675	11,626	1,960

Table 5. Aggregate scores for international development think tanks

Name	Social media fans	Web traffic	Incoming links	Media mentions	Scholarly citations	Overall	Rank
African Economic Research Consortium	0.0	1.0	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.3	20
Bangladesh Inst. of Development Studies	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.0	0.2	21
Brookings Institution	7.7	22.4	22.6	53.1	38.2	28.8	1
Cato Institute	48.9	25.7	22.7	19.4	1.8	23.7	2
Ctr. for Development & the Environment	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	23
Center for Global Development	5.5	4.6	4.9	1.8	13.3	6.0	4
Ctr. for Strategic and International Studies	26.2	8.5	9.8	14.0	4.8	12.6	3
Ctr. for Int'l Governance Innovation	0.9	1.1	0.9	1.0	2.1	1.2	16
Council for Dev. of Social Science Research in	0.6	1.6	1.0	0.1	2.0	1.1	17
Danish Institute for International Studies	0.3	0.7	1.0	0.1	0.3	0.5	18
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung	2.8	7.3	7.2	5.9	5.4	5.7	6
Institute of Development Studies	3.2	2.4	3.4	0.5	0.7	2.0	14
Int'l Development Research Centre	2.0	4.5	7.1	0.6	1.3	3.1	11
Int'l Food Policy Research Institute	4.2	3.6	4.4	2.7	13.9	5.8	5
Int'l Inst. for Environment & Development	1.7	2.3	3.1	0.8	4.9	2.5	12
Int'l Inst. for Sustainable Development	0.9	7.5	7.0	0.7	2.1	3.6	10
Konrad Adenauer Foundation	2.1	8.1	6.4	7.0	0.9	4.9	7
Korea Development Institute	0.0	1.3	0.4	0.9	0.1	0.5	18
North-South Institute (L'Institut Nord-Sud)	0.3	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.2	21
Norwegian Inst. of International Affairs	1.1	2.1	0.8	0.5	4.5	1.8	15
Overseas Development Institute	4.8	4.7	3.6	2.0	5.8	4.2	8
South African Inst. of International Affairs	0.3	0.9	0.5	0.9	10.0	2.5	12
Woodrow Wilson Int'l Center for Scholars	1.2	4.5	7.5	2.5	2.8	3.7	9
Minimum	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
Median	1.2	2.4	3.4	0.9	2.1	2.5	12.0
Mean	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	11.9
Maximum	48.9	25.7	22.7	53.1	38.2	28.8	23.0

Adjusting for budget

The above results capture aspects of think tank profile in absolute terms. In general, we expect large institutions to score higher on them. Being in a populous or wealthy nation should also increase citations and mentions, links and followers. For purposes of assessing performance and productivity, it would be useful to adjust for such factors.

Partly because of the small sample of tanks for which we have collected data, we do not attempt to control for most of these factors. But we do take one straightforward step in this direction: dividing the profile metrics by organizations' budgets in order to measure "profile productivity."

Financial figures are collected from charitynavigator.org or from annual reports on organizations' websites. They reflect operational expenses (such as research, program, administration, fundraising, etc.). Expenses for non-US tanks are converted into US dollars using the average exchange rate of 2011 (the data year for most tanks). Staff size would have been an interesting alternative denominator. However, this information would likely have to be collected through a survey, as many tanks do not list their full staff on their websites. Staff size can also be hard to define as many tanks have part-time affiliates. The next four tables are like the previous four, except that they divide all profile indicators by annual budget.

Table 6. Budget-adjusted profile for US think tanks

Name	Expenses ($ million/ year)	Age (years)	Per $ million of expenses: Social media Fans	Web traffic	Incoming links	Media mentions	Scholarly citations
American Enterprise Institute	29.0	69	3,816	221	237	136.2	6.6
Brookings Institution	88.9	96	516	219	142	130.7	22.0
Carnegie Endowment for Int'l Peace	27.4	102	1,812	282	142	65.8	12.4
Cato Institute	23.6	35	12,258	945	536	179.3	3.9
Center for a New American Security	5.2	5	2,466	729	342	104.1	45.8
Center for American Progress	33.7	9	1,730	316	282	91.6	10.1
Center for Global Development	9.8	11	3,357	408	280	40.7	69.7
Center for Strategic and Int'l Studies	32.9	50	4,712	224	166	92.8	7.4
Council on Foreign Relations	52.8	91	2,352	460	223	83.3	8.4
German Marshall Fund	37.5	40	727	74	41	12.0	2.3
Heritage Foundation	80.4	39	9,526	795	215	85.4	1.5
International Food Policy Research Inst.	79.5	37	312	39	31	7.6	9.0
New America Foundation	15.8	13	1,060	308	329	97.4	6.8
Peterson Inst. for International Economics	11.4	31	600	467	263	114.5	44.1
Pew Research Center	25.4	8	4,569	582	341	284.0	17.1
RAND Corporation	266.9	64	110	54	35	6.7	2.2
Urban Institute	73.3	44	233	117	71	20.1	13.0
Woodrow Wilson Center	20.2	44	338	192	206	27.1	7.2
Minimum	5.2	5	110	39	31	6.7	1.5
Median	31.0	40	1,771	295	219	89	9
Mean	50.8	44	2,805	357	216	87.7	16.1
Maximum	266.9	102	12,258	945	536	284.0	69.7

Table 7. Budget-adjusted scores for US think tanks

Rank	Name	Social media fans	Web traffic	Incoming links	Media mentions	Scholarly citations	Overall
1	Cato Institute	21.8	13.2	12.4	10.2	1.2	11.8
2	Pew Research Center	8.1	8.1	7.9	16.2	5.3	9.1
3	Center for a New American Security	4.4	10.2	7.9	5.9	14.2	8.5
4	Center for Global Development	6.0	5.7	6.5	2.3	21.7	8.4
5	Heritage Foundation	17.0	11.1	5.0	4.9	0.5	7.7
6	Peterson Inst. for International Econom	1.1	6.5	6.1	6.5	13.7	6.8
7	American Enterprise Institute	6.8	3.1	5.5	7.8	2.0	5.0
8	Council on Foreign Relations	4.2	6.4	5.2	4.7	2.6	4.6
8	Center for Strategic and Int'l Studies	8.4	3.1	3.8	5.3	2.3	4.6
10	Center for American Progress	3.1	4.4	6.5	5.2	3.1	4.5
11	Brookings Institution	0.9	3.1	3.3	7.5	6.9	4.3
11	New America Foundation	1.9	4.3	7.6	5.5	2.1	4.3
13	Carnegie Endowment for Int'l Peace	3.2	3.9	3.3	3.7	3.8	3.6
14	Woodrow Wilson Center	0.6	2.7	4.8	1.5	2.2	2.4
15	Urban Institute	0.4	1.6	1.6	1.1	4.0	1.8
16	International Food Policy Research Inst	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.4	2.8	1.0
17	German Marshall Fund	1.3	1.0	0.9	0.7	0.7	0.9
18	RAND Corporation	0.2	0.8	0.8	0.4	0.7	0.6
	Minimum	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.6
	Median	3.2	4.1	5.1	5.0	2.7	4.5
	Mean	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Maximum	21.8	13.2	12.4	16.2	21.7	11.8

Table 8. Budget-adjusted profile for international development think tanks

			Per $ million of expenses				
Name	Expenses ($ million/ year)	Age (years)	Social media Fans	Web traffic	Incoming links	Media mentions	Scholarly citations
African Economic Research Consortium	15.6	24	0	56	12	1.6	0.2
Bangladesh Inst. of Development Studies	0.7	41	560	143	101	143.5	0.0
Brookings Institution	88.9	96	516	219	142	130.7	22.0
Cato Institute	23.6	35	12,258	945	536	179.3	3.9
Ctr. for Development & the Environment	4.7	22	201	*0*	0	0.2	0.0
Center for Global Development	9.8	11	3,357	408	280	40.7	69.7
Ctr. for Strategic and International Studies	32.9	50	4,712	224	166	92.8	7.4
Ctr. for Int'l Governance Innovation	37.3	11	142	25	13	5.8	2.9
Council for Dev. of Social Science Research in /	5.5	39	622	248	104	3.8	18.6
Danish Institute for International Studies	14.1	9	116	42	39	2.1	1.1
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung	191.1	87	88	33	21	6.8	1.4
Institute of Development Studies	29.2	46	647	70	66	3.5	1.3
Int'l Development Research Centre	212.9	42	55	18	19	0.6	0.3
Int'l Food Policy Research Institute	79.5	37	312	39	31	7.6	9.0
Int'l Inst. for Environment & Development	31.5	41	320	62	55	5.8	7.9
Int'l Inst. for Sustainable Development	15.3	22	364	426	254	9.3	7.2
Konrad Adenauer Foundation	167.3	57	74	42	21	9.2	0.3
Korea Development Institute	59.4	41	2	19	3	3.2	0.1
North-South Institute (L'Institut Nord-Sud)	3.3	36	580	37	66	4.3	0.3
Norwegian Inst. of International Affairs	11.7	53	538	154	40	9.9	19.9
Overseas Development Institute	27.9	52	1,025	147	71	15.7	10.7
South African Inst. of International Affairs	3.7	78	524	215	76	52.9	137.9
Woodrow Wilson Int'l Center for Scholars	20.2	44	338	192	206	27.1	7.2
Minimum	0.7	9	0	0	0	0	0
Median	23.6	41	364	70	66	8	4
Mean	47.2	42	1,189	164	101	33	14
Maximum	212.9	96	12,258	945	536	179	138

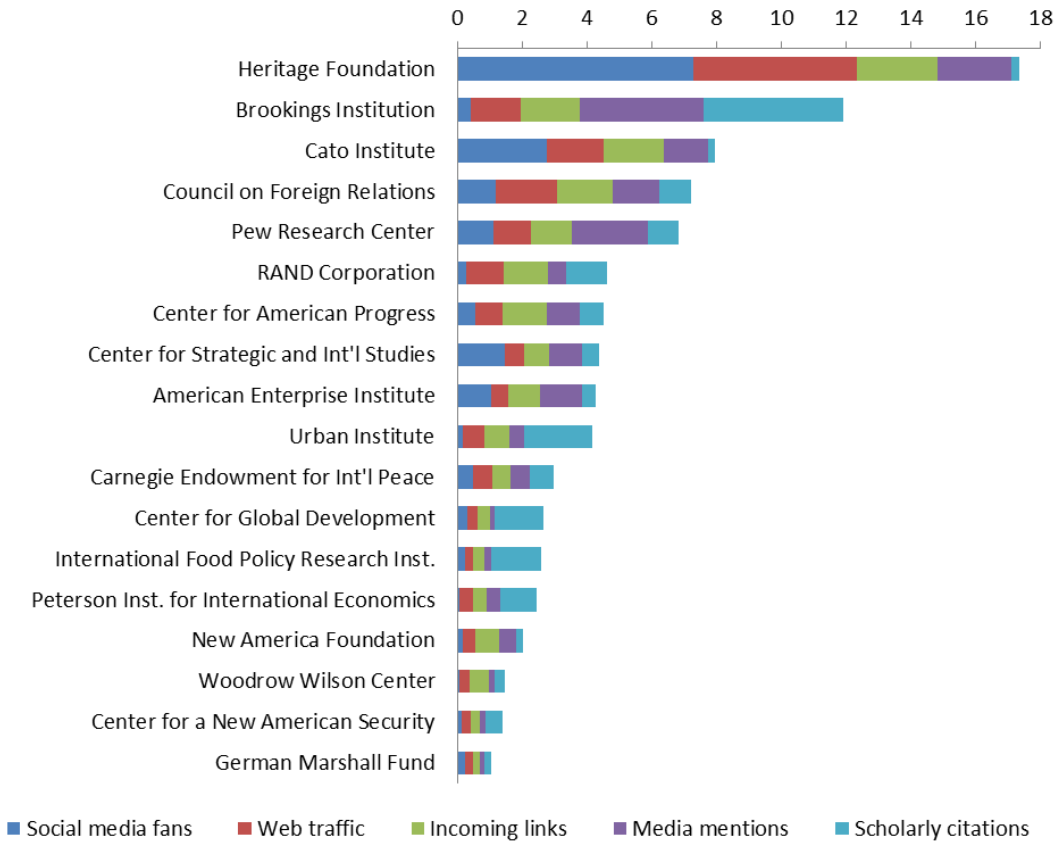
Table 9. Budget-adjusted scores for international development think tanks

Rank	Name	Social media fans	Web traffic	Incoming links	Media mentions	Scholarly citations	Overall
1	Cato Institute	51.5	28.9	26.5	27.3	1.4	27.1
2	Center for Global Development	14.1	12.5	13.8	6.2	24.3	14.2
3	South African Inst. of International Affairs	2.2	6.6	3.8	8.0	48.2	13.8
4	Ctr. for Strategic and International Studies	19.8	6.8	8.2	14.1	2.6	10.3
5	Brookings Institution	2.2	6.7	7.0	19.9	7.7	8.7
6	Bangladesh Inst. of Development Studies	2.4	4.4	5.0	21.8	0.0	6.7
7	Int'l Inst. for Sustainable Development	1.5	13.0	12.6	1.4	2.5	6.2
8	Woodrow Wilson Int'l Center for Scholars	1.4	5.9	10.2	4.1	2.5	4.8
9	Council for Dev. of Social Science Research in Afric	2.6	7.6	5.2	0.6	6.5	4.5
10	Overseas Development Institute	4.3	4.5	3.5	2.4	3.7	3.7
11	Norwegian Inst. of International Affairs	2.3	4.7	2.0	1.5	6.9	3.5
12	Int'l Inst. for Environment & Development	1.3	1.9	2.7	0.9	2.8	1.9
13	Institute of Development Studies	2.7	2.1	3.3	0.5	0.5	1.8
14	Int'l Food Policy Research Institute	1.3	1.2	1.5	1.1	3.1	1.7
15	North-South Institute (L'Institut Nord-Sud)	2.4	1.1	3.3	0.7	0.1	1.5
16	Danish Institute for International Studies	0.5	1.3	1.9	0.3	0.4	0.9
17	Konrad Adenauer Foundation	0.3	1.3	1.1	1.4	0.1	0.8
17	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung	0.4	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.5	0.8
17	Ctr. for Int'l Governance Innovation	0.6	0.8	0.7	0.9	1.0	0.8
20	African Economic Research Consortium	0.0	1.7	0.6	0.2	0.1	0.5
21	Int'l Development Research Centre	0.2	0.6	0.9	0.1	0.1	0.4
22	Korea Development Institute	0.0	0.6	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.3
23	Ctr. for Development & the Environment	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2
	Minimum	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2
	Median	1.5	2.1	3.3	1.1	1.4	1.9
	Mean	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Maximum	51.5	28.9	26.5	27.3	48.2	27.1

Observations

The aggregate scores showcase a high level of variability in think tank profile, driven in part by a few significant outliers. In the US-based think tanks, for example (see Figure 1, below), the Heritage Foundation leads with a score of 17.4, which is more than three times the average of 5.0. Brookings is second with a score of 12, Cato ranks third with a score of 8, and the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) and Pew Research Center follow with scores close to 7. The rest of the tanks score below the average of 5.

Figure 1. Aggregate scores for US think tanks



Scores for incoming links, media mentions and scholarly citations are generally more evenly distributed than social media and web traffic. Brookings leads in the number of media mentions, followed by the Pew Center (logical given its frequent public opinion polling), Heritage, CFR and Cato. Brookings is also far ahead of the pack in scholarly citations; though it is followed by a group of tanks that mostly ranked in the bottom half of the other indicators: the Urban Institute, IFPRI, CGD and Peterson.

When scores are adjusted for size, the rankings shift slightly and the outliers are somewhat tamed (see Figure 2, below). Cato comes first with a score of 12.6, followed by Pew. The Peterson Institute makes a huge jump to third place from 14th, and the Center for a New

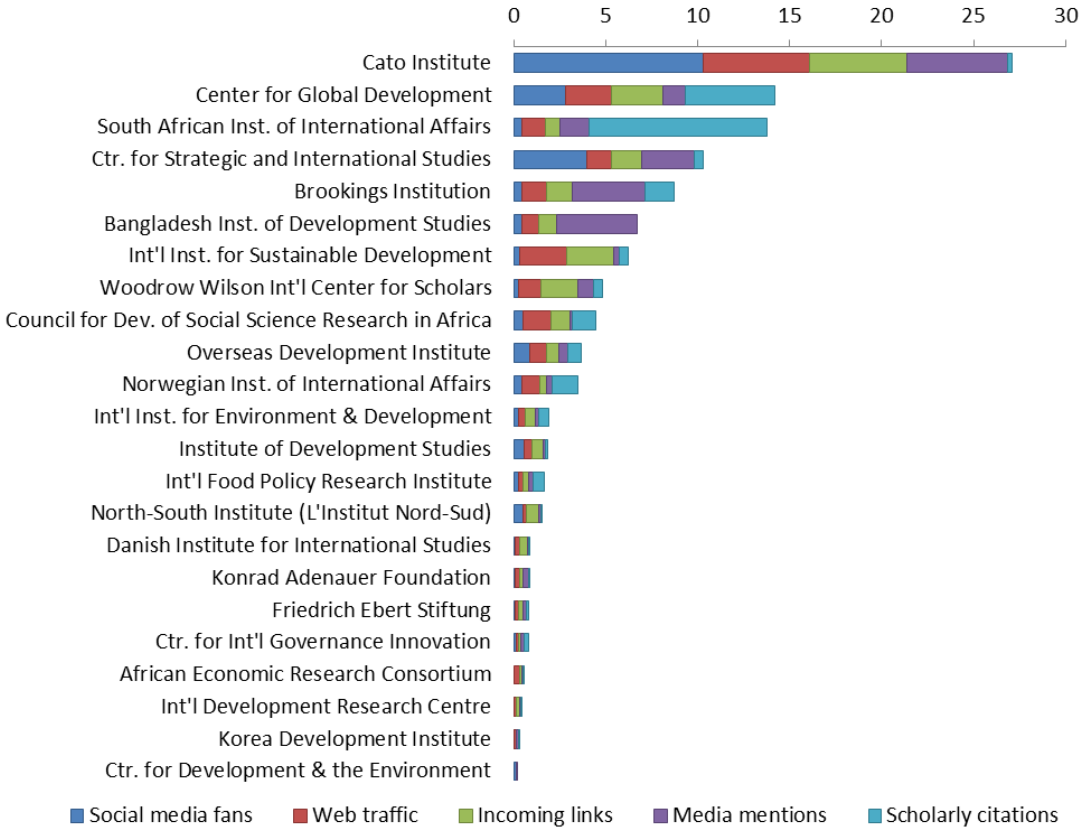
American Security similarly jumps from 17th to fifth. Heritage, which had a significant lead in the aggregate scores, now comes fourth. The RAND Corporation drops from the middle of the pack (scoring 4.4) to last (scoring 0.5).

Figure 2. Expense-adjusted scores for US think tanks

The variation in think tank profile is even more pronounced among the international development think tanks (see Figure 3, below). Even when adjusting for size, overall scores range from 0.2 (the Korea Development Institute) to 29.0 (the Cato Institute). A majority of tanks score below the average of 5.0.

In the US, the Heritage Foundation and Cato Institute dominate social media and web traffic. In aggregate, Heritage has over 765,000 social media fans, more than twice that of Cato, the next highest with nearly 290,000. Cato, however, leads in social media (and overall) once the figures are adjusted for size. One possible explanation for these extreme outliers could be that many people who follow these and other more "ideologically driven" tanks on social networks do so in part as a values statement. Such behavior is presumably less common with think tanks like the International Food Policy Research Center (IFPRI) or the Peterson Institute. Individual budget-adjusted indicators for US tanks are graphed in Figures 4–8.

Figure 3. Expense-adjusted scores for international development think tanks



Adjusting for each tank's budget also reveals highly varied operating expenses. Many of the tanks with substantial public profiles (like Brookings, CFR, etc.) have substantial budgets, and as a consequence fall in the adjusted rankings compared to the aggregate scores. In some cases, this may indicate relative inefficiency compared with smaller tank that have greater public profile per dollar spent. However, it may also reflect the fact that many of these organizations engage in public profile-related activities that are not captured by these indicators (such as throwing public events or authoring white papers). Others have large non-research components to their work, including CFR, which is also a membership organization. The same is true for a number of the non-US tanks in the international development group. The Institute of Development Studies also administers post-graduate degree programs; FES and KAS implement or sponsor many development projects and scholarships; and IDRC is best known for its support of researchers in developing-country.

Within the international development group, it is also unsurprising that the rankings are dominated by tanks in the US and Europe. These are generally older and larger, have larger Internet-connected domestic populations to connect with, and may focus more attention on the particular indicators of profile that we have chosen to measure. There are exceptions, however, particularly when we look at the budget-adjusted scores. For example, the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), which scores second to last in the

aggregate rankings (0.2), scores fifth in the adjusted scores, with its relatively high number of media mentions per dollar spent.

Figure 4. Social media fans/$ million of annual spending, US think tanks

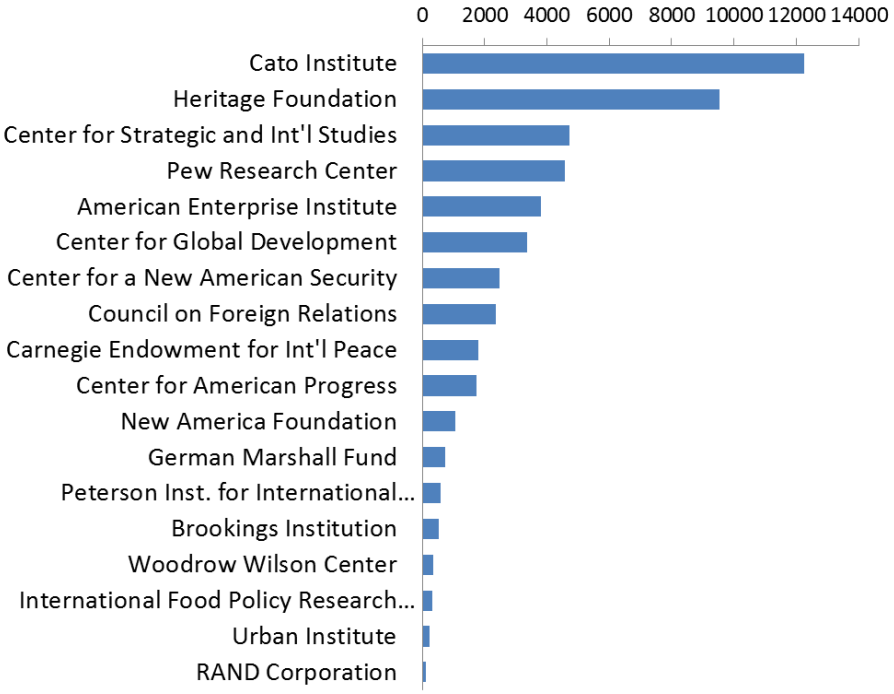
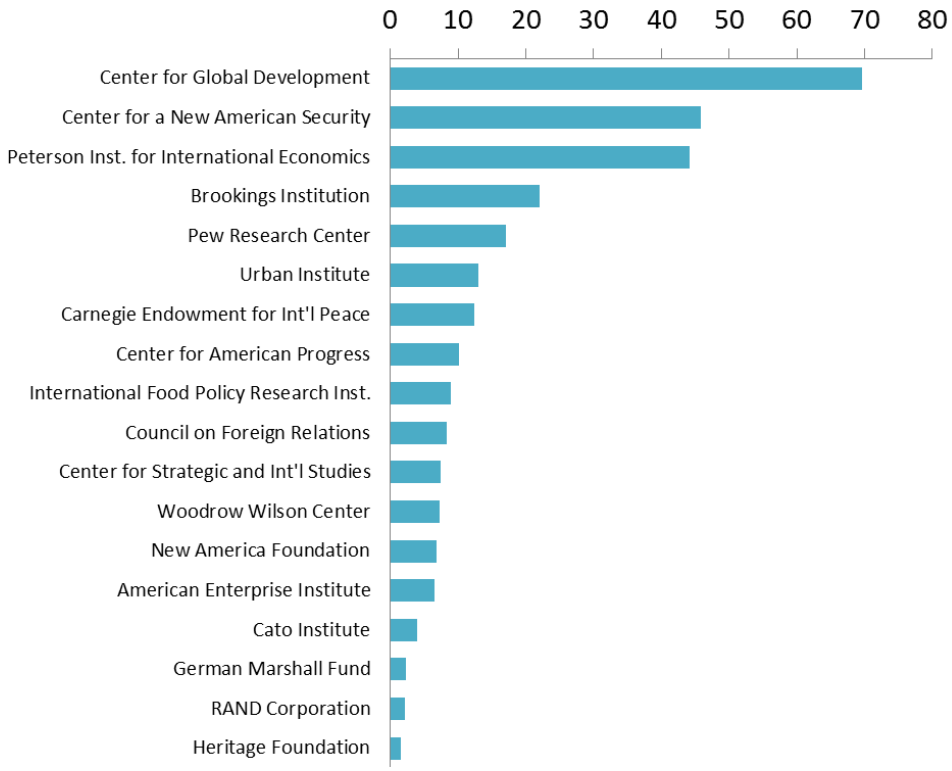


Figure 5. Web traffic/$ million of annual spending, US think tanks

Figure 6. Incoming links/$ million of annual spending, US think tanks

Figure 7. Media mentions/$ million of annual spending, US think tanks

Figure 8. Scholarly citations/$ million of annual spending, US think tanks



Discussion

Three issues emerge from this work that are relevant for future efforts to conceptualize and measure think tank profile.

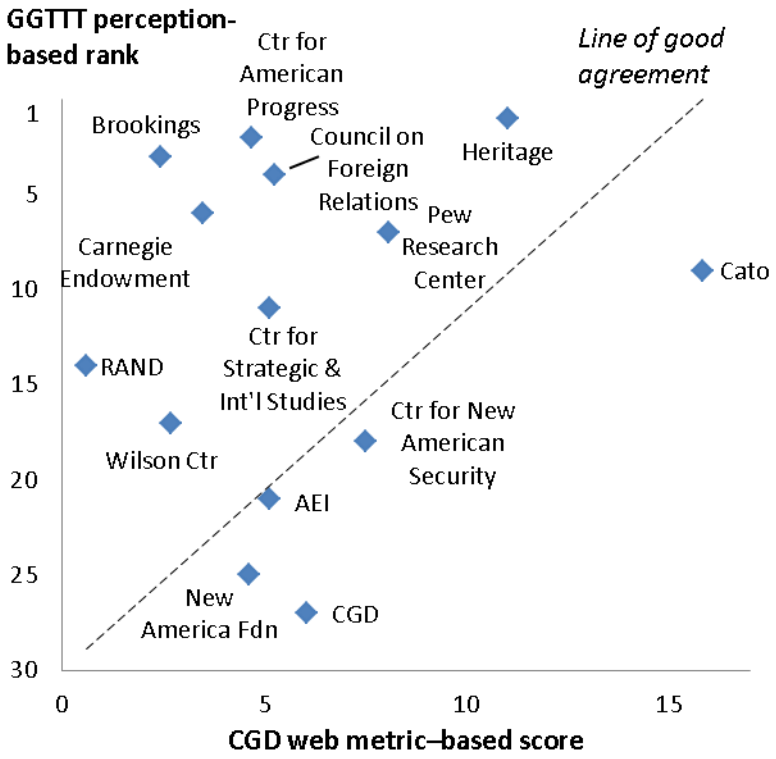
1. Our findings disagree with the GGTTT. Given that we have limited ourselves to measuring one aspect of think tank performance (public profile) it would seem specious to compare our overall rankings with one of the general GGTTT categories, such as "Top International Development Think Tanks." However, we could match certain of our indicators, such as the web traffic and social media, with GGTTT award categories such as "Think Tanks with the Best Use of the Internet or Social Media to Engage the Public."

In Figure 9, for example, we map the 2012 GGTTT rank—the index does not provide scores—for US think tanks[18] on "Internet or Social Media" against the average of our scores for on three indicators, all adjusted for budget: social media fans, web traffic, and incoming links. (We could plot GGTTT ranks against our *ranks*; but we plot against our scores since ranking destroys information.) We think our budget-adjusted indicators come closer to the spirit of the GGTTT category, since an institution should be deemed to be doing a good job

[18] Included in these graphs are US think tanks for which we collected data that also appear on the 2012 GGTTT internet/social media and use of media (print or electronic) categories (McGann 2013).

on "Internet and Social Media," if it achieves profile not by spending a lot but by spending efficiently. There is some relationship: the Spearman correlation of the ranks is 0.43 (p = .07). Still, in most other cases the GGTTT rank is significantly higher than the CGD score would indicate (Brookings, CFR, Carnegie, and Center for American Progress). In a few, tanks that receive a high score in our index receive a comparatively lower rank in the GGTTT (CATO and Heritage).

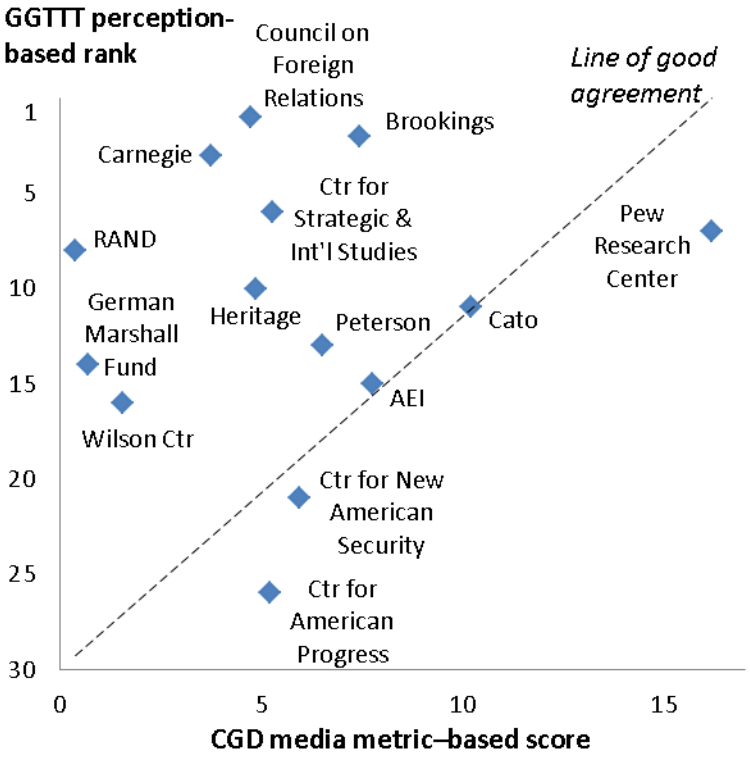
Figure 9. Internet/Social media: GGTTT rank vs. CGD budget-adjusted index



The association is even weaker when we compare how US tanks rank on the 2012 GGTTT list of "Best Use of the Media (Print or Electronic)" with actual media mentions per dollar of budget. (Spearman's rank correlation 0.2687, p=0.28. See Figure 10.)

It could be that our measures are incomplete, and the GGTTT is capturing other factors relevant to internet savvy and media outreach that we miss. However, the difference could also be explained by errors in the GGTTT expert rankers' perceptions. For these two GGTTT categories, for which relevant quantitative data are available, we think the presumption of accuracy should favor metrics that lean directly on that data.

Figure 10. Print/electronic media: GGTTT rank vs. NEXIS citations/$ score



2. Data can be improved. Although our set of metrics captures some aspects of think tank profile, it remains limited in scope. Future attempts to measure performance would benefit from better data. As mentioned earlier, better sources (such as Google Analytics, Klout, Alexa's paid services, etc.) are available for web and social media analytics; however obtaining them would require arranging for data sharing among peer institutions or buying subscriptions. Exercises repeated over time could also collect time series data on social media followers and web presence that would be less sensitive to current trends and events and thus more useful for identifying differences in overall influence.

A number of dimensions of think tank performance—such as research quality, outreach and events, meetings with policymakers—are not captured by this exercise. A more comprehensive effort would include a qualitative survey of think tanks in addition to the quantitative metrics we test, and would also expand the list of tanks included. To be a more effective learning exercise, narrative descriptions or case studies of think tank success, like those conducted for the *Prospect Magazine* awards, could provide a rich supplement.

3. We are comparing apples to oranges. The GGTTT lists on which we base our exercise are, of course, created based on peer perceptions rather than a transparent, unitary analysis of which tanks should be considered under which heading. For this reason, we find that we are often comparing tanks with little in common. This is true along many dimensions and most pronounced among the international development group, which includes tanks from a wide variety of countries and have diverse purposes and resources. A number of top think

tanks also appear to be missing from the international development list, such as ECDPM. Goran Buldioski (2010, 2011), Enrique Mendizabal (2011, 2012) and others have already commented extensively on these issues. Future iterations of work like ours—ideally carried out by people more objective than us—should attempt to define more complete and comparable lists.

However, though the GGTTT groupings may be problematic, deriving a list of tanks to rank is not an easy or straightforward task. Fundamentally, there is a wide spectrum of organizations often referred to as think tanks that may not make sense to compare. Some tanks focus on research while others focus on behind-the-scenes lobbying. Some are attached to a university while others are affiliated with a political party. Posen (2002), for example, chose to exclude the RAND Corporation from his analysis on the grounds that it is not independent (given its large amount of government contracts) and NBER because it lacks permanent staff. Think tank rankings would be more useful if the tanks were grouped in a deeper way, focusing on smaller groups of peer institutions, individual countries or particular policy issues. To its credit, the GGTTT does the latter, ranking tanks in international development, health, environment, and other policy sectors—though this categorization appears to be based less on careful consideration than on (often inaccurate) perceptions.

Conclusion

CGD does not intend to enter the tank-ranking business long-term, if only for lack of the necessary objectivity. Indeed, our choice of public profile as numerator and budget as denominator may reflect our biases as a small organization emphasizing online outreach to multiple audiences. It bears repeating that web page hits, media mentions, and scholarly citations are just a subset of the characteristics that can make a think tank effective. Thus the "profile" in our title. Some tanks succeed precisely by flying below the radar.

Our purpose is to stimulate and improve the discourse around think tank performance. We believe that expert and popular understanding of think tanks would improve if some of the energy currently put into cajoling hundreds of experts to rate thousands of institutions each year were redirected into collecting and analyzing more objective, empirical measurements of think tank performance. Both *Prospect Magazine's* award process and indices such as the Corruption Perceptions Index illustrate the utility of qualitative and perceptions-based assessments. However, when it comes to comparable dimensions of think tank public profile, the weak agreement between empirical data and perceptions suggests the merit of a quantitative approach.

We hope that our work will be a useful reference point for others who want to move forward on the complex question of how best to assess think tanks.

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Appendix 1

US-based think tanks	Short form	Website
American Enterprise Institute	AEI	aei.org/
Brookings Institution, The	Brookings	brookings.edu/
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace	CEIP	carnegieendowment.org
Cato Institute	Cato	cato.org/
Center for a New American Security	CNAS	cnas.org/
Center for American Progress	CAP	americanprogress.org/
Center for Global Development	CGD	cgdev.org/
Center for Strategic and International Studies	CSIS	csis.org/
Council on Foreign Relations	CFR	cfr.org/
German Marshall Fund	GMF	gmfus.org/
Heritage Foundation, The		heritage.org/
Human Rights Watch	HRW	hrw.org/
International Food Policy Research Institute	IFPRI	ifpri.org/
National Bureau of Economic Research	NBER	nber.org/
New America Foundation		newamerica.net/
Peterson Institute for International Economics	IIE, PIIE	iie.com/
Pew Research Center		pewresearch.org/
RAND Corporation	RAND	rand.org/
Urban Institute		urban.org/
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars	Wilson Center	wilsoncenter.org/

International development think tanks	Short form	Country	Website
African Economic Research Consortium	AERC	Kenya	aercafrica.org/
Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies	BIDS	Bangladesh	bids-bd.org
Brookings Institution, The	Brookings	US	brookings.edu/
Cato Institute	Cato	US	cato.org/
Center for Development and the Environment	SUM	Norway	sum.uio.no/english
Center for Global Development	CGD	US	cgdev.org/
Center for Strategic and International Studies	CSIS	US	csis.org/
Centre for International Governance Innovation	CIGI	Canada	cigionline.org
Council for the Dev. of Social Science Research in Africa	CODESRIA	Senegal	codesria.org/
Danish Institute for International Studies	DIIS	Denmark	diis.dk/sw152.asp
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung	FES	Germany	fes.de/
Institute of Development Studies	IDS	UK	ids.ac.uk
International Development Research Centre	IDRC	Canada	idrc.ca/
International Food Policy Research Institute	IFPRI	US	ifpri.org/
International Institute for Environment and Development	IIED	UK	iied.org/
International Institute for Sustainable Development	IISD	Canada	iisd.org/
Konrad Adenauer Foundation	KAS	Germany	kas.de/wf/en/
Korea Development Institute	KDI	South Korea	kdi.re.kr/kdi_eng
North-South Institute		Canada	nsi-ins.ca/
Norwegian Institute of International Affairs	NUPI	Norway	nupi.no/
Overseas Development Institute	ODI	UK	odi.org.uk/
South African Institute of International Affairs	SAIIA	South Africa	saiia.org.za/
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars	Wilson Center	US	wilsoncenter.org/