Linking Think Tank Performance, Decisions, and Context

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Results for Development Institute (R4D) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to unlock solutions to tough development challenges that prevent people in low- and middle-income countries from realizing their full potential. Using multiple approaches in multiple sectors, including Global Education, Global Health, Governance and Market Dynamics, R4D supports the discovery and implementation of new ideas for reducing poverty and improving lives around the world.

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Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ANC	African National Congress
BAPPEDAS	Indonesia Regional Body for Planning and Development
B-A	Bangladesh Affiliated Think Tank
B-I	Bangladesh Independent Think Tank
BOD	Board of Directors
CDD	Center for Democratic Development
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CEP	Center for Economics and Politics
CGD	Center for Global Development
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DfID	United Kingdom Department for International Development
EDPRS	Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (Rwanda)
FGD	Focus group discussion
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MA	Masters of Arts Degree
MPP	Masters of Public Policy Degree
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change (Zimbabwe)
MIDIS	Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (Peru)
MOU	Memoranda of Understanding
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NPRO	Nonpartisan Policy Research Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OLS	Ordinary Least Squares
P-A	Peru Affiliated Think Tank
PhD	Doctorate of Philosophy
P-I	Peru Independent Think Tank
PRI	Policy Research Institutes
R4D	Results for Development
R&D	Research and Development
RSS	Rich Site Summary
SADC	Southern African Development Community
TOC	Theory of Change
TTF	Think Tank Fund
TTI	Think Tank Initiative
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
V-A	Vietnam Affiliated Think Tank
VCP	Vietnamese Communist Party
V-I	Vietnam Independent Think Tank
WB	World Bank
WGI	World Governance Indicators
Z-A	Zimbabwe Affiliated Think Tank
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
Z-I	Zimbabwe Independent Think Tank

Summary of Integrated Findings

Linking Think Tank Performance, Decisions, and Context is a global research project designed to explore the relationship between political, economic, and social contexts and think tanks' strategic behavior and performance. The purpose of the study, undertaken with support of the Think Tank Initiative which is implemented by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), is to inform the general policy debate among donors, think tanks, and researchers concerning the role of context.

The report is structured as follows: we first present an integrated summary of findings from the four linked empirical investigations undertaken by the research team. This is followed by an introduction to the research project and the report. The four technical papers: literature review, case studies, think tanks survey, and focus group discussion and executive director interviews, and their technical appendices follow the introduction.

Introduction: Three Challenges

This research project addresses three main challenges. First, context is thought to affect think tank choices at all organizational decision points, from a think tank's inception, to the design and execution of its research and communication strategy, to its ability to influence policy. However, to date researchers have not clearly defined context and its relationship to think tanks' decision making and policy influence. As a result, context has remained a somewhat murky concept in the empirical literature and its relationship to other factors is not well understood. Without a more comprehensive way of thinking about context and a corresponding framework for undertaking research, think tanks and policymakers risk setting the wrong priorities and overlooking areas in which context may have acute but unrecognized impacts on think tank decision making and influence. The problem is particularly evident in low- and middle-income countries in which less research on think tanks has been carried out.

The second challenge involves discerning the optimal strategy for think tanks given the interaction of several context factors. This research area has attracted little attention. For example, a think tank's strategy for success in a low political competition context may depend on whether the government is able to implement policy effectively. The major consideration here is the impact that the interactions of more than one context factor have on

the strategies that think tanks employ. We have sought to account for these interactions by choosing appropriate methods to research them.

Third, our review of the context and effectiveness literature reveals the dominance of small N historical and comparative case analysis methods and far fewer larger N studies of think tanks. Small N studies are routinely used to sharpen description, develop and test concepts, and contribute to theory-building. However, studies using these methods are specific and are difficult to generalize; accordingly, case selection needs to be carried out carefully to ensure proper matching. Large N studies offer the opportunity to make inferences across a much broader set of units, reducing the potential for bias. However, the use of blunt instruments sometimes results in data that lacks sufficient detail to explain complex relationships. The field may now benefit from quantitative studies to verify patterns observed in small N studies and unearth notable differences across a broader range of context environments. The challenge here is to test the feasibility of operationalizing context constructs and develop an adequate sample of think tanks to undertake quantitative study.

The project seeks to resolve these three challenges by contributing research on the three following questions:

What is context and how is it measured? To answer this question, we first examined previous research on context and its measurement in the literature review. We next probed these results and developed some ideas about the relative importance of context factors in our elite interviews. Last, we developed a survey instrument to test the concepts that we identified, and their hypothesized relationships to think tank choice variables.

How does context affect think tanks' decision making and policy effectiveness? To answer this question, we performed in-depth case studies using a comparative case analysis method. We selected cases on the basis of three criteria: the level of political competition, the level of a government's effectiveness (or the ability of a government to implement policy), and whether a think tank seeks to be independent of or affiliated with the government or political parties in its approach to attaining policy influence. The team undertook field research in four countries: Zimbabwe (low government effectiveness, high political competition), Bangladesh (low government effectiveness, high political competition), Vietnam (medium government effectiveness, low political competition), and Peru (medium government effectiveness, high political competition). In each country context, key stakeholder

interviews were used to examine the decisions and perceived impact of two think tanks that differed in their strategic approach to policy influence.

How do think tanks evaluate and respond to context in practice? To answer this question, we conducted interviews with think tank executive directors and facilitated focus groups with research and communications staff in two countries to learn how context factors influence their projects and organizational decisions. We also collected their stories; specifically, those stories that detailed projects' successes and the coping strategies that they carried out in challenging political, economic, and social environments.

In subsequent sections, we discuss how we define, categorize and measure context. However, before doing so it is important to discuss our definition of a think tank. One of the more robust results found in the literature concerns the positive association between political and media freedoms, democratic forms of governance, and the proliferation of think tanks around the globe over the past 20 years. Despite the robustness of this finding, another branch of the literature argues that the research used to demonstrate the relationship defines think tanks too narrowly. These researchers assert that broadening the definition of a think tank to include both independent AND organizationally-affiliated think tanks challenges the finding that their proliferation coincides with the spread of democracy.

Our study defines a think tank as an organization that produces research and analysis to improve public policies or to improve policies of concern to the public's wellbeing. We distinguish affiliated and independent think tanks and include both in our definition of a think tank. Affiliated think tanks have or seek formal or informal affiliation with a political party, whereas independent think tanks do not. Both affiliated and independent organizations want to produce rigorous, reliable, and useful research and policy recommendations and remain credible with their respective audiences. However, affiliated think tanks also want to be trusted by the political actors with whom they are affiliated and will often tailor their policy advice to fit those actors' political incentives and constraints. In contrast, independent think tanks often want the policy that maximizes the social welfare, and they want to serve as objective sources of information to all parties and coalitions, not just one.

Defining, Categorizing and Measuring Context

Framing how to think about think tank decisions, capacities, and context was a major conceptual challenge that we addressed in this research. We present the hypothesized relationship between think tank outcomes, characteristics and context in a generic regression format to ensure their clarity. While this framing (described below) provided guidance for the design of the study, results that emerged from the case studies, survey, interviews, and focus group discussions suggested a need for a more accessible framework that depicts the interactions we observed during the course of research. While the underlying structure remains the same, we present our refined thinking in our study framework (Figure 1.1). For the purpose of elaborating our thinking, we describe both the regression model and the framework below.

Regression Model for Defining how Context and Outcomes Relate

For all think tanks i in country s:

$$Outcome_{is}=f(characteristics_i, context_s, characteristics_i \times context_s, error_{is})$$

Where **$Outcome_{is}$** is any observable policy outcome; **$characteristics_i$** is a vector of think tank attributes and choice variables including size, staff composition, and strategy, etc; **$context_s$** is exogenous country-level political, economic, and social factors; the term **$characteristics_i \times context_s$** captures the interaction of a think tank's strategy and choice with context, for example, the interaction of political competition with a think tank's strategy; and **$error_{is}$** is an error term.

In the simplified, general equation above, measurable policy outcomes are shown on the left hand side. There are multiple outcomes because think tanks can influence policy in a range of ways. For example, think tanks may: influence policy discussion by framing the substantive issues and questions in the policy debate; change how policy is implemented by contributing evaluation tools and analysis; or impact how policy is adopted by contributing an optimal policy solution. It is important to capture the variation in these outcomes. It is also important to note that differences in the ability of think tanks to achieve an outcome may depend on country context, the think tank's own decisions or abilities, or both.

To reach success in any of these outcomes, think tanks need to organize their available resources in the most productive ways, and learn how to respond to context factors that are mainly, or entirely, beyond their individual control.

The terms on the right hand side of the equation describe three categories of factors likely to affect the ability of a think tank to influence policy. First, there are endogenous variables. These are choices made by the think tank, for example, the quality and size of its staff, research areas of focus, and its origins. The second category consists of exogenous variables. These factors are determined by forces beyond the think tank's sphere of influence. For example, political or party competition, the role of donors, and country level of economic development have all been observed by think tanks to impact their ability to influence policy.

The third category captures how think tank choices interact with exogenous context to affect think tank outcomes. For example, suppose we have two think tanks in a country subject to flooding from (an exogenous) rise in global sea level. Each may choose to pursue a global warming research agenda, but differences in their individual context may affect their ability to reach success. Suppose we have two cases. In the first, the think tank pursues the research agenda because its outside funder supports research on global warming. In the second case, the think tank pursues the topic at the express request of a government Minister. The ability of each think tank to impact policy may differ depending on these circumstances. While this is an oversimplified example, it usefully demonstrates some of the complex interaction we expected to observe in think tank decisionmaking. This interaction also makes the research task more complex. This is because correlation in the terms on the right hand side leads to bias when standard regression methods (i.e. OLS) are used.

A New Framework for Conceptualizing Context

The regression framework formalizes the hypothesized relationship between think tank policy outcomes, choice variables, and external forces, and captures both the individual variation in the think tank as well as the variation in the country-level context in which it operates, and their interaction. However, it has several major limitations.

The largest limitation of the regression relates to endogeneity. Defining and ascertaining the impact of exogenous factors, those determined wholly or mainly outside of the think tank's influence, is the main focus of this study. Specifically, we want to understand the effect of context on a think tank's policy influence while making sure to control for individual differences between think tanks, such as size, staff composition, or strategy. Yet, because context is likely to be correlated with a think tank's choices and strategies, all coefficients will be biased using a standard ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. Research methodologies need to account for this

complexity in order to establish a causal relationship and inform donors' and think tanks' policy decisions. Although we do not present causal evidence here, the project team addressed these research complexities in three ways.
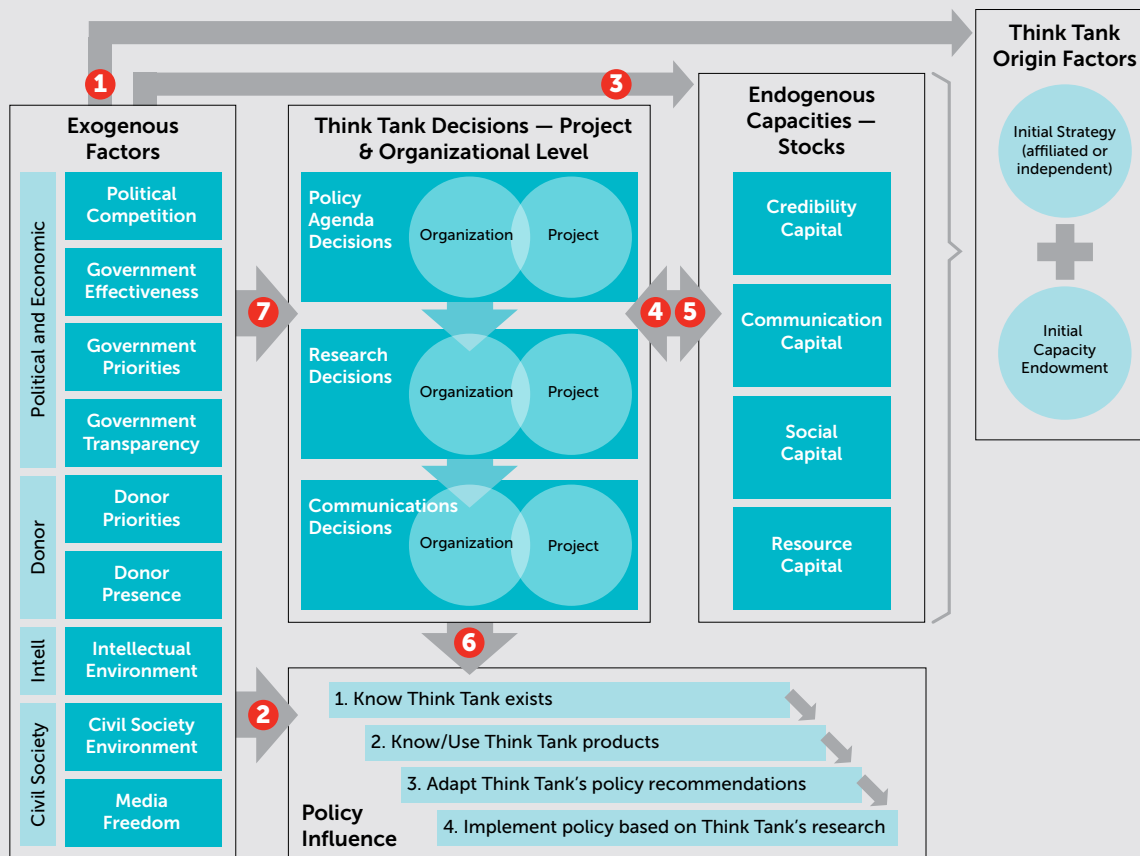
First, we reviewed the literature with this framing concept in mind and developed a system by which to categorize endogenous and exogenous factors to ensure clarity in the proposed definitions and relationships. Second, following our case analysis method, we selected two think tanks in each country, which enabled us to hold constant the levels of two important context dimensions, namely political competition and government effectiveness, while allowing the think tank strategy to vary across the two organizations analyzed. This approach enabled us to contribute new insights concerning the interactions of strategy, context, and think tanks' policy influence. We followed a similar method when we selected Indonesia and Rwanda as countries in which to conduct focus group discussions and executive director interviews. However, this time, we held constant the level of civil society development as we examined self-reported effects of context on decision making.

Third, we developed the survey instrument with the objective of generating a quantitative data set to enable us to study context across a wide range of country settings. As a sampling frame for think tanks does not exist, testing was limited to a convenience sample of 380 think tanks drawn from a wide range of countries. A 25 percent survey response rate and item non-response on more than a few questions ruled out the feasibility of conducting regression analysis due to sample size constraints. While the survey results demonstrate the feasibility of operationalizing think tanks' outcomes, contexts, and capacities, they also indicate some of the real limitations of quantitative study at this stage of the field's development. This discussion certainly will inform the development of future methods to address some of the issues that we faced in this project.

The second limitation of the regression framework is that its generalized structure doesn't adequately capture some of the detailed relationships found in the research. As such, we felt that it was important to elaborate on this basic model by developing the framework presented in Figure 1.1, where we map out the relationship between endogenous choices of the think tank (origins, decisions, and capacities) to exogenous context factors and outcomes based on our analysis of the evidence presented in the report. This framework retains the structure above, but has been made more accessible to reach a wider audience of think tank donors, practitioners, and scholars. This is the framework that we use to guide the remainder of the report.

The framework (shown in Figure 1.1) builds on previous research and contributes new thinking about context and its relationship to think tank decision making and strategy.

Figure 1.1: A Framework for Thinking about Context as it Relates to Think Tanks and Their Decisions

Exogenous Factors

Political and Economic:
- Political Competition
- Government Effectiveness
- Government Priorities
- Government Transparency

Donor:
- Donor Priorities
- Donor Presence

Intell:
- Intellectual Environment

Civil Society:
- Civil Society Environment
- Media Freedom

Think Tank Decisions — Project & Organizational Level

- Policy Agenda Decisions (Organization / Project)
- Research Decisions (Organization / Project)
- Communications Decisions (Organization / Project)

Endogenous Capacities — Stocks

- Credibility Capital
- Communication Capital
- Social Capital
- Resource Capital

Think Tank Origin Factors

- Initial Strategy (affiliated or independent)
- Initial Capacity Endowment

Policy Influence

1. Know Think Tank exists
2. Know/Use Think Tank products
3. Adapt Think Tank's policy recommendations
4. Implement policy based on Think Tank's research

Specifically, we map relationships between the four main exogenous context factors and the four main endogenous capacities of think tanks identified in the literature using numbered arrows. We additionally show that context impacts think tank origin factors, and think tank decision making. In sum, the framework depicts seven relationships of interest to researchers, think tanks and donors who want to develop their understanding of the complex role context plays. While our study does not present evidence on every one of these relationships, we present some evidence on four, focusing mainly on the effects of exogenous context. We discuss the other three relationships at various points throughout the study, but their direct analysis was beyond the project's scope.

We present the framework above, and again in more detail in the introduction to the full report. Our discussion here describes the key relationships of interest (Figure 1.1) and links them to the research questions, evidence and data (Table 1.1).

The numbered arrows in the framework depict seven relationships of interest: 1) the impact of exogenous context on initial think tank strategy and endowment of capacity, 2) the direct impact of exogenous factors on policy influence, 3) the direct impact of exogenous factors (unique to each country) on think tank endogenous capacities, 4) and 5) the interaction between think tank capacities with project and organizational decisions (a two-way relationship), 6) the cumulative effect of project and organizational decisions on think tank policy influence, and 7) the effect of exogenous context on think tank staff and leadership decisions.

The remainder of this summary focuses on some of the key crosscutting results related to exogenous context, endogenous capacities, think tanks' decisions and strategies, and areas for further research.

Table 1.1: How the Research Questions Map to the Evidence and Data Presented in the Report

Research Question	Evidence and Discussion Presented	Information Source
What is context and how is it measured?	• Evidence of the effect of exogenous context on think tanks' capacities (relationship 3) • Discussion of the interaction between think tanks' capacities and choices (relationships 4 & 5). Note, these relationships were not a central focus of the study	• Think Tank survey • Literature, focus groups and executive director interviews
How does context affect think tanks' decision making and policy effectiveness?	• Evidence of the combined effects of context on think tank strategy and policy influence (relationships 1 & 2). • Discussion of think tank decisions on policy influence (relationship 6)	• Case studies
How do think tanks evaluate and respond to context in practice?	• Evidence of the effect of exogenous context on think tanks' decisions (relationship 7) • Evidence of the interaction between think tanks' capacities and choices (relationships 4 & 5) • Discussion of the effects of decisions on policy outcomes (relationship 6)	• Focus groups, and executive director interviews • Literature review, focus groups, and executive director interviews • Focus groups, and executive director interviews

The Relative Importance of the Political Context for Think Tanks

Beyond defining the key components of context and how they relate to think tank decisions and strategy, we additionally contribute new information about the relative importance of exogenous factors to think tanks.

The four primary exogenous context factors found in our review of the academic and grey literature addressing think tanks in developing countries were: political and economic factors, donor factors, civil society factors, and intellectual climate. Our review of the literature and our analysis of survey data from 94 think tanks as well as the results from our executive director interviews and focus groups all suggest that political context is of the highest importance to think tanks. Political context is by far the most widely discussed factor in our interviews and focus groups and was the subject of more than half of the articles that we reviewed. The importance of the donor environment, civil society, and a country's intellectual climate are slightly more difficult to rank, but our survey, interview and focus group results suggest donor environment and civil society context likely come second and third followed by intellectual climate factors.

Consistent with its importance in the literature, in the interviews and focus groups that we held in Indonesia and Rwanda, political context nearly always was the first context factor mentioned by staff and directors in the open discussions of context. Moreover, evidence that we gathered further supports that political context is a prominent influence in all stages of work in both countries,

despite substantial differences in their respective levels of civil society development. From policy to research and communications decisions, political factors are perceived to be of primary importance both for organizational-level decisions and for project-level decisions as well.

Evidence from our survey suggests that a majority of think tank leaders view either national government or national political leaders to be their key audiences. When think tank directors in 48 countries were asked: "Who do you see as the most important audiences for your work?" approximately 43 percent ranked 'national civil servants/national policymakers,' and nearly 20 percent ranked 'national politicians or political parties,' as the single most important audience. In contrast, only 12 percent reported that 'average citizens' are the most important audiences. In the survey, other audiences, including NGOs, the media, international donors, and local politicians or parties, were infrequently reported as being the first-priority audiences.

In short, information from a variety of data sources suggests that of the exogenous context factors, the broad category of political factors is perceived to exert the strongest influence on think tanks.

Political Context Subcomponents

Political context encompasses a wide range of sub-factors, including country-level factors related to the government's ability to govern, the characteristics of the government, political parties and competition, concentration of political power, the country's political history, and the attitudes of policymakers towards research (i.e., their demand for research and the attributes of policymakers themselves).

Political Competition and Government Effectiveness

As already introduced, political context receives the most attention in the literature. Our study focused attention on two specific subfactors, political competition and government effectiveness, because of their potential importance for think tank strategy.

Previous research shows that the number of political parties or factions and the extent of competition between them drives demand for the evidence-based public policy analysis in which think tanks specialize. The level of political competition, parties, or factions in a given country may change policymakers' appetites for open dissent and demand for novel ideas, and may impact the strategies that think tanks use to present data and evidence. For example, while think tanks in Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, and the United States routinely engage in open dissent, this approach is much less welcome in closed, authoritarian regimes. Studies of think tanks in environments with high political competition evidence that think tanks search for openings in the political system to exploit, engage in dialogue with parties, and compete with other think tanks for influence. A direct line to policymakers gives traction, but even so, as political competition increases observers note it often becomes increasingly more difficult for think tanks to demonstrate their individual policy influence.

In less open political environments, there is suggestive and anecdotal evidence that independent think tanks adjust their stated goals and outcome measurements to avoid engaging with corrupt policymakers. For example, an Armenian think tank interviewed for this study reported that its strategy for collecting and disseminating data both fills voids in the availability of public data and helps it maintain independence from a corrupt political regime without directly challenging or openly criticizing the regime. A think tank donor corroborated this point and cited numerous additional ways in which he had observed think tanks defining alternative policy outcomes for themselves in lieu of engaging with corrupt policymakers.

A survey of policy community members in 19 countries found that a higher level of government effectiveness makes it more difficult for policymakers to discern the impact of an individual policy research organization. Although not without caveats, the research suggests that government effectiveness might work in conjunction with political competition to make think tanks' strategies more or less effective.

While factors such as political competition and government effectiveness are dynamic, the research suggests think tanks may respond to the current state of these and other factors by making strategic choices about their organization's objectives and larger strategy.

How Political Competition and Government Effectiveness Affect Think Tank Strategy

Our field research in Peru, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, and Vietnam strongly suggested that political competition and government effectiveness fundamentally influence think tanks' effectiveness, i.e., their ability to influence policy. Think tanks' success in achieving policy influence was evaluated along a four-tier cascade from the most basic level of influence (policymakers know the think tank exists) to the most comprehensive (policymakers adopt the think tank's policy). Reaching each successive tier in the cascade depends both on the choices that think tanks make and on the exogenous context factors beyond their control. While government effectiveness affects how far think tanks advance along the "cascade of influence," political competition affects whether an affiliation with a political party or independence is a more effective strategy.

A government's effectiveness, specifically, how well a government is able to implement policy, impacts whether think tanks influence the implementation of governmental policies or whether they instead must influence only the policy dialogue. Further, even if think tanks influence a government's policy positions, if a government does little effective policy implementation, the think tank's influence will have little material result.

Further, we find evidence of a dominant strategy among the think tanks observed operating in high and low political competition and government effectiveness contexts. For example, in politically competitive environments, think tanks benefit from staying impartial and above the political fray and offering themselves as sources of trusted analysis and advice no matter who is in power. In countries in which a party is uncontested, however, think tanks benefit from building trusted long-term relationships with the political actors in power, and from incorporating these actors' particular political constraints and incentives into their analyses.

These conclusions are strongly supported by similar patterns that we observed across the pairs of cases in our case matrix. Our study found evidence in Zimbabwe and Vietnam, both low political competition environments, that the strategy of being affiliated with the government or a governing political party provided organizations with more access to the policymaking process. Organizations with this affiliation evidenced more regular and significant success in getting their research incorporated into public policy and implemented. In this way, affiliation supports access to policymaking in countries in which policymaking processes are either so limited or so internalized within the government that think tanks have limited opportunities for influence. Yet at the same time, low political competition states also tend to be environments that limit the range and success of think tanks' strategies overall.

Even though our evidence points to the existence of a dominant strategy, we also find examples of successful think tanks going against the grain by applying creative methods. In these instances, think tanks resort to leveraging other aspects of context, for example the donor environment, and civil society mechanisms or instruments of the intellectual environment to gain policy influence.

Donor Context

While governments are the most commonly cited audiences for think tanks according to our work, there are myriad other actors involved in the process of evidence-based policy research. Think tanks would not exist without independent financing and many rely on financial support from international donors. Indeed, our interview, focus group and survey results all suggest that the donor context is likely the second-most important factor behind political context.

Empirical studies evidence a positive relationship between the spread and growth of think tanks in developing countries and the expanding amount of donor funding available to support the development of civil societies in middle- and low-income countries. A few donor organizations have made think tanks the focus of major philanthropic initiatives in recent years. For example, in 2009, Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, collectively committed a total of $90 million to support independent policy think tanks in developing countries through the Think Tank Initiative.[1] These funds were subsequently added to, with contributions from the UK Department for International Development, The Netherlands Directorate General for International Cooperation, and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation. Other major funders of developing-country think tanks include the Think Tank Fund of the Open Society Foundations, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the US Agency for International Development. Yet, the donor environment consists of more than just those groups funding think tanks directly. In addition to distributing foreign aid, bilateral and multilateral agencies carry out a great number of research and policy studies in developing countries under contract to policy research institutions. In developing countries, domestic donors and funders also support local think tanks, but these sources of funding are limited in most countries.

Consistent with the literature, our results show that donor influence produces mostly mixed results for developing country think tanks. For example, while donors provide needed funding, they have been known to select Western consultants to carry out analytical work, substituting away from local capacity. Researchers also have observed that a donor's financial support shifts research attention to the donor's priorities, which can sometimes lead to a research agenda that has questionable relevance to the country's policy context and culture.

Our analysis of the survey data generally validated these observations from the academic literature; however we use simple pairwise correlations to examine relationships and therefore we interpret these results with some caution due to the absence of additional controls. We examined correlations in the amount of Net Official Development Assistance (Net ODA) per capita on think tanks' resources and found that think tanks in countries receiving less per capita Net ODA tend to report larger budgets overall. We also found that higher per capita donor flows were not significantly associated with more staff resources, namely, the number of full time staff or the percentage of research staff. This suggestive evidence supports the crowd-out effect: more aid does not translate into a greater demand for research staff. Last, we observed no relationship between the level of per-capita ODA and the amount of unrestricted funding that think tanks report, or their abilities to define topics in line with their research agendas. This suggests that more ODA does not necessarily confer upon think tanks more control over their resources, which would correspond to an increase in control over research topics.

Perhaps the biggest challenge facing think tanks described in the literature is the need for them to secure sustainable funding from a range of sources in order to retain independence from the encroaching interests of any one stakeholder, while being able to consistently produce high quality research. Our survey found no evidence that net ODA per capita impacts a think tanks' reported number of donors, which suggests that increased amounts of development assistance do not lead think tanks to diversify their funding base.

Although there is wide discussion postulating that think tanks should diversify their portfolio of donors, the literature documents the difficulties of them doing so in both low- and high-activity donor environments. The case analysis results showed that most of the think tanks in the four case study countries rely on international foundations and development agencies for their funding. This was particularly pronounced in Zimbabwe and Bangladesh, the two cases with particularly low levels of government effectiveness. In countries with very low levels of government effectiveness, both affiliated and independent think tanks must rely to some degree on external funding at either the regional and/or international level. For example, in Zimbabwe, because there is a conspicuous lack of indigenous funding for think tanks of all types, both

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[1] See Hewlett Foundation Newsroom announcement: "Partners Pledge US$30 Million to Strengthen African Think Tanks", http://www.hewlett.org/newsroom/press-release/partners-pledge-us30-million-strengthen-african-think-tanks. Accessed 15 June 2014

independent and affiliated think tanks turn to international donors. However, this has sometimes led think tanks to gain more influence outside of their countries than inside.

Indeed, the case study research here also demonstrated that both affiliated and independent think tanks work with international organizations to boost the credibility and prestige of their organizations and to gain access to more prestigious social networks with greater connections to influential domestic policymakers. As an example of this creative approach, while international organizations offer independent think tanks in Vietnam funding opportunities, affiliated think tanks also see these opportunities as means by which to expand their policy influence and media access. Working with an outside organization can provide individual researchers that work at the government-affiliated think tanks in Vietnam with another forum in which to publish their findings. This can be important to individual researchers, some of whom say that they feel that their work gets lost in the ministerial bureaucracies.

Yet the reputational benefits of donor relationships extend in both directions, particularly in low-political competition countries. For example, think tanks that contract with international development organizations like the World Bank gain more prominence both in the international community and in their own countries. International development organizations also benefit because they gain access to the networks of and deep domestic knowledge available in these think tanks. For example, in Vietnam, international organizations work with affiliated think tanks to boost the international organization's domestic policy influence. International organizations solicit consulting projects from independent think tanks when they want more rigorous academic-quality research.

Intellectual Climate and Civil Society

Looking beyond the donor environment, the academic literature suggests that a country's intellectual climate and civil society facilitate think tanks' access to academic researchers and ideas and to open debate channels with policymakers. Independent universities contribute to a vibrant intellectual environment and the skilled researchers and data produced by academic programs are necessary inputs to think tanks' successes.

Our case research supported this result, specifically in relation to the media. In countries in which the media are free and vibrant, think tanks can use the media in

creative ways to try to augment their policy influence. For example, in Peru, the political and cultural environment favors independent think tanks. We found that a think tank affiliated with the corporate sector, not the government, uses the media to advocate for its policy goals and put issues on the national policymaking agenda. While several interviewees described a space in the media in which audiences could hear from technocrats and hear about academic studies, the affiliated organization described itself as having an aggressive strategy with the media in order to shape public dialogue particularly through television, newspapers, and the radio. More so than the independent think tank, the Peruvian affiliated think tank's audience is the public. The organization is a small outfit with less than 15 employees, which is much smaller than the prominent independent think tanks in Peru. However, through its "somewhat reactive" emphasis on debating and critiquing government policy via the media, the organization has been able to have an outsized influence on public policy.

Wide Variation in Think Tank Capacity

While the primary focus of this project is the impact of exogenous factors, we repeatedly encountered a set of endogenous capacities in the literature, survey, interviews, and focus group discussions that are important to the decisions and influence of think tanks. Endogenous capacities include those factors the values of which are determined by the think tank, such as the quality and quantity of research staff, research topics, and resource allocation to functions within the organization.

Our survey results indicate that thinks tanks vary widely in terms of their credibility, communications, social and resource capital. For example, with respect to credibility capital, we find that while research staff are reported to make up 54 percent of full time staff among think tanks on average, the survey found that the percentage of research staff varied widely from a low of 0 percent to a high of 100 percent. On average, more than 16 percent of full time research staff had attained a PhD, with wide variation, the smallest percentage was at 0^2 and the largest share reported as 50 percent. However, think tanks of all sizes reported that they prioritized research and staff quality over other ways of establishing their credibility. For example, 40 of 58 respondent think tanks reported that the quality of the research produced was the single-most important factor contributing to the maintenance of organizational credibility, while research staff credibility was the second-

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2 Note, only one think tank responded to the survey indicating zero research staff (this particular think tank reported one staff member in the 'survey' category). For the purposes of the Think Tank Survey, responding institutions that self-identify as think tanks are taken as such, independent of the number of research staff they report.

highest ranked factor. The majority of think tanks reported having institutionalized quality control processes, such as peer review of data, methods, and publications.

We found that think tanks also vary in terms of their communication capacity. To be effective, think tanks must be able to communicate their high-quality research using a variety of methods and channels; we found evidence from the survey that think tanks are doing this. Think tanks reported using and evaluating themselves on between 10 and 11 different communications outcomes. While most of the think tanks in the sample continue to use traditional forms of think tank communication, including roundtables, reports, and publications, a few are experimenting with newer communication forms such as tweets.

In similar fashion, we find think tanks vary widely in terms of the number and scope of informal partnerships they develop with other think tanks, domestic and international donors, political parties, and so on. Think tanks in our sample also differed considerably with respect to their self-reported annual budget size and overall staff resources. Thus our small sample suggests a substantial amount of think tank heterogeneity along all four think tank capacities we measured.

Think Tank Decisions

The wide variation we observe in think tank capacity led us to question whether exogenous context plays any role in explaining observed differences. To explore this relationship, we focused on research and communications decisions made by executive directors and research and communications staff. We examined in a sample of Indonesian and Rwandan think tanks the extent to which staff and executive directors reported that their project and organizational decision-making depended on context.

How Adaptive are Think Tanks to Context?

Based on our analysis, we found that in general think tanks adapt their organizational and project level decisions to context on a fairly regular basis.

Think tanks reported that they frequently adapt their policy agendas to governments' policy priorities. For example, Indonesia's rapid process of democratization and decentralization that began in 1998 led think tanks' executive directors and project teams to significantly change their decisions about areas of work. After decentralization, a number of project teams described performing research on local government budgets and transparency, an idea that was practically unimaginable

just a few years prior. In Rwanda, think tanks' executive directors reported that a major strategy involves aligning their research priorities with those published by the government. As government priorities change, so do think tanks' policy agendas.

The research agenda is the decision making step that appears to be least dependent on context; however, there was some evidence that government transparency and, specifically, access to information plays an important role. Further, respondents pointed out explicitly that donors did not play a role in think tanks' decisions regarding research methods, research capacity, and human capital, including decisions such as staff hiring and training.

Evidence from the literature supported our finding that successful think tanks actively build their research and communications credibility over time by selecting topics in which they are likely to have an impact. In addition, think tanks build individual and institutional social ties to increase the flow of information from the think tank to policymakers and back again. Evidence from the focus group discussions and executive director interviews in Indonesia and Rwanda suggested that communications decisions at the organization and project levels are directly related to the audiences that the think tanks seek to influence, especially government and policymakers.

Getting the attention of policymakers is a challenge for all think tanks. The most prevalent methods of getting their attention include communicating through the media, targeting specific ministries, and seeking windows of opportunity. We also found evidence of think tanks' informal communications with government officials, such as senior think tank staff actively meeting with Ministry officials, parliamentarians, or legislators, and individuals in the Executive or President's office.

Finally with regard to policy influence, both exogenous and endogenous factors played a significant role for those directors and project teams seeking to push for changes in policy based on their research. In focus group discussions and executive director interviews alike, government priorities and social capital were cited as significant factors. Executive directors shared a number of successful projects that resulted in changes in policy, and in all cases the directors stated that the success was due in part to the fact that the policy question or recommendation focused on an area of interest to key government officials. In most cases, directors also explained that positive relationships with key policymakers helped to make their projects successful.

Affiliation, Independence, and Organizational Social Ties

In addition to shorter term and medium term think tank decisions concerning their policy and research agendas, and communications methods, organizations make defining strategic choices at their inception. Our case studies examined a think tank's fundamental and major strategic decision regarding whether it should be independent or affiliate with a government or a particular political party.

The case research suggests that think tanks adopt different dominant strategies based particularly on the level of political competition, with think tanks benefiting more from affiliation in a low political competition setting. However, the research also provided examples in each country of think tanks going against the dominant strategy. These think tanks leveraged international organizations, donors, and the media to achieve policy influence. For example, we learned of an affiliated and academically oriented think tank in Bangladesh that seeks to shape domestic policy by publishing in foreign languages and in well-regarded domestic and international academic journals. Because of its close affiliation with the government, it does not want to be openly critical. Its academic publications satisfy both dynamics: The government views them as academic products rather than potentially inflammatory critiques of its policy, while the think tank gains credibility by demonstrating that it meets international research standards.

The adaptability shown in these strategies is important because our evidence points to the difficulty that a think tank would experience in changing from an affiliated to an independent institution or vice versa. Much of a think tank's identity and strategy is based on its relationship to government, a particular political party, or an ideology. To change affiliation likely would upend a think tank's sources of funding or complicate its relationships with donors.

Context and the Endogenous Capacities of Think Tanks

Utilizing survey results, a test of the relationships that we hypothesized between exogenous context and endogenous capacities revealed limited, significant associations. We observed a few significant associations with the level of economic development and no significant association between the amount of political competition or government effectiveness and the endogenous capacities of think tanks examined in this study.

We found no evidence in the analysis of a significant association between a country's Voice and Accountability

indicator (an indicator of democratization) and the size of a think tank's communications staff, the most important audience it targets, the number of communications channels it measures itself against, or the ways in which it attempts to obtain the attention of policymakers. We hypothesized that the diversity of communications channels would widen in more democratic contexts, but this was not shown to be the case in our sample of think tanks.

Additionally, we found no significant association between country Voice and Accountability rank and measures of think tank social capital. We found that Voice and Accountability rank was not associated with the number of institutions from which think tanks report recruiting new staff members; it also was not associated with the proportion of Board members that presently serve or formerly served in the government, the number of formal institutional ties, informal ties to other organizations, or number of instances in which think tanks' staff gave testimony to a member of the Executive or President's office, a Ministry official, or a parliamentarian. Thus, we found very little evidence to suggest that the social ties a think tank develops vary in accordance with the country's level of democratization and political competition.

Consistent with our hypothesis, a country's context—namely, its global rank on Voice and Accountability, per capita GDP, per capita ODA, and Government Effectiveness — does not appear to bear a relationship to other indicators of the think tank's credibility. Specifically, we observed no significant associations between any of the exogenous context factors that we tested and the top-ranked credibility factor reported, the percentage of staff with a PhD, the percentage of research staff, and the presence of quality control methods such as peer review of data, methods, and reports.

We note that our survey results should be interpreted with caution as the data is limited in several ways. First, there is no known sampling frame from which to draw a random sample of think tanks. We used a convenience sample as a result, which limits the generalizability of any findings derived from the analysis. Second, the lists used to generate the sample came from think tank donors, a non-governmental organization that partners with many developing-country think tanks, and internet searches of think tank forums, conferences, and events. Although it is impossible to confirm, the sample is likely to include a higher proportion of think tanks from developing and low-income countries and to include think tanks that have developed ties with external donors or that participate in international think tank events and conferences. It is important to keep these elements in mind when interpreting our results. In addition, the survey response rate was about 25 percent of all think tanks contacted, and far fewer of those that responded completed the survey. As such, item non-response is a concern on several questions.

Final Thoughts

Even given the caveats previously noted, the results from the survey are somewhat surprising considering the frequency with which the think tank executive directors and researchers we interviewed report adapting their decision making to accommodate context. The results are also surprising in light of our case study findings which demonstrate a clear impact of political competition and government effectiveness on think tank strategy. These surprising results suggest context may impact short- and medium-term decisions and long-term decisions, such as a think tank's strategy, in fundamentally different ways. However, this is a question that remains open for other researchers to explore for we have insufficient evidence to make a determination.

Introduction

The role of exogenous context factors in the effectiveness of think tanks across the world is one that has been studied extensively as the number of independent policy research institutions in all countries has increased. However, there remains a limited understanding of the specific and nuanced relationships between the context in which think tanks operate and their larger impact. One potential confounding factor is the role that context plays in the decisions of think tanks. Rather than passively allowing political, geographic, and social factors to affect their influence, to the extent that these factors are identifiable, think tanks develop strategies and make research and communications decisions based on them. While this added layer of complexity presents a research challenge, it also presents an opportunity for think tanks and donors to leverage "positive" context factors and mitigate "negative" factors through their decisions. This research, undertaken with support of the Think Tank Initiative which is implemented by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), seeks to illuminate the relationship between think tank decisions, influence, and the context factors that think tanks face.

Below, we introduce the research questions and provide an overview of our approach. In addition, we present an updated framework that builds upon the simple regression model introduced previously. This revised framework was developed at the project's culmination. It brings together our collective thinking in light of the evidence about context as it relates to think tanks and their decisions.

Research Questions

In researching the relationships between context, think tank decisions, and think tank performance, we sought to answer the following three specific questions:

- What is context and how is it measured?

- How does context affect think tank decision making and policy effectiveness?

- How do think tanks evaluate and respond to context in practice?

These questions and our approach to answering them are discussed in more detail below.

What is Context and how is it Measured?

Despite increased talk among donors and think tanks about the role of context in the performance of think tanks, there seems to be little agreement among researchers about how to categorize and measure it. Before we can identify how context impacts think tanks' decisions and performance, we must develop a common understanding of what is meant by this term. A further categorization of context factors is critical to aid think tanks and those supporting them in developing clear strategies to address external factors that may affect their abilities to influence policy.

We used three approaches to determine what context is and how it is measured: a literature review of context and think tanks, think tank and donor elite interviews, and a survey of think tanks.

Through a literature review of articles on context and think tanks, in which we exhaustively searched 23 articles identified in a key word search of the grey and academic literature, we found more than 100 unique context factors. Each context factor was documented and then combined with similar and related factors into theoretical groupings (e.g., political context), and sub-categories were fit to the data (e.g., the 'number and strength of political parties', or 'authoritarian government', or 'instability and high turnover of key government positions') within each category. Last, each context factor was evaluated along the following four dimensions:

- Whether the factor is exogenous or endogenous

- Whether the factor impacts a think tank's performance and effectiveness

- Whether the factor is thought to have positive, negative, or mixed impact

- Whether the factor has been subject to empirical testing

We explored early results from the literature in 12 elite interviews that we conducted with think tanks' executive directors (8) and donors (4). These interviews particularly highlighted the importance of research, credibility, and reputation, and of the tradeoff between a think tank's income source and its ability to retain research autonomy.

Last we developed and fielded a survey in a convenience sample of roughly 380 think tank executive directors. The survey yielded 94 responses (a 25 percent response rate) from 48 countries.

How does Context Affect Think Tank Decision Making and Policy Effectiveness?

While defining and categorizing context is an essential first step, we also must understand not only how context influences the effectiveness of think tanks in achieving objectives such as policy influence, but also how context factors affect the decisions that think tank leaders and project teams face. Understanding these relationships will enable think tanks and those supporting them to better address external context factors that they may face.

To answer this question, we conducted in-depth case studies using a comparative case analysis method. We selected cases on the basis of three criteria: the level of political competition, the level of governmental effectiveness (or the ability of a government to implement policy), and whether a think tank seeks to be independent or affiliated in its approach to attaining policy influence. The first two criteria refer to exogenous factors that we identified as important and likely to influence think tank strategy based on the literature. The final criterion refers to a strategic decision that think tanks may make, potentially in relation to the exogenous context or environment.

The case study field research was undertaken in four countries: Zimbabwe (low government effectiveness, low political competition), Bangladesh (low government effectiveness, high political competition), Vietnam (medium government effectiveness, low political competition), and Peru (medium government effectiveness, high political competition). Within each country, the research team interviewed key stakeholders, focusing on the decisions and perceived impact of two think tanks that the researchers studied in each country, one that was independent and one that was affiliated.

How do Think Tanks Evaluate and Respond to Context in Practice?

The final question relates to how think tanks' staff and executive directors think about exogenous context – and how they make decisions at the organizational and project levels in response. This information will enable us to provide actionable guidelines that think tanks can consider in relation to the environment in which they are working.

To answer this question, we conducted interviews with think tanks' executive directors and facilitated focus groups with research and communications staff in two countries to learn how context factors impact their project and organizational decisions. We also collected their stories; specifically, we learned about projects' coping and success strategies in challenging political, economic, and social environments. These interviews and focus group conversations were transcribed and analyzed for discussion of context as well as related stories. The results reveal clear trends in the manner in which think tanks consider and respond to context, with interesting patterns within and across country environments.

A Framework for Thinking about Context as it Relates to Think Tanks and Their Decisions

The research questions, while straightforward, are built upon a set of complex relationships between external factors (exogenous context factors), think tank decisions (which include long-term capacities and shorter term strategic and project level decisions), and objectives. For the purposes of this study, we developed a guiding framework to provide a general theory of these relationships and linked them to the research methods and questions (Figure 2.1).

We developed this framework to demonstrate the myriad relationships that exist and factors that influence different think tank decisions. In particular, there are seven relationships that we discuss in this study: 1) the impact of exogenous context on initial think tank strategy and endowment of capacity, 2) the direct impact of exogenous factors on policy influence, 3) the direct impact of exogenous factors (unique to each country) on think tank endogenous capacities, 4) and 5) the interaction between think tank capacities with project and organizational decisions (a two-way relationship), 6) the cumulative effect of project and organizational decisions on think tank policy influence, and 7) the effect of exogenous context on think tank staff and leadership decisions.

Below we consider each of these relationships in more detail.

The impact of exogenous context on initial think tank strategy and endowment of capacity (relationship/ arrow 1). Two of the major political context factors found in the literature review are political competition and government effectiveness. Both are evidenced as important contributors to think tanks' effectiveness. However what is not shown in the literature is how these two factors interact and whether they influence

Figure 2.1: A Framework for Thinking about Context as it Relates to Think Tanks and Their Decisions
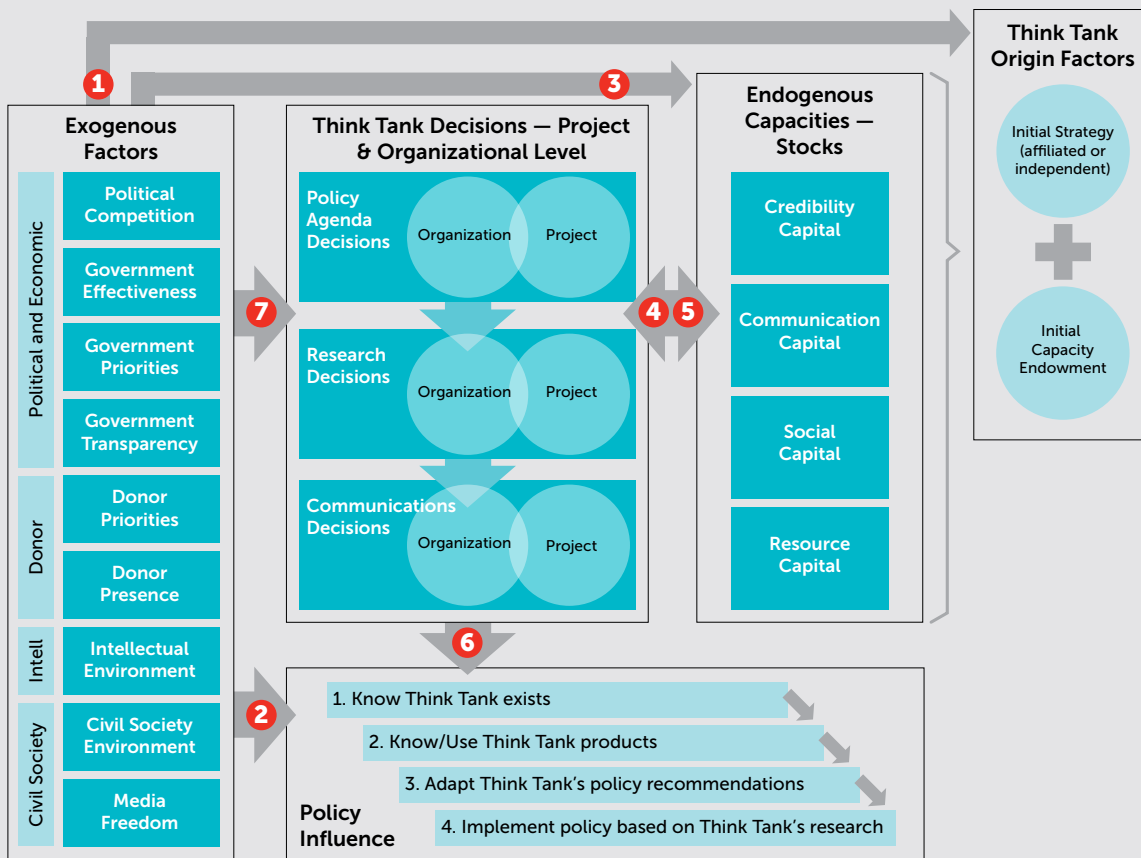
initial decisions by think tanks regarding major strategic directions, including whether to formally affiliate with a political party or remain independent.

We studied this relationship in detail using the case studies in four countries representing the four combinations of differing levels of political competition and government effectiveness context: low political competition and low government effectiveness; low political competition and medium government effectiveness; high political competition and medium government effectiveness; and high political competition and low government effectiveness. The case studies examined the influence of these factors on the strategic choice regarding affiliation or independence.

The direct impact of exogenous factors on policy influence (relationship/arrow 2). While exogenous factors such as political competition and donor presence likely influence the decisions of think tank directors and staff, these factors also may have a universal harmful or helpful effect on the ability of think tanks to achieve their objectives. As such, we sought to investigate the direct

influence of these external factors on the cascade of policy influence.

A think tank's success in achieving policy influence can be evaluated along a four-tier cascade. Successive tiers in the cascade begin with the first and most basic mark of influence, which is that policymakers know that the think tank exists. The second tier is that policymakers know about, respect, and use the think tank's research products. The third tier is that policymakers adopt policy recommendations or policies based on the think tank's research. The fourth tier is that policymakers implement policy based on the think tank's research or recommendations.

The ability to reach any step in the cascade depends both on the choices that think tanks make and on the exogenous context factors beyond their control. To understand the relationship between success in achieving influence and exogenous factors, we utilized field research from the case studies to investigate the perceived influence and measured effectiveness of think tanks. We additionally examined this relationships using data from the survey by testing the correlation between indicators of

exogenous context (political and economic context, donor context, intellectual climate, and civil society context) and three self-reported think tank policy outcomes.

The direct impact of exogenous factors (unique to each country) on think tank endogenous capacities (relationship/arrow 3). Exogenous factors may influence think tank performance in many ways. One is directly, by influencing the effectiveness and performance of think tanks (described in relationship 2). A second way is the effect that exogenous factors have on endogenous capacities.

Endogenous capacities refer to factors of which the value is determined by the think tank. Through our review of the literature, we identified four major categories of endogenous capacities: credibility capital, social capital, communications capital, and resource capital. The stock of endogenous capacity can be developed or drawn down over time by think tank staff and leadership decisions. Therefore, endogenous capacities consist of measurable stocks and flows. Think tank staff and leaders can choose to build their stocks by developing capacity. For example, the choice to hire a new full time communications staff member is likely to build the think tank's stock of communication capacity. Think tank staff and leaders also can leverage available stocks to reach a desired goal. For example, affiliated staff or board members serving in government positions may be contacted to help facilitate connections with policymakers. Over time, the cumulative results of these decisions lead to observable and measurable differences in the level of organizational capacity across all four dimensions.

We researched the relationships between these sets of variables using the survey results. Specifically, we examined correlations between think tanks' endogenous capacity (developed with information from the survey) and country indicators of the four key exogenous factors. We compared these results to a set of hypotheses described in more detail in the section on the survey.

The interaction between think tank capacities with project and organizational decisions (relationships/arrows 4 and 5 — a two-way relationship). All of the

relationships described up until this point have been one way, with a set of factors influencing think tank decisions or outcomes. However one relationship in the framework is two way. The level and accessibility of a think tanks' endogenous capacity influences decisions think tank executive directors and project teams make regarding policy problems on which to focus, research decisions, and target audiences and communications channels. On the flip side, these choices can also draw down or increase an institution's capacities, such as through the development of new resources or social ties. The relationship between think tanks' capacities and decisions is complex, but one that may relate to how think tanks respond to and are influenced by context.

We investigated these relationships in two ways. First, we mined the existing literature to analyze identified relationships between these capacities and choices. Second, we sought to understand how practitioners themselves consider the relationship between decisions and those capacities that they have the ability to build and draw from in the longer term. The executive director interviews and focus group discussions in Rwanda and Indonesia were designed to garner further evidence regarding these relationships.

The cumulative effect of project and organizational decisions on think tank policy influence (relationship/arrow 6). In theory, think tank decisions and actions culminate in their ability to influence policy. While investigating the impact of a think tanks' decision making on its policy influence was beyond the scope of this study, we did seek to understand a related point, which is how think tank staff perceive the influence of exogenous factors on their key decisions. The main methods that we utilized to investigate this relationship were the interviews and focus group discussions with representatives from think tanks.

The effect of exogenous context on think tank staff and leadership decisions (relationship/arrow 7). Finally, think tanks' directors and staff may choose to make specific decisions regarding the research, communications, and policy problems on which to focus based on external factors such as political competition or the role of civil society. While the entire study was designed to better understand this relationship, we investigated this in depth using the focus groups discussions and executive director interviews.

The remainder of this paper presents findings from different components of the research and seeks to share findings that illuminate the relationships described in the framework.

Literature Review

Although there is fairly well-developed literature examining think tanks' effectiveness and performance in developed countries, less attention has been paid to think tanks in developing countries, until recently. Our analysis of the literature on developed and developing country think tanks identifies and describes four main categories of exogenous and mixed exogenous context factors, and four endogenous capacities think tanks may develop in response. We describe associations between political and economic context, donor behavior, civil society development, intellectual climate, and think tank outcomes found in the empirical literature. We similarly describe four capacities that think tanks develop to manage demands for their technical expertise: credibility capital, communication capital, social capital, and financial resources. Our analysis distinguishes think tanks' choices from the forces that act upon them and in doing so contributes to the development of a framework to test empirical relationships in future studies.

Introduction

Think tank donors and practitioners observe that context affects a think tank's decisions at all organizational decision points from a think tank's inception, to the design and execution of its research and communication strategy, to its ability to influence policy. However, external factors such as national and international crises, political competition, and donor policies often enter implicitly into a think tank's choices over time. Preoccupied with day-to-day decisions, and perhaps occasionally short- and medium-term interests of the organization, it can be difficult for decision-makers to see how context shapes, constrains, and enables key choices.

This literature review defines and categorizes think tanks' context in order to make the concepts and choices explicit, and to begin to disentangle the relationship between context and think tanks' strategy and decision making. Although a number of studies have examined these issues independently, to date none have attempted to synthesize or make collective meaning of them, nor have they tried to infer how think tanks could make

strategic choices given the unique features of their operating environment.

The existing literature examines the impact of context on two main types of think tank outcomes. The first, at the global level, is concerned with explaining trends leading to the proliferation and spread of think tanks around the world (see, e.g., McGann and Johnson 2005a). The second concerns the effect of context on a set of organizational-level outcomes, such as the ability to attain policy influence or relevance, achieve policy change, impact knowledge production or the policy agenda, or demonstrate a policy's effectiveness. Our review considered both types of outcomes, seeking mainly to clarify relationships and make empirical results as explicit as possible throughout. To be sure that these outcomes are considered carefully, we provide our summary review tables, including the outcomes examined, in Appendix 1.

Structure of the paper

The paper is organized as follows: Section 1 defines what a think tank is for the purposes of this study and lays out the framework we used to think about think tank outcomes and classify context factors. Section 2 presents the methodology that we used to review and analyze the literature. Section 3 describes the main results of our literature review and Section 4 concludes the paper.

Think Tank Definition

What is a think tank?

For the purposes of this paper, we define a think tank as an organization that produces research and analysis to improve public policies or to improve policies of concern to the public's wellbeing. This definition includes think tanks that have or seek formal or informal affiliation with a political party. Think tanks affiliated with research universities are considered, in this definition, to be independent think tanks, rather than affiliated.[3,4] Also included are independent government-funded think tanks

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[3] Think tanks affiliated with research universities are considered to be independent think tanks because affiliated status is a function of ties to a party or to the government in this definition.

[4] The literature review includes analysis of organizations that have or seek formal or informal affiliation with a political party, even though politically affiliated organizations are outside the bounds of the Think Tank Initiative's funding support. Including affiliated think tanks diversifies the range of institutional types examined and enables learning based on these differences in similar settings.

and policy research organizations that aim to remain politically unaffiliated. We exclude lobbying organizations from our definition. Lobbyists use research to advance the specialized interests of a specific client or group, while think tanks use research to advocate for policies that will affect societal well-being and improve the delivery of public services.

We argue that affiliated and independent think tanks should be distinguished: although both affiliated and independent organizations want to produce rigorous, reliable, and useful research and policy recommendations and remain credible with their respective audiences, affiliated think tanks also seek to be trusted by the political actors with whom they are affiliated. Accordingly, affiliated think tanks often tailor their policy advice to fit those actors' political incentives and constraints. In contrast, independent think tanks often want the policy that maximizes the social welfare, and they want to serve as objective sources of information to all parties and coalitions, not just one.

For the purpose of this analysis, we view political affiliation and independence as key mechanisms linking think tanks to their target audiences. In turn, these audiences exert pressure and influence to affect public policy outcomes.

Think Tank Ultimate Outcomes of Interest

Ultimately, think tanks seek to influence public policy; that is, to produce ideas and proposals that impact the approach, framing, discourse, and policy options that stakeholders consider and reference when they debate and write policy. Think tanks seek to influence public policy in the following three main ways:

1. Contribute to or shape the debate

   - Analyze and present policy alternatives in a structured way so as to shape how public decision making and the opinions of policymakers are framed and understood by others.

2. Improve decision making

   - Contribute to a major policy-decision tool, such as a computational simulator to model government revenues, or provide theories and tools to enable stakeholders to make complex decisions.

3. Affect policy outcomes

   - Impact policy outcomes directly with analysis that leads to an optimal solution, or a solution that aligns with the think tank's policy position.

To achieve the outcomes described above, think tanks need to organize their available resources in the most productive ways, and learn how to respond to context factors that are mainly, or entirely, beyond their individual control. Below, we describe how we have divided our discussion of the literature, according to the three main kinds of factors that think tanks encounter as they work to achieve their ultimate outcomes.

- **Exogenous factors:** Factors that are determined by forces outside of the think tank's sphere of influence that impact the think tank's ability to achieve its goals, including, for example, political or party competition, or country level of economic development.

- **Mixed Exogenous Factors:** Mixed exogenous factors include circumstances in which context is partly a function of a think tank's strategic choice and partly a function of variables outside of its influence. In these circumstances, the think tank—through the normal course of performing its work—both contributes to and is subject to specific dimensions of context. For example, think tanks contribute to civil society by leading or engaging in public discourse. However, the total size, scope, and collective impact of a country's civil society remain beyond its individual control. As a second example, a think tank can produce outputs or cultivate relationships that are intended to gain media exposure, but the think tank lacks strict control over the media's development level and extent to which it pays attention to and promotes the think tank's research results.

- **Endogenous factors:** Factors the value of which is determined by the think tank. For example, the quality and quantity of research staff, research topics, and resource allocation to functions within the organization are all choices determined by individuals and forces operating inside the think tank.

Methodology

To identify the literature concerning think tanks and their context, we performed an intensive search of library and academic databases, including Web of Science, JSTOR, and Google scholar. Additionally, we performed web searches of the grey literature and specific searches of working papers produced by key organizations active in the development, evaluation, or analysis of think tanks, including the World Bank (WB), the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

We performed searches of the academic literature using key terms developed for two broad constructs: context and think tank, in combination with Boolean operators.

Table 3.1: Key Terms and Boolean Operators	
Context	**Think Tank**
context OR environment OR external influence OR policy environment AND	think tank OR policy research organization OR research institute OR policy research institute OR policy analysis institute

We searched titles and topics using one term from the context column and one term from the think tank column, as shown in Table 3.1, using all possible combinations.

The searches that we conducted using key terms in Web of Science yielded 279 results that we refined by article type (including articles, proceedings, and reviews) to yield a total of 191 search results. We reviewed titles and abstracts for relevance, and collected 16 papers for further review. We selected approximately eight articles using a similar approach in JSTOR. In initial searches of the grey literature, we found more than 700 reports, presentations, and blogs that we further screened for quality and topic relevance. Ultimately, we selected 12 articles from the grey literature for review.

In combination, we determined that a total of 36 articles were relevant based on a review of title and abstract content. We eliminated 13 of these articles from the literature review after we reviewed the full article and determined that their content was not directly relevant to the research questions.

Ultimately, 23 articles fit the search criteria for this review and were included in the analysis. We extensively searched each article for any mention of context factors that were likely to affect think tanks' outcomes of interest or to explain broad trends in the growth and spread of think tanks around the globe. Every context factor mentioned in a paper was entered into a row in an excel spreadsheet, along with a definition, and identifying information about the article. We used the spreadsheet to track context factors and their sub-components, as they were defined and used in the literature.

In total, we documented more than 250 context factors mentioned or described in the literature. We further screened this initial list to eliminate duplicate entries and collect similar and related context constructs (where there may have been slight differences in how they were described). After screening, our list included just over 100 unique context factors found in the literature.

We synthesized the large number of context factors first by fitting broad theoretical groupings and sub-categories (e.g.,

'political context' and 'number and strength of political parties', or 'authoritarian government', or 'instability and high turnover of key government positions') to the data. After an initial theoretical categorization, we further analyzed the literature according to the following four main criteria:[5]

- Whether the context factor is exogenous or endogenous, i.e., factors within or outside of a think tank's control;
- Whether the context factor positively or negatively impacts the think tank's performance and effectiveness;
- Whether the context factor is broadly recognized, i.e., there is agreement on the positive or negative nature of context factors within the literature; and,
- Whether the context factor has been subject to empirical testing.

In conjunction with the literature review, we conducted elite interviews with 13 developing-country think tank experts and personnel,[6] including think tanks' executive directors, researchers, and donors. We developed the list of interview contacts based on organizational contacts belonging to the Think Tank Initiative (TTI) and Results for Development Institute (R4D).

The interviews collected background information on think tanks' missions, long-term goals, and steps towards meeting those goals. The interviewers' questions additionally explored context, specifically the interviewees shared thoughts on the following topics:

1. Knowledge of past and current research related to the effect of context on think tank outcomes in developing countries
2. Underlying ideas about the relationship between context and think tank performance
3. Current efforts of organizations, policymakers, and experts to address context factors
4. The relative importance of individual context factors on the ability to influence policy

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[5] To see how we categorized the literature, please see the Tables in Appendix 1, which are organized according to the main theoretical categories that we developed.

[6] Please contact the authors for a list of the countries represented by think tank interviews.

Interviewees' responses were entered into an excel spreadsheet, which we tabulated and analyzed. We grouped context factors according to two categories: factors that impact the think tank's research agenda, and its ability to influence policy.

In addition to augmenting the literature in a few areas, we used the results of the interview analysis to inform our selection of country case studies for field research, and to develop research question for subsequent testing in the online survey of think tanks and context.

Main Results

The results of this analysis are summarized according to the three main kinds of factors presented in Section 1: exogenous, mixed exogenous, and endogenous. We note that the literature primarily consists of two types of studies, those that document context through the case analyses of think tanks in a single country and those that perform comparative case analysis of think tanks in several countries or regions. Only a few studies combine cross-country regression analysis with quantitative case studies or perform quantitative study at the country level.

Exogenous Factors

The literature describes multiple types of exogenous factors as having influence on think tanks' outcomes. We have categorized these exogenous factors into two main theoretical groups: Political and Economic Context and Donors. We developed the theoretical groups by combining similar and related sub-factors described in the literature into meaningful categories. As a result, each theoretical group is composed of several sub-factors as described below.

Political and Economic Context: Country-level factors that relate to the ability to govern, the characteristics of government, political history, and the attitudes and attributes of policymakers. The key sub-factors that we examined in this group include the following: Governance and government capacity; Political parties and competition; Concentration of power; Political transition; Policy relevance and windows of opportunity; Policymakers; and Economic development and liberalization.

Donors: Multinational organizations, bilateral and multilateral agencies, foundations, and international non-governmental organizations that have financed think tanks and civil society organizations in developing countries. The key subfactors that we examined in this group include the following: Donor funding; Donor influence on research agenda; and Democracy assistance.

Political and Economic Context

Factors related to political and economic context have been the most widely discussed in the developing-country think tank literature. More than half of the articles that we examined for this review discussed political context as a key feature of the environment in which think tanks operate.

Governance and Government Capacity

In comparison to closed and authoritarian regimes, evidence suggests that open political systems are more supportive of think tanks' development and prosperity. An analysis of 20 countries across five regions finds that authoritarian rule generally has a "stifling" effect on the existence and operation of think tanks, while multi-party democracies are more likely to foster think tank culture by creating space for active participation in the political arena (McGann and Johnson 2005a). Similarly, an analysis of 50 developed and developing country case studies finds that accountable governments with open political systems allow easier access to information and communication – which is thought to be a prerequisite for the free flow of ideas (Court and Young 2003a).

There is some evidence to suggest that the ability of think tanks to achieve influence increases with democratic forms of government. For example, in Ghana, evidence gathered during its transition between authoritarian and democratic rule shows that think tanks achieved greater influence during periods of democracy and were stifled during periods of authoritarian rule (Ohemeng 2005). Indeed, Young (2005a) argues that open participatory regimes with civil and political freedoms are essential to think tanks' success. Such regimes are "important in allowing evidence to be freely gathered, assessed and communicated" (Court and Young 2003a, 14). A positive correlation is also seen between the spread of think tanks in the developing economies of Latin America, Asia, and Africa and the expansion of political democracy into these countries (Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal 2010; McGann and Johnson 2005a), although a causal relationship has yet to be demonstrated.

The strong relationship between political and media freedoms and democratic forms of governance has also been shown to correlate with a flourishing think tank culture (McGann and Johnson 2005a). McGann (2005b, 3) has argued that "political freedom is a precursor to genuinely independent analysis," with citizens' freedom of expression a foundational requirement for both individuals and, particularly, think tanks, to "perform their duties as independent policy analysts". Similarly, press freedoms are described as enabling factors that allow think tanks "to effectively disseminate their research findings and policy prescriptions without government, legal or extralegal interference" (McGann 2006a, 24).

If, as political theorists would predict, the independent analysis and the quality of policy formulation increases with democratization, the presence of think tanks may be a critical factor enabling policy transfer to occur. However, few think tank investigators have pursued this line of inquiry. The lone exception, Struyk and Haddaway (2011), analyze policy community members' perceptions of think tanks' effectiveness in 19 countries across 5 dimensions. Two outcomes, whether a policy research organization's recommended policies are helpful and whether the organization works positively to impact public policy, are found to be significantly and negatively correlated with World Governance Indicators measuring the quality of public services and of policy formation. This result suggests that improved policy formation and both public services' and the civil service's increased independence from political pressure make it more difficult for policy community members to discern or to attribute to a single organization the impact of individual policy research organizations. However, these results should be interpreted with caution, as variables that might explain this diffusion, such as a country's level of economic development and the number of competing NGO institutions, are omitted from the regression model.

A further limitation of the research conducted to date is that the observed relationship between a vibrant think tank culture (operationalized in terms of the distribution of think tanks globally) and political, press, and media freedoms and democratic governance is based on a majority of cases from countries with "open" political systems.

Case studies of think tanks in closed political and social environments that have considered a think tank's ability to influence change (as opposed to merely the presence of a vibrant think tank culture) yield mixed evidence. Court and Young (2003a) admit that few of their case studies come from non-democratic contexts; although, in comparing Iran and Ukraine's 'less open' political systems, they find that think tanks have minimally impacted policy-making in Iran, while the opposite is true for think tanks in the Ukraine. They call for additional research to explain the differences.

Evidence gathered from elite interviews conducted with think tanks' executive directors suggests that think tanks may redefine their performance objectives when confronted with a closed regime. For example, an

Armenian think tank[7] reported that in lieu of forming ties to "someone high up in the government" to effect policy change, collecting reliable data to enable "whoever wants to deal with the issues" has proven a viable business strategy. Indeed, the defining objective of the organization is to supply quality data, a position that avoids compromising its organizational credibility by aligning with government entities or political factions (Executive Director, Armenia 2013). An interview with a think tank donor revealed two additional strategies. For example, an Armenian think tank developed the opposite approach by forming close ties within the elite government. It gained the credibility to challenge policy directly but only during closed-door discussions. Researchers have observed other think tanks using the strategy of recruiting young nationals educated overseas by providing them an institution in which to conduct impactful work (International Donor 2013a)

Political Parties and Competition

The number of political parties or factions and the extent of competition between them appear to play a role in driving the demand for the kind of evidence-based public policy analysis that think tanks provide. According to McGann and Johnson (2005a), having two or more political parties within a country is sufficient to create demand for policy alternatives and opportunities for think tanks to act.

In politically competitive environments, think tanks report searching for openings in the political system to exploit. Their participation in dialogue with parties contributes to a marketplace of ideas, which fosters greater competition among think tanks for influence. Sometimes, however, it is not parties but strategic ties to well-positioned officials that matters more for gaining influence. For example, in the case of a Peruvian think tank, "contributing to the policy agenda" and "enriching the debate" are weak strategies, but providing independent technical assistance to policymakers offers more policy traction. The challenge is in being in a position to define the topic, rather than merely accepting a "politically guided" issue (Alcázar et al. 2012).

In countries that lack political competition, think tanks take several different strategic approaches. For example, think tanks have sought to fill gaps in public data availability with

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[7] Armenia is currently characterized by "factional competition" in the polity variable of the Policy IV data set, Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2012. "Factional Competition: There are relatively stable and enduring political groups which compete for political influence at the national level – parties, regional groups, or ethnic groups – but particularist/parochial agendas tend to be exclusive and uncompromising with limited social integration or accommodation across identity boundaries. As such, competition among them is often intense, antagonistic, hostile, and frequently coercive. Factional competition is distinguished by a relative balance of group capabilities that prevents any one of the groups from capturing state power and imposing restrictions on other groups. This condition can also appear when the state is a relatively autonomous entity that attempts to broker "peace" among contending factions."

their own collection and dissemination efforts, in some cases to avoid political affiliation; or in Asian countries, they have played a technocratic role while retaining deeply embedded ties to the governments' ministries, having originated there in many cases (Nachiappan, Mendizabal, and Datta 2010).

McGann argues that "where political parties are strong and numerous, dissenting views are expected. When opposing parties are absent or when strength resides almost completely with a single party, countervailing opinions are ignored or silenced." (2005a, 4–5). For example, in South Africa, strong parties activate the think tank culture. Although the African National Congress (ANC) has dominated politics in South Africa for years, the party system is highly competitive, which allows other challengers to enter. In this politically charged system, think tanks exert influence by exploiting a wide range of available opportunities to enter the policy debate (2005a, 216). Elsewhere, Hird (2005a) finds that in the U.S. a high level of political competition and the presence of strong parties allow nonpartisan policy research organizations to bring varied ideas and perspectives into the policy debate.

Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal (2010, 58) show that inter-party competition in India sparked a movement in which political parties began to affiliate themselves with think tanks in order to ensure they had a source for new policy ideas. While this surge in affiliation increased the government's awareness and the visibility of think tanks, it also provided an opportunity for parties to coopt think tanks, depending on the type of relationship formed.

Concentration of Power

The concentration of power constrains how think tanks operate in a variety of ways, which depend on a country's history, level of development, and extent of political openness. In sub-Saharan African countries, autocrats who sought to consolidate power after independence quashed intellectual debate and independent discourse of the intellectual elites – there was no room for any kind of think tank (Kimenyi and Datta 2011a). In South and Southeast Asia, highly centralized regimes created in-house think tanks to undertake research on narrowly constrained topics of great interest to the state (for example, implementing the state's economic development goals) (Nachiappan, Mendizabal, and Datta 2010, 12).

In contrast, one of the advantages of a single decision maker is that it enables think tanks to think about influencing specific individuals rather than a broad range of power-holders (Braun et al. 2010a). In two separate examples, after the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (local government) was created in India and the Ministry of Education was created in Peru, decision making was

consolidated or became more centralized, which enabled policy research institutes to reach policymakers more directly. Although other case studies recognize the importance of power in assessing a think tank's ability to perform effectively (Young 2005b), they do so without producing evidence to support the claim. Weak evidence makes it difficult for us to generalize that 'centralization increases think tank influence' as a rule applying in all country contexts, as there is sufficient anecdotal evidence to suggest the opposite in closed regimes.

Political Transition

Evidence is mixed regarding the impact of political transitions and regime change on the opportunities of think tanks to act. In many developing countries, think tanks proliferate in the wake of collapsed regimes (Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal 2010). Similarly, a case analysis of British think tanks finds that the collapse of postwar social democracy in Britain led to an increase in the number of think tanks (Bentham 2006). However, while collapsed autocratic regimes in Peru and Indonesia increased research uptake, similar changes in the political context in India had more negative effects, breaking linkages between research and policy (Court and Young 2003a, 9).

The kind of transition – i.e., whether it is peaceful or violent and whether the political shift is to a more or less repressive form of governance – may affect think tanks' opportunities. In sub-Saharan Africa, post-independence political transitions reduced political competition and severely constrained intellectuals and independent researchers as newly installed leaders sought to consolidate power and extract economic gains (Kimenyi and Datta 2011). However, newly established policy research organizations have helped society move forward from crises. For example, in Eastern Europe, the Caucuses, Russia, and Central Asia, public policy-focused NGOs were created after the fall of Communism. Similarly, in South Africa, organizations emerged out of necessity to formulate public policy in the post-Apartheid era.

A cross country case analysis by Court and Young (2003) and an analysis of transitional countries in Eastern Europe (Struyk 1999) suggest that volatility can create the potential for policymakers' attitudes and interests to change quickly. In terms of obtaining influence in post-conflict environments, Jones et al. (2009, 16) find that think tanks and policy research institutions can be successful when they present innovative thinking and systematic evidence during formative, agenda-setting stages.

Policy Relevance and Windows of Opportunity

Policymakers' demands for policy analysis shape think tanks' strategies in both developed and developing countries. Research on think tanks in Canada, the U.K., and Germany shows that the timeliness and relevance of an analysis to current debates increases the chances of a policy's success (D. Abelson 2010; Pautz 2011a). Comparative case analysis from a broad range of countries suggests that when policy research is demand-driven "impact speeds up because certain issues related to research – such as topic relevance, importance, solutions to specific problems, among others – precede the beginning of it and thus avoid the imbalance between expectations and definitions of those who 'ask for' research and the ones who 'offer' it" (Braun et al. 2010, 90). Similarly, policy community members tend to rate more highly organizations that they know well and perceive to be working on high priority issues (Struyk and Haddaway 2011).

Stakeholder support for policy change is also important. For instance, in Kenya, 20 years of research and evidence demonstrating the efficiency and safety of decentralized animal healthcare programs remains unsupported by veterinarians, a key stakeholder group, who remain unconvinced of the research findings (Court and Young 2003a). The support of this group might otherwise lead to policy changes that would promote and expand these practices.

In contrast, think tanks in countries in which there is little demand for research define objectives that may help increase policymakers' demand within appropriate limits and expectations. In Nigeria, where the culture of evidence is just beginning to emerge and policy dialogue is not well developed, just getting a policymaker at the same table with researchers is both a major strategic objective and evidence of a think tank's success (Executive Director, Nigeria 2013).

When demand for research becomes acute, such as when exogenous factors change quickly and without warning, think tanks may be able to push forward relevant research in areas in which they already have demonstrated expertise. For example, during periods of "economic, social or political crisis, change(s) in government" a 'policy window of opportunity' can arise in which policymakers demand "a concrete solution to an urgent problem" (Braun et al. 2010b, 89).

Court and Young (2003) suggest that this strategy extends beyond post-conflict or transitional environments. With proper positioning, think tanks can have "substantial impact" during these times. Knowledge demands made of new or emerging governments in post-conflict environments often conflict with urgent demands for government action. Think tanks that are capable of adapting to new political climates may be able to make important policy contributions in time-sensitive windows (Jones et al. 2009).

Periods of economic crises or change have ambiguous impacts on think tank outcomes. While economic crises create windows of opportunity in some countries (Braun 2010a), a study that examined periods of recession in sub-Saharan African countries demonstrated more mixed effects. For instance, during periods of recession, donors' funding increased, which brought needed attention to the region. However, the ideas and values of donors' external advisors imposed new demands on think tanks' strategies and agenda setting, which introduced additional constraints (Kimenyi and Datta 2011a).

Research also finds a link between policy disagreement or debate and policy analysis, although debate does not guarantee that evidence-based inputs will be accepted or determine policy outcomes. In general, the extent to which a policy issue is contested can impact the quality and amount of analysis paid to it. For example, in conflict-affected states, Jones et al. (2009) find that policy contestation increases the leverage of knowledge actors in impacting policymaker opinion (Jones et al. 2009).

In the absence of policy windows, policymakers' taste for change seems to be low (Court and Young 2003a). Indeed, in a number of their cases, Court and Young point out that policy change took a substantial amount of time to achieve.

Policymakers

The impact that a policy's evidence has on policymakers' choices is nuanced and often non-linear. Few studies have empirically isolated the ability of think tanks to influence the opinions and behaviors of policymakers using evidence-based research. The closest that we identify in this review is a cross-state, comparative assessment of domestic Nonpartisan Policy Research Organizations (NPROs) in the US, nonpartisan think tanks that perform research for state legislators. The study concludes that research on its own is rarely able to overcome the ingrained political values of those receiving it; although, a more progressive political culture (as opposed to moralistic, traditionalistic, or individualistic culture) increases the chances that it will. In addition, researchers found that larger, more established NPROs with a history of performing high quality, long term research and analysis influence legislators significantly more than their smaller, less established counterparts. The conclusion drawn from this result is that trust in the research institution, built over time, is an important factor affecting how much leverage and influence an NPRO can attain with a US state legislator (Hird 2005b).

However, in other contexts, evidence suggests that even when the quality of evidence is strong, policy choices made by elites leave the impression that something other than evidence motivates the choice (i.e., that political contestation, institutional pressures or vested interests are at work). For instance, in Tanzania "wide scale confidence in research results (was) inadequate to ensure impact so long as policy decisions (were) fundamentally political," (Court and Young 2003b, 13). In Ethiopia, Young (2005c) reports on the perception of Ethiopian think tank leaders that policy study areas, specifically those involving energy policy, may reflect elite interests, rather than the demonstrated needs of the poor majority. In particular, the policy prioritizes large-scale investment in the energy sector, rather than development or refinement of methods to extract energy from sources already in wide use by a majority of the population.

Turnover or high rotation in policymaker positions can create difficulties for policy research organizations to achieve policy influence. For example, in Pakistan, the Sustainable Development Policy Institute found that high rotation among government officials interfered with their ability to establish productive relationships. Every government change, and there were 6 within a 13-year time, necessitated re-forming ties and adjusting to drastic policy changes (Braun et al. 2010b, 93).

There is limited evidence regarding the impact that the individual demographics of policymakers–e.g., their age, education, and ideology—have on policymakers' receptivity to policy research. In Hird's study of American legislators, their age and sex had little to do with whether they would follow an NPRO's policy advice. Elsewhere, although Court and Young (2003) suggest that policymaker education and their prevailing ideas influence policymakers' decisions, they present no empirical evidence to validate this claim.

Economic Development, Liberalization, and Donors

The positive relationship between economic growth and demand for good governance is fairly well established in the international development literature. The think tank literature additionally contributes that policy research organizations similarly expand in tandem with a rising standard of living (McGann and Johnson 2005a). Think tank scholars have argued that the strong, positive correlation between economic freedom—'the absence of government coercion or constraint on the production, distribution or consumption of goods and services, beyond the extent necessary for citizens to protect and maintain liberty itself' (McGann and Johnson 2005b, 5)— and political freedom means that economic freedoms and growth underlie the creation of a viable think tank culture (McGann 2006a).

The effects of economic liberalization policies on the development of think tanks have been analyzed in sub-Saharan Africa (Kimenyi and Datta 2011b). Results show that liberalization led central governments to shift power to international institutions, regional organizations, or local government authorities. In many countries, orienting towards international institutions increased the government's reliance on both finance and policy advice from outsider institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Donor experts substantially contributed to policy formation, to such an extent that policy debates included just a few central government technocrats and officials from the international organizations. This had the effect of practically eliminating policy debate in the country beyond the halls of the central government.

Liberalization also affects donor-funded research agendas. For example, in their analysis of think tanks in East and Southeast Asia, Nachiappan, Mendizabal and Datta (2010) document how the donor-funded research agendas of think tanks shifted to greater representation of citizens' interests, more scrutiny of government transparency, and an increase in policy support to devolved levels of governance in response to country democratization and political liberalization.

To summarize, the political and economic literature suggests that think tanks prosper in more economically advanced, open, and more democratic political systems in which political and media freedoms support and enable civic discourse. However additional study of think tank behavior in closed environments is needed to determine the generalizability of this finding.

Evidence suggests that competition between a minimum of two political parties generates sufficient demand for think tanks to present a range of policy alternatives. However, a challenge to think tanks that operate in more prosperous and dynamic policy research environments is to differentiate their individual contributions to policy change.

In countries that lack political competition, at least two kinds of strategic behaviors have been observed: close affiliation with government on the one hand, and independence from government on the other. The research examining a think tank's ability to influence change in closed political environments is sparse and anecdotal with mixed results. Donors and executive directors that we interviewed for this study suggest that think tanks may strategically adjust their methods of policy engagement or shift their policy objectives when confronted with a closed regime.

At the same time, political transitions and regime change present opportunities for think tanks to act but the kind of transition – i.e., whether it is peaceful or violent and whether the political shift is to a more or less repressive form of governance – may affect think tanks' opportunities.

There is widespread agreement that policymakers' demands for policy analysis shape think tanks' strategies regardless of development level. However, high demand is no guarantee that policymakers will use this policy analysis and even high quality research can be ignored in the pursuit of political wins.

Donors

Donor Funding

The spread and growth of think tanks in developing countries has been linked to the expanding pie of donor funding that supports the development of civil society in middle- and low-income countries (Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal 2010). However, donor support may substitute local capacity and lead to dependency. For instance, while Poverty Reduction Strategy Processes that have been implemented in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa are praised for increasing investment in local research, they rely heavily on the work of donor researchers and external consultants (Kimenyi and Datta 2011a). This has also been documented in a careful analysis of postwar redevelopment in Bosnia Herzegovina (Struyk, Kohagen, and Miller 2007). In Bosnia, researchers found that the presence of Western experts crowded out domestic capacity to undertake high quality policy research.[8]

The main challenge facing most think tanks is to secure sustainable funding from a range of sources in order to retain independence from the encroaching interests of any one stakeholder (Braun et al. 2010a; Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal 2010; International Donor 2013b) while being able to consistently produce high quality research (Ohemeng 2005).

Overall, donor influence produces mixed results for think tanks. Court and Young (2003a) document both instances. Positive examples include a Dutch donor-funded program in Kerala in which research capacity improved, although policy did not change; a DFID-funded program in Indonesia; and an education project in Peru sponsored by the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank. Negative examples include a donor-funded project in India, where research priorities and recommendations were skewed by the donor's interests and the follow up to the research

results did not occur because the donor's priorities shifted. A final example concerns the benign impacts of research in the Kyrgyz Republic, Iran, and Lithuania where donor funding was not found to be critical to achieving a policy's impact (Court and Young 2003a, 24).

Donor Influence on Research Agenda

Scholars observe that donors' financial support shifts research attention to donors' priorities, which can sometimes lead to a research agenda whose relevance to the country's policy context and culture is questionable (Young 2005b). This is particularly the case in "smaller, heavily indebted countries [in which] World Bank and Bilateral Donor policies and practices can be very influential" (2005b, 729). Studies conducted in a range of environments, including a post-conflict state (Jones et al. 2009), four South Asian countries (Srivastava 2011), and sub-Saharan Africa (Kimenyi and Datta 2011a), support the finding that think tanks adapt their research agendas to donors' interests and demands.

Democracy Assistance

Democracy assistance, also known as political aid, is a particular type of donor funding that seeks to strengthen both government institutions and civil society organizations for the purpose of supporting liberal democracy's spread. Researchers show that in South Africa democracy assistance affects citizens' perceptions of and preferences for the basic definition of democracy. Hearn (2000) finds that the influx of democracy assistance from Western donors in the post-Apartheid era reshaped popular belief from a preference for addressing economic inequality to a preference for procedural democracy, i.e., strengthening government structures. This change represents a substantial shift in perspective from what South Africans had prioritized in the past.

Similarly, researchers show that the influx of democracy funding correlates with changes in the role that Middle Eastern governments played in formulating public policy. Carapico (2002) analyzes resource inflows from more than 600 projects sponsored by Western agencies to Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Yemen from the early 1990s to the early 2000s. In this regional setting, Carapico finds that democracy funding has challenged government as the 'knowledge producer,' leading to increased political risk for groups that have accepted donor democracy dollars.

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[8] The crowding out process can take two forms. First, local think tanks may not be capable of more sophisticated analysis, so they never get contracts from the World Bank or similar international organizations to do high level research. Second, when think tanks start to do such studies, oftentimes international organizations criticize them sharply, thus retaining their monopoly on high quality (reliable) work (Note from Raymond Struyk).

In sum, think tanks proliferate in countries in which donor funding supports them; however, the presence of donors may lead to dependency, may shift the research agenda to donors' priorities, and may substitute away from the development of local research capacity. Thus, the presence of donors is found to have mixed results on think tanks in developing countries.

Mixed Exogenous Factors

Our analysis of the literature classifies mixed exogenous factors into two main categories, intellectual climate and civil society. With mixed exogenous factors, the think tank in the normal course of performing its work both contributes to (i.e., helps to generate and influence) and is subject to (i.e., responds through its strategic choices) intellectual climate and civil society. For example, think tanks contribute to civil society by leading or engaging in various civic forums; however, the total size, scope, and collective level of influence of civil society at the country level remains largely outside of its individual control. Similarly, think tanks can produce outputs or cultivate relationships intended to gain media exposure, but lack strict control over the extent of media development in the country and the degree to which (and the way in which) media outlets actually pay attention to their research results. We differentiate the exogenous and mixed exogenous factors in order to acknowledge the contributions that think tanks can make in the latter case.

Intellectual Climate: Factors refer to the quantity and quality of human capital inputs to think tanks, the accessibility and financial support for tertiary education, and whether the country's environment is permissive of independent analysis and policy contribution. The following key subfactors are included in this analysis: Cultural respect for education and research; Brain drain; and Intellectual competition among think tanks.

Civil Society: The atmosphere in which civil society is able to engage, as well as the network of private and public individuals and associations that engage in public discourse and service provision are meant to act as counterweights to the state. The following key subfactors are included in this analysis: NGO effectiveness; Openness to civil society; Political, historical, and economic origins; and Public interest.

Intellectual Climate

Cultural Respect for Education and Research

With respect to a country's intellectual climate, McGann (2006a) finds that the quality and number of universities has a positive correlation with the presence of a think tank culture. A general level of cultural respect for education and research was found to influence think tanks' prevalence within universities throughout East and Southeast Asian countries (Nachiappan, Mendizabal, and Datta 2010). Inadequate investment in higher education and poor institutional capacity for research among existing academic institutions erodes capacity to generate and use research-based evidence effectively (Young 2005a). However, an intellectual environment in which there is too much government funding and influence reduces independent research and policy advice (McGann 2006a, 25). For example, in their analysis of policy research organizations in Sub-Saharan African countries, Kimenyi and Datta (2011b) find that repressive politics limits the room for intellectuals to enter into the policy debate.

Brain Drain

Policy research institutions also need access to the knowledge and skill factors necessary to produce research. A concern among countries experiencing brain drain is that the exodus of educated citizens will diminish the capacity to generate and use research-based evidence. A second factor includes both the quality and access of policy research organizations to information and data sources that would enable high quality analysis (McGann 2006b). Without credible data, it is difficult for research organizations to provide credible analysis. In cases in which access to government data is extremely limited, some policy research organizations have pursued the alternative strategy of developing and contributing data sets themselves.

Intellectual Competition Among Think Tanks

Researchers find that intellectual competition between policy research organizations encourages the development of intellectual niches. Think tanks must find ways to contribute new ideas first or analyze data that is not otherwise available to competitor organizations. Indeed, researchers find that Latin American think tanks compete against other think tanks and civil society organizations to carve out research niches in order to maintain niche sources of government funding (Braun et al. 2010a).

In sum, the presence of independent universities contributes to a vibrant intellectual environment in which think tanks can contribute analysis to open debate. In addition, the skilled researchers and data produced by academics are necessary inputs to think tank success. While government support for tertiary education is generally a good thing, too high a level of government interference limits the contributions that intellectuals make and has been shown to stifle discourse in authoritarian settings. A competitive intellectual environment for think tanks in Latin America encourages their specialization in niche topics in which they can attract funding.

Civil Society

NGO Effectiveness

Researchers theorize that the size, scope, effectiveness, capacity and sustainability of 'civil society,' including the number of associations falling outside of private and public spheres, non-governmental organizations, and, indeed, the number of think tanks themselves, influence how receptive policymakers are to think tanks' input and how successful think tanks are. Rules guiding the sector's growth and development – the "ease of registration, legal rights, and the degree to which laws governing taxation, research, and regulation" – impact how easy or difficult it is for new think tanks to enter and for the space to grow as a whole (McGann 2006a, 82).

An indicator of an effective NGO environment is the presence of a critical mass of credible and sustainable non-governmental organizations that are "transparently governed, publicly accountable, capably managed, and able to exhibit professional organizational skills." The availability of training and information provided to or accessible by NGOs is associated with the development of information-sharing networks, which is thought to improve NGO effectiveness (McGann 2006a).

Openness to Civil Society

Even a well-functioning NGO sector will not produce think tanks with policy influence if the policy process is not receptive to their input. In their comparison of 18 cases, Braun et al. (2010a) find that policy research institutes are likely to have a greater influence when their country, or at least the specific policy sector in which they work, is receptive to the participation of civil society or to those outside of government. This point is similarly raised in Struyk and Haddaway (2011). For example, during a time when NGO numbers declined in Belarus, think tanks reported being under constant government suspicion that their research would undermine the government's authority and destabilize the country.

While the rules and laws pertaining to civil society may pave the way for think tanks to influence the development of public policy, the causal direction of the sector's development is not clear. According to Datta, Jones and Mendizabal (2010), government's and policymakers' receptivity to policy research depends on the history of civil society's development, suggesting that rules that guide the sector's growth and development may occur in response to key issues, rather than precede civil society's growth.

Political, Historic, and Economic Origins

A number of scholars argue that think tanks emerge in response to the key issues of the day, as permitted by civil society (Mendizabal and Sample 2009; Kimenyi and Datta 2011a; Nachiappan, Mendizabal, and Datta 2010). They theorize that political and historical context influences both how think tanks participate in knowledge production and how they select the research topics that they pursue (Court and Young 2003a; Young 2005c). For example, in East and Southeast Asia many of the first think tanks were created within governments "as instruments to legitimize and consolidate existing regimes or leaders" (Nachiappan, Mendizabal, and Datta 2010, 4).

French and British policy research organizations emerged in Sub-Saharan Africa during the colonial era. According to Kimenyi and Datta (2011a), their work focused on economic growth prospects and Colonial settler's health. For example, the West African Institute for Social and Economic Research was established in Nigeria to help the colonial administration govern, but left African elites little room to address topics of interest to them. In Botswana, Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda, Kimenyi and Datta (2011a) show that World Bank-funded policy research institutes developed to "monitor and help improve government policy implementation" came into being at the same time that World Bank lending to governments was conditioned on their efforts to cut corruption and improve governance (International Donor 2013b). The purpose of these institutes reflected the funder's interest at the time.

Although a think tank's origins may shape its initial character, there is no evidence to suggest that these roots are deterministic. Rather, think tanks' research topics are likely to evolve over time. In Africa, many think tanks shifted their research to topics such as trade and good governance in the 1970s and 1980s as political and economic liberalization began to take hold in many countries across the region. According to Nachiappan, Mendizabal, and Datta (2010), politics of production (economy) and the politics of power (governance) are the factors most likely to shift a think tank's research agenda. For example, as China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan shifted attention to economic growth in the 1980s, a class of economic think tanks emerged in response. These think tanks undertook research and analysis to assist the bureaucracy in implementing national economic development policies.

Public Interest

Evidence suggests that a think tank's positive credibility and visibility with citizens, businesses and governments helps to improve their effectiveness in some settings, but makes little difference in others (McGann 2006a). For example,

an analysis of policy community member's perceptions of the effectiveness of think tanks across a wide range of transitioning and developing countries shows that those that are more highly engaged with the public rank as more effective (Struyk and Haddaway 2011).

Among U.K. think tanks, engaging the public's interest is a critical component of bringing legitimacy to evidence-based policy. U.K. think tanks have sought to create 'downward' linkages to the populations and communities that are affected by policies in order to improve their public image and the public's awareness of them, both essential elements of think tank success in the U.K. according to Bentham (2006, 23). Court and Young (2005) similarly argue that sustainable policy changes should be supported by the populations and groups that they benefit or affect the most.

Public interest may be represented in the way media portray think tanks. In Sri Lanka, Nigeria, and Peru, the frequency with which a think tank appears in the media, whether in a positive or negative light, appears to be significant in increasing its impact. Moreover, researchers find that ties between research producers and the media increase the impact of think tanks in these countries (Alcázar et al. 2012). In another example, Bentham (2006) finds that whether the media portrays a U.K. think tank as being motivated to support the public good, or as a self-interested organization insensitive to public interest, could 'make or break' a think tank.

In one well-documented case in Uganda, neither think tanks nor the public interest played much of a role in formulating policy. Analysis undertaken by K. Moat and Abelson (2011) shows that President Yoweri Museveni enacted a dramatic change in health policy—abolishing user fees for health services in Uganda—just prior to his 2001 re-election without any kind of debate by leveraging informal institutional arrangements then prevalent in Uganda.

Although the importance of the public's interest and engagement varies across different settings, public interest usually complements rather than substitutes credible research. Indeed, the credibility of organizational research is almost universally recognized as a keystone element of the effectiveness and success of think tanks. The disparate experiences of civil society organizations and think tanks highlight this point. Young (2005b, 731) documents that civil society organizations (CSOs)[9] have been able to integrate into the policy process, but that they have frequently faced limited success. "While their legitimacy and credibility with the local communities they support

is widely recognized, national governments remain wary of their greater involvement in policy." In contrast, the think tank approach of "delivering academically credible research-based evidence and advice to policymakers" is frequently a part of achieving success in developing country settings.

In sum, research shows that think tanks gain more influence in contexts in which government is receptive to the participation of civil society actors. While the historical time and place in which a think tank originated endows the think tank with initial capacities and objectives, there is no evidence to suggest that origin is destiny. Rather, think tanks adapt their behaviors over time in response to changing policy priorities.

Endogenous Capacities

Endogenous capacities result from think tanks' choices in the way that they select, combine, and manage factors of production to meet their organizational objectives. Input factor choices, such as the quality and quantity of research staff, short-term and long-term research priorities and topics, and the balance of research or advocacy-oriented work, all contribute to a think tank's endogenous capacity.

Our discussion is organized around the following four capacities identified in the literature that think tanks develop and manage in their efforts to affect policy influence: credibility capital, communication capital, social capital, and resource capital. The ability of a think tank to manage its resources effectively is critical to its success. Our analysis considers management as an input to the endogenous capacity that a think tank exhibits.[10]

Credibility Capital: Factors that contribute to the institutional reputation of a think tank. The following key subfactors are included in this analysis: Research quality; Type of evidence produced; Research agenda; and Political party affiliation.

Communication Capital: Factors that contribute to the organization's ability to produce and present high quality, policy relevant research using a broad array of channels. The following key subfactors are included in this analysis: Communications capacity and Media.

Social Capital: Factors that help think tanks to build trust over time. The following key subfactors are included in this analysis: Institutional origins and governance; Institutional ties; and Network affiliations.

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[9] Civil society organizations include a wide array of non-profit and non-governmental organizations that work directly with citizens to organize or advocate their points of view, implement programs to serve their interests, or conduct other activities to support citizens.

[10] For a thorough discussion and practical treatment of managing think tanks see Struyk (2006). A revised version of this book is forthcoming in 2014.

Resource Capital: Factors related to the funding strategy undertaken by a think tank that enable it to hire and pay staff, manage the organization, and undertake communications and operations tasks. The following key subfactors are included in this analysis: Funding and Finances.

Credibility Capital

Research Quality

The ability of a think tank to produce high quality research and evidence, and to attract and retain high quality staff capable of producing this research, is the foundation on which its credibility rests. Research credibility is a universally recognized criterion of a think tank's success, regardless of whether the think tank is independent or affiliated.

The capacity of a think tank to produce quality research depends upon the quality of its personnel. Indicators of high quality staff include the percent of researchers with a PhD (Ohemeng 2005) or the number of MA and PhD graduates, and their years of policy research experience (Xufeng 2005), the level of technical expertise (Jones et al. 2009), researcher credibility (Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal 2010), and staffing levels (Bentham 2006; Hird 2005a; Xufeng 2005). Highly credible researchers are an indispensable component of a think tank's institutional capacity (Braun et al. 2010a). Almost independent of country context, "expert knowledge is a basic resource for think tanks to build their influence" (Xufeng 2005).

Organizational credibility is built, and must be maintained, over time. It is based foremost on the organization's ability to produce high quality policy advice, grounded in consistently credible policy research (Court and Young 2003a). Because organizational reputation also depends upon government and public perceptions, think tanks must "communicate those organizational features that convey trustworthiness, neutrality, independence, non-partisanship and quality," if they are to establish their credibility (Braun et al. 2010a, 82).

Since high quality research is essential to influence politics (Braun et al. 2010a), many think tanks establish quality control mechanisms that they use throughout the research process, from critical review of proposals (Hird 2005a), to peer review of final products. These processes help to ensure quality and increase credibility and reputation with policymakers (Struyk 2006).

The capacity of policy research organizations to undertake research remains paramount (McGann 2006a). Poor institutional capacity can result from inadequate funding, the absence of peer review systems, or inadequate access to research tools, according to Young (2005c). Additionally, in some developing countries and post-conflict environments, the ability to produce high quality research is hampered by a lack of access to quality data or by a lack of technical expertise to undertake analysis (Jones et al. 2009).

Type of Evidence Produced

Producing straightforward and understandable research is critical to a think tanks' effectiveness (Court and Young 2003a; Struyk 2006; Young 2005b). There is some evidence to suggest that new, hard-nosed, critical research has more impact than research that merely synthesizes the results of other studies. Hird's (2005a) survey of state legislators in the U.S. finds that policymakers' perceptions of a think tank's credibility increased when the think tank analyzed research rather than synthesized it. This preference does not appear to be restricted to just U.S. policymakers. Analysis of think tanks in Sri Lanka, Nigeria, and Peru evidences that applied academic information and research that is "methodologically rigorous, critical, and theoretically robust" have a greater impact than synthesized results (Alcázar et al. 2012, 13). It is difficult for us to know if negative perceptions of synthesis result from the quality of the research produced or from a methodological preference for other methods; high quality meta-analysis and systematic review methods are considered rigorous enough to meet the standards of top tier, international journal publications.

The type of evidence that think tanks produce may matter in individual cases, but it is difficult to make generalizations about which methods are likely to have more impact on policymakers. Regardless, there is a reasonable amount of evidence to suggest that rigor is valued in all settings examined to date. Moreover, think tanks with high internal research capacities, i.e., those with in-house staff who are capable of producing novel research rather than rely on external experts or recycled research, have more influence on political parties in the U.K. and Germany than think tanks with lower internal research capacities (Pautz 2011b). Similarly, larger, more established think tanks with this same capacity have more influence on U.S. state legislators (Hird 2005a). The ability of a think tank to be innovative and creative (Hird 2005a) and to put forward new policy ideas—to act as a policy entrepreneur (Bentham 2006)—has been associated with higher credibility in a few studies, even though it does not guarantee policy success on its own.

Think tanks should provide approaches to research and policy that are individualized and sensitive to local conditions. Datta and Young (2011, 35) highlight how important it is for think tanks to create solutions "from knowledge and policies that are locally generated and context specific." For example, the African Centre for Economic Transformation—widely recognized as a credible think tank—is led by African professionals, and provides policy advice to African governments that draws specifically on a network of experts and preeminent African professionals.

Beyond relevant, local analysis, the ability of think tanks to translate research results into policy has been shown by researchers to increase their influence in some settings. Court and Young (2003a) provide an example of the need for policy translation in Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Although innovative bottom-up solutions improved sustainable agriculture in these countries, the programs' successes failed to engender widespread policy changes. Instead, the research found that effecting policy change depends on dialogue between researchers and policymakers that translates research into policy, and the outcome measures used to evaluate and spread the word about the program's effects.

Research Agenda

There is evidence to suggest that many think tanks struggle to balance the research agenda over the long- and short-term. A think tank's short-term responsiveness to crises and news items enables the think tank to garner media attention, contribute to analysis of current events, and remain relevant to the policy debate. At the same time, having a long-term research agenda, i.e., research that builds upon itself over time, contributes to a think tank's organizational credibility. To achieve this balance a think tank must work out the funding model required to support it. For example, Alcazar et al. (2012, 5) ask whether research topics are "defined on the basis of the availability of funds and/or in relation to the organization agenda?"

To remain credible think tanks must research significant issues that are relevant to the specific contexts in which they operate (Braun et al. 2010a). Relevant research focuses on the major issues facing society at large, and responds to policymakers' demands, providing solutions to the policy problems at hand. For example, Court and Young (2003b, 12) evidence a positive relationship between policy relevance and long-term impact in a case study of Croatia, where there was a "specific and urgent need for drawing and adapting of the appropriate legislation."

Researchers have shown that if a think tank is able to develop ways to explicitly discern policymakers' preferences, or learn which events are likely to attract media attention, that will increase the think tank's success in some instances. The Center for Global Development (CGD) finds that topic selection based on 'problem relevance' is a top priority when it seeks to effect policy change (MacDonald and Levine 2008). CGD has been most effective when it has selected "an important problem for which new knowledge, consensus building, and getting attention from new stakeholders or high-level (potential) champions can make a difference" (2008, 2). When looking to achieve a change in policy, it seeks politically neutral topics and avoids topics that are not already well

framed or defined, and typically it avoids topics for which opinions and beliefs are already quite strong.

Think tanks should have knowledge of the policy agenda setting process and policymakers' preferences. In the U.K., think tanks "have a key role in constructing the frameworks within which public policy and problems are understood" (Bentham 2006, 170). In so doing, they create for themselves political legitimacy based on a constructive objective knowledge, which is crucial to success in the agenda setting process. At the same time, "research will have a greater impact if it fits within a range of what can be seen as 'good advice'" (Court and Young 2003a, 11). To illustrate this, Malawian Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation officials trained during the Green Revolution were receptive to policy ideas building on green revolution technologies and less receptive to new and unfamiliar technologies or methods. To be successful with this group think tanks had to have knowledge of policymakers' preferences.

The ability to assess the demand for a think tank's area of technical expertise is important for the think tank to manage its research agenda. For example, in the Jones et al. (2009) study of post-conflict environments, understudied areas such as fiscal administration or rule of law presented opportunities for think tanks to contribute their technical expertise while demand for expertise in public administration and reform of civil society participation waned because of crowding.

Political Party Affiliation

A fair amount of scholarly attention has been paid to the balance that think tanks must achieve between seeking influence through political party affiliation and maintaining credibility through independence. Studies examine whether the think tank "works for" or is independent of political parties, governments, ministers of state, or public agencies (Hird 2005a; Baier and Bakvis 2010; Kimenyi and Datta 2011a; Pautz 2011b).

Though links between think tanks and policymakers are generally regarded as an essential way to gain influence, challenges arise because of these links. For example, in Ghana, Ohemeng reports that the extent of the ties between prominent think tank individuals and political parties affects public perceptions of transparency and accountability (2005). In a more extreme example, in Baier and Bakvis's (2010) analysis of Canadian think tanks, the authors identify "vanity think tanks" that "serve the dual purpose of spinning the candidate's message or ideology and jetting the candidate around the country on a tax-subsidized expense account" (2010, 41). The ability of these organizations to attract and retain credible researchers is undermined by their political leanings.

Rather, evidence suggests that a limited level of political affiliation improves think tanks' effectiveness in some contexts, but not in others. In fledgling democracies in sub-Saharan Africa that have weak oppositional parties, research organizations do not want to work "too closely with political parties for fear of being seen as partisan and having their research discredited" and instead they align themselves with the more powerful executive (Kimenyi and Datta 2011a, 10).

Datta et al. note that political affiliation is a strategy that think tanks use to increase their policy influence (2010). For example, Abelson and Carberry (1998, 537) document the rise of advocacy think tanks in the U.S. and Canada to drive "ideologically derived" policy agendas and behave like advocates and interest groups rather than independent analysts. However, in so doing, think tanks need to be wary of politicians who seek to promote their opinions by using think tanks as a machine of propaganda. This was the strategy utilized by the Czech Republic's former president, Vaclav Klaus, who upon assuming leadership created the Center for Economics and Politics (CEP) to help promote his own agenda and ensure his election in 2003.

Beyond political affiliation, corporations and elites have been known to assist think tanks to gain access to policymakers; however, this assistance comes sometimes at a cost. Bentham (2006) shows that in the U.K. elite networks may assist in increasing think tanks' access to government officials. However, their support is often conditioned on think tanks' promotion of corporate and elite interests. Researchers also have studied links to the private sector, though minimally. For instance, a study linked think tank development in Taiwan and Hong Kong to the private sector, which has played a key role in exerting its influence over both the think tank and policy space (Jones et al. 2009).

Srivastava's case analysis of think tanks in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka concludes that even though an organization's agenda may be compromised by its elite associations, its proximity to power increases its ability to influence policy and at the same time provides reliable funding and government access (2011). Within the Southeast Asian context, the first think tanks to emerge originated as elite, establishment bodies, which often were set up within the government itself (Stone 2005). However, close government associations require think tanks to adhere to state regulations on lobbying, donations, taxation, and funding, which can restrict think tanks' autonomy (Srivastava 2011).

A think tank is likely to adopt a deliberate strategy of affiliation—whether corporate or political—in high political competition environments, as inter-party competition tends to create a demand for a constant supply of policy ideas. Alternatively, in low competition environments, think tanks may be reluctant to align with oppositional parties

looking to challenge the legitimacy of the state. To retain their research credibility with audiences beyond the party, however, think tanks cannot allow these affiliations to bias their research; this is supported by research compiled in interviews and a literature review by Datta et al. (2010). Think tanks should have transparent budgets and proffer unbiased analysis to retain their credibility as independent analysts.

In sum, a think tank's research credibility is a keystone underlying its ability to influence policy. The quality of research staff is considered to be critical to the quality of research produced, as are well developed quality methods such as peer review.

However, that a think tank produces high quality research on its own is probably insufficient to influence policy. To gain influence, successful think tanks actively build their research credibility over time by selecting topics in which they are likely to have an impact, consistently producing high quality research and unbiased analysis, implementing quality controls such as peer review, and by communicating their results strategically.

Researchers have not garnered evidence to suggest that any particular kinds of data or analysis have more of an impact than others; however, research produced by larger, more established U.S. institutions was viewed as more credible in a study of U.S. think tanks.

Last, think tanks must decide whether to affiliate with a political party or other elite associations or be independent. To date no study has compared the policy influence of affiliated and independent think tanks in different contexts and, therefore, the question of optimal strategy remains open. However, the literature suggests that most choices present a potent three-way trade-off between a think tank's access to funding, autonomy in setting its research agenda, and the extent to which the think tank directly or indirectly accesses policymakers.

Communication Capital

Communications Capacity

Communication capital includes a think tank's organizational capacity to produce and present high-quality, policy relevant research using a range of channels. Research has examined the importance of framing and presenting research findings across a wide range of contexts (Jones et al. 2009; Braun et al. 2010a; Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal 2010; Hird 2005; Struyk 2006), the role of communication in setting the policy agenda (Bentham 2006), communication diffusion strategies (Alcázar et al. 2012; Struyk 2006), the abilities of think tanks to affect the policy making process using radio and print media in sub-Saharan Africa (Ohemeng 2005), and ways of measuring media exposure, publication output and other indicators of media attention over time (D. Abelson 2010;

D. E. Abelson 1999; D. E. Abelson 2002; Bentham 2006; Ohemeng 2005; Clark and Roodman 2013).

There is widespread agreement among researchers that strong communication capacity and a coherent communications strategy are important for think tank success. Young (2005b) calls good communications "essential" to influencing policy design. For example, in an ODI workshop in Morocco, participants discussed the problem of poor communication skills among both CSOs and government, and noted that it is important for think tanks to use consistent language that is universally understood.

Braun et al. (2010a) distinguish the importance of strong organizational and individual communication skills, noting that both contribute to more informed policymaking. A research process that is clear from its outset leads to more success (Court and Young 2003a; Struyk 2006). Think tanks also should identify audiences for results early on, tailor products to meet the audience's needs, and continually adapt the communication strategy, according to Struyk. Moreover, the "first step in developing a communications strategy for a project is to understand the policy process and timeliness of the issue" (Struyk 2006, 68).

Media

Media access is an essential component of effective think tank communication. Across the globe, policymakers draw much of their knowledge from the media. For example, in multi-party democracies in Africa, media play a crucial role in channeling public opinion to policymakers (Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal 2010). In Ghana, media are key mechanisms to broaden audiences and disseminate research (Ohemeng 2005). Beyond the conferences and roundtable discussions that are covered by the media, think tanks also engage in more interactive discourses with the public. For instance, think tanks in Ghana take advantage of television and radio shows that the public can call to join in the debate.

Media exposures are used to identify which think tanks affect policy outcomes. Abelson (2010) tracks the number of media exposures of U.S. think tanks to identify which institutes most actively frame public policy debates. He argues that think tanks gain credibility from positive exposure in the media, increasing the perception that they wield influence on a topic. Elsewhere, Alcazar et al. (2012) propose an input measure as an alternative when an organization's communication and dissemination results are not tracked. This measure examines organizational staff allocations and the funding set aside for communication strategies, and analyzes the purpose of the communication (i.e., whether it is to raise visibility or establish relationships).

However, not all think tanks' communications are directly observable by researchers, either because products are not publicly disseminated or because their communications consist of more informal interactions with policymakers. For example, MacDonald and Levine (2008) measure think tank-policymaker linkages using "touches." A touch includes any activity, output, or interaction with a policy community member. For example, at the Center for Global Development policy and outreach associates combine the number of NGO and Capitol Hill staff phone calls (made and received), meetings, e-mail conversations, and information requests in a single "touch" indicator (2008, 16).

In general, by using different channels to convey research findings, think tanks increase their chances of reaching their intended audiences. Ohemeng (2005) documents research dissemination through events held for public officials, private sector, CSOs, and the public. The Center for Democratic Development (CDD) in Ghana finds that roundtable discussions are one of the most powerful ways in which they can influence policy decisions.

In sum, to be effective, think tanks must be able to communicate their high-quality research using a variety of methods and channels. Research shows that think tanks that have a clear communication strategy in place from the start of a research project that is tailored to meet the time demands of the policy process are more likely to have success in comparison to projects without a clear communications plan.

Think tanks' communications methods include public dissemination of research findings, private meetings, and direct outreach to policymakers. Only a portion of think tanks' communication activities, however, can be easily observed and measured by researchers using routine data on think tanks' publications, news stories, and events. Researchers do not have access to the email conversations, information requests, phone calls and more informal face-to-face meetings that think tanks hold with policymakers.

Social Capital

Institutional Origins

A founder's academic affiliation and leadership, intellectual reputation (Braun et al. 2010a), and strategic identity (Bentham 2006, 168) can provide a think tank with the initial credibility that it needs to succeed. Over time, a think tank's leadership must find ways to leverage individual ties because obtaining "the backing of individuals and/ or governmental and non-governmental organizations with legitimacy or weight in the public realm helps policy research institutes (PRIs) position themselves as credible and solid institutions that attempt to enhance public policies" (Braun et al. 2010a, 82).

Institutional Ties

A think tank that aims to have a significant impact on government should hire staff who have previously worked with or in government (Braun et al. 2010a). Former public officials who work at a think tank can connect with current policymakers who are their former colleagues. In China, one of the benefits of close institutional ties to government is that "in many cases, a think tank is able to influence policies not only because of its expertise but also mainly because its experts can submit their research reports and ideas to decision makers through administrative linkages; their ideas become part of a small set of policy alternatives" (Xufeng 2005, 341).

In a few context studies, researchers have found that the power and strength of policy networks and ties are important. In post-conflict environments, Jones et al. (2009, 3) find that the number and relative strength of issue champions increases a think tank's effectiveness: "a larger and stronger set of issue champions (defined as policymakers or other key stakeholders closely linked to the policy process) increases prospects of policy change."

A think tank's capacity "to reach policymakers with research results and proposals is tightly linked to the ability to gain consensus on the institute's goals, activities, and proposals among other key stakeholders that influence the policymaking processes." Therefore, according to Braun et al. (2010a, 83), building high level support for the think tank's organizational strategy increases its credibility with policymakers. In order for a think tank to achieve the goal of building high level support for the organizational strategy and objectives, it must constantly reach out to policymakers through diverse institutionalized mechanisms. These mechanisms include incorporating policymakers into research projects, arranging personal meetings with policymakers, detecting entry points into government, leveraging former public officials as staff, and taking advantage of government rotations.

Court and Young emphasize the importance of feedback processes between researchers and policymakers (2003a). In order for research to lead to policy change, feedback, dialogue, and collaboration are needed. A failed example of this can be seen within a case in India, where insufficient feedback mechanisms were in place to continually update policymakers on the research findings behind a particular policy issue. By contrast, in their Caribbean healthcare example, policymakers were involved at all stages; Court and Young believe that this involvement led to a successful policy outcome.

Strong ties between think tanks and academics can also be beneficial. In India, for example, Datta et al. note that "academics with links to senior government officials and/or politicians have often been viewed as key intermediaries" (2010, 58). In addition, "formal or informal networks with other knowledge producers, such as prominent academics, appear to play an important role in claiming credibility for certain policy messages," in Latin American countries (Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal 2010, 65). Similarly, think tanks in Korea and Taiwan (Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal 2010) and in Sri Lanka (Jones et al. 2009) have benefitted from close relationships to scholars and prestigious national universities.

Network Affiliations

Think tanks' involvement in both national and international networks is one of the best ways to reach a broader audience and receive greater support. Networks essentially "serve as multipliers for the institutes' key messages," connecting PRIs with important social and political stakeholders, as well as other institutions (Braun et al. 2010a, 83). Court and Young (2003) similarly emphasize the importance of both formal and informal networks to support think tanks' potential for policy impact, a point also raised in Stone (2002).

The strength of think tanks' ties to 'global knowledge networks' is the exposure participants gain to peer learning and community building. These ties enable them to share information with a broader pool of institutions than they might otherwise have access to. For example, the Chronic Poverty Research Center, a partnership of NGOs, universities, and researchers from Bangladesh, India, South Africa, Uganda and five West African countries, works to bridge the North/South divide and share information and resources (Datta and Young 2011).

Among national networks, policy communities can be built up based on which interest groups hold a stake in the policy issue at play. These networks or professional associations disseminate research findings among their constituents and to associated NGOs, donors, and expert intermediaries, helping to create a consensus for change (Struyk 2006). In China, social elite networks of think tanks include entrepreneurs or experts and scholars drawn from other research institutes. Here, "the more think tank experts have guanxi[11] with other policy actors, the greater their own and their institute's influence on different groups in the policy process" (Xufeng 2005, 342).

In sum, researchers theorize that successful founders of think tanks endow their respective institutions with initial

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[11] Xufeng defines guanxi as personal ties, and refers to the number and quality of personal ties as a measure of how much policy influence an actor has with other policy actors in the policy process.

credibility, but that think tanks' leaders need to cultivate individual and institutional social connections to realize the think tanks' potential. Think tanks sometimes seek staff with individual ties to government officials and academics as a means to reach policymakers. Some institutions are known to recruit candidates from government positions, cultivate open channels of communication with policymakers directly, or form strategic partnerships with prominent academics. Think tanks with ties to policy communities and national and international knowledge networks likely are exposed to a broader range of ideas and strategies than those without such ties.

Resource Capital

Funding and Finances

Financial resources are required to manage, attract, and retain research staff and perform the other operational tasks of a think tank. Think tanks' sources of funding include governments, political parties, corporations, multilateral and bilateral agencies, foundations, individual contributors, and research services or contracts. Strategically, think tanks must find a funding strategy that hedges against the risk of bias that can arise from the interest or stake financiers may have in particular research outcomes or broad policy agendas.

Among the mostly independent think tanks that Braun et al. analyze (2010a), a range of diversified and flexible funding sources is ideal. In Ghana, for example, independent think tanks primarily rely on external sources of funding, particularly international donors, rather than rely on governments to fund research (Ohemeng 2005).

The size of a think tank's budget has been shown to impact the amount of attention received in some contexts. For example, Abelson finds the budget size of U.S. think tanks corresponds to the amount of media exposure the organization obtains (2010). Struyk and Haddaway (2011) also find that size, as measured by number of researchers, has a positive effect on several measures of think tank success. Budget size is less clearly related to media attention in the study by Baier and Bakvis (2010, 36) of Canadian think tanks: "while there are some think tanks that have larger budgets and command more attention than others, there is still remarkable variety."

In sum, a study of 18 successful independent think tanks concludes that a diversity of funding sources help to ensure that no single financial interest dominates a think tank or gives the appearance of dominating the institution. This is key to enable independent think tanks to retain their credibility. The size of a think tank's budget has been shown in several studies to affect the amount of media attention that it receives, but there is no evidence that it is a determining factor.

Conclusions

Our review of the literature found a strong association between open political systems, political and media freedoms, democratic forms of governance, economic growth, and the proliferation and success of think tank culture. However, these relationships have not been established as causal and mainly rely on studies of think tanks in open political systems. Research suggests that the use of a more inclusive definition of a think tank will challenge the strength of the relationship, particularly concerning think tank emergence in some South Asian countries and China.

We additionally found that the level of political competition, parties, or factions may change policymakers' appetites for open dissent and demands for novel ideas, and may impact the strategies that think tanks use to present data and evidence. While open dissent and idea competition is a common strategy of think tanks studied in Canada, the U.K., Germany, and the U.S., it is a much less welcome approach in closed, authoritarian regimes. This is a challenge for think tanks that operate in these contexts, as evidence suggests that think tanks gain more traction when the government is receptive to their participation.

There is evidence that suggests that think tanks in less open political environments adjust their stated goals and outcome measurements to reach (or avoid reaching corrupt) policymakers in situations in which they have the opportunity to do so. However, even as think tanks pursue alternative policy outcomes, their drive to establish and retain research credibility is both enduring and universal.

The priority that a think tank accords to its research and its research credibility often is challenged when it navigates donor relationships, which invariably present think tanks with a trade-off between funding necessity and research autonomy. Think tanks discuss the strategy of obtaining a diversified portfolio of donors, but find that it is difficult to realize in both low- and high-activity donor environments. For instance, in environments in which donor activity is limited or non-existent, think tanks may have few alternative sources of funding. However in highly competitive donor environments, think tanks compete (partly) on their ability to demonstrate impact, which becomes more challenging to claim (and measure) in a marketplace crowded with ideas.

While the identity of a think tank's founder and the historical time and place in which it is founded endow the think tank with initial capacities and objectives, there is no evidence to suggest that origin is destiny. Rather, think tanks adapt over time in response to changing policy priorities. For example, although a think tank's research credibility is a keystone underlying its ability to influence policy, its hiring decisions affect the quality of

research staff, and research managers choose whether to implement quality assurance methods such as peer review.

A country's intellectual climate and civil society facilitate a think tank's access to academic researchers and ideas, and to open debate channels with policymakers. Independent universities contribute to a vibrant intellectual environment and the skilled researchers and data produced by academics are necessary inputs to a think tank's success.

Successful think tanks actively build their research and communications credibility over time by selecting topics in which they are likely to have an impact, consistently producing high quality research and unbiased analysis, and by developing and implementing communications plans from the start of their research projects. In addition, think tanks build individual and institutional social ties to increase the flow of information from the think tank to policymakers and back again.

Effective think tanks use a variety of formal and informal communication channels; however, only a fraction of their activities can be observed easily and measured by researchers. Routine data collection on think tanks' publications, news stories, and events should be augmented with indicators of informal interactions such as phone calls and face-to-face meetings in order to capture the full picture of communications effort.

In sum, the research literature on think tanks provides some evidence that context affects think tanks' outcomes and behaviors. Although there are a few quantitative studies, the literature generally lacks testable empirical models of think tanks' performance. One of the challenges to developing such a model has been lack of consensus on what constitutes context in different environments.

To begin to address these gaps in the scholarship, we developed a model of exogenous, mixed exogenous, and endogenous factors using the definitions put forward in this review. Making these categories explicit enabled the research team to operationalize the constructs and test the presumption that external contexts affect think tanks' behaviors across a wide range of country settings. In the process of doing so, we hope to contribute new knowledge about the relative importance of context in different settings and with respect to different decisions.

In addition, the literature contributes little information regarding the relative importance of these factors in think tanks' and donors' decision making processes. The absence of this information makes it difficult for think tanks to look across contexts and discern which adaptive strategies are likely to be relevant and useful in their home contexts.

Last, the challenge for think tanks to discern optimal strategy given context is an underdeveloped area of study and is made more difficult by the challenge of accounting for the interaction between context factors and strategic choices. For example, a strategy for a low political competition context may differ depending on whether the government's ability to implement policy is highly effective or not at all effective. Thus, we considered the various methods required to hold some context factors constant while examining variation in the outcome of interest (i.e., the strategy). The literature suggests that most choices present a potent three-way trade-off between funding access, research agenda autonomy, and the extent to which the think tank directly or indirectly accesses policymakers. Given context, which of the options presents the greatest likelihood of success?

Case Studies

Overview

In order to understand strategy and policy choices made by think tanks across a range of political contexts, we conducted in-depth case studies of think tanks in four countries.

Each case study analysis consisted of three elements. First, we analyzed each case as a whole in relation to our theory of change to assess whether the links between context, strategy, and effectiveness functioned as hypothesized. Second, we drew lessons from the four cases to explain how think tanks adjust their strategies in response to their environments. Given our case selection strategy, which we describe below, we were able to make plausible claims about the relationships between the context and think tank strategy and performance that add to the emerging theory of think tank strategy in the developing country context, and provide compelling policy advice to donors and policymakers about how to support the efforts of think tanks to improve policymaking. Our claims are based on the actual experiences of the think tanks that we studied in the case studies. The third and final output of the case studies was our more nuanced and detailed understanding of the concepts of context, strategy, and performance that can be operationalized in a more systematic way.

The next section of this report ("Approach") first explains the process by which we selected the four case study countries. Next we lay out the theoretical underpinnings according to which we evaluated think tanks' strategies and success. We describe the process that we followed to understand each case study country's context and to choose the two think tanks of focus in each country. We next describe our preparation for fieldwork and the fieldwork process itself. The "Influence of Political Competition" section of this report lays out our hypotheses for think tank success based on a country's context and presents findings from our field research in low political competition and high political competition case study countries. In the "Influence of Government Effectiveness" section we present our findings on how government effectiveness affects the implementation of policy and the influence of international donors with regards to think tanks' strategy and success. In the "Think Tank Strategies in Context" section we present our findings on the strategies of think tanks that "go against the grain" and further explore the influence of international donors. The Conclusion summarizes our key findings and what they mean for donors that support think tanks.

Approach

Myriad context factors—political, social, and economic—may influence the effectiveness of a think tank. The challenge that we confronted in conducting our study was to account for as many of these factors as possible with a limited number of cases. Our solution was to use comparative case research: we compared the effectiveness of think tanks with similar approaches operating in different contexts. Our strategy was to first narrow the context factors to examine them and then to select appropriate case countries to illuminate each context.

Country Selection

To select appropriate cases, we first isolated two of the most important categories of exogenous factors likely to affect think tank strategy: political competition and government effectiveness (i.e., state capacity).

Political competition is relevant to our analysis because it affects the degree to which there are multiple political actors—political leaders or parties—that might implement policies based on a think tank's research and policy advice. In addition, the number of political parties or factions and the extent of competition can drive demand for evidence-based public policy analysis (McGann and Johnson 2005a) or provide opportunities for think tanks to define and shape policy topics (Alcázar et al. 2012). Political competition also encompasses a political system's relative openness versus its repressiveness. Political openness and media freedom appear to support the development of think tanks; more open societies typically harbor a larger number of think tanks (Court and Young 2003a; McGann and Johnson 2005a; Ohemeng 2005; Young 2005a; Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal 2010).

Government effectiveness affects the degree to which a government is able to implement policies. In low effectiveness or low capacity states, for example, policymaking may be relatively limited or closed, which limits the amount of influence that any given think tank can have.

We selected four countries to study that varied across these two dimensions. To select these four countries, we arrayed all developing countries according to their degree of political competition and government effectiveness. We measured political competition using the "political competition" variable from the Polity IV regime type data. We measured government effectiveness using the

"government effectiveness" measure from the World Bank Governance Indicators.[12] The "political competition" variable rates regimes on openness on a scale that varies from repressive to fully competitive. "Government effectiveness" captures "perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies (Worldwide Governance Indicators, ND). We then selected cases that varied between 1) high and low levels of political competition and 2) medium and low values of government effectiveness (since the Think Tank Initiative is most interested in supporting think tanks in developing and emerging economies), and that, conditional on 1 and 2, offered the greatest possible geographic variation across the regions in which IDRC and TTI work (sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America). Figure 4.1 shows the country choices that resulted from this case selection method: Vietnam, Zimbabwe, Peru, and Bangladesh.

Think Tank Types

We focused our case studies on think tanks that engage primarily in policy research to improve public policies or to improve policies of concern to the public's wellbeing. These think tanks stand in contrast to those organizations for which research is a secondary or tertiary goal and that engage primarily in consulting, grassroots movement building, political advocacy (lobbying), or providing services to clients.

Many organizations that call themselves think tanks or are generally understood by the public to be think tanks focus almost exclusively on consulting projects or policy advocacy. While these organizations conduct some internal research, research and policy influence is not their primary goal. On the other hand, there are many government agencies and NGOs that conduct scientific research on issues like agriculture or public health, or that

regularly provide statistical or economic analyses to a country's government or to the public. We did not include these organizations in our potential set of think tanks to examine because they are not concerned primarily with public policy research and because they define themselves largely as information providers, rather than influencers.

In each case study country, we examined think tanks that differed in the strategies that they adopted to relate to the government: either "affiliation" or "independence." *Affiliated* think tanks have or seek a formal or informal affiliation with a political party or with the government. *Independent* think tanks, by contrast, have a goal of being unaffiliated with political parties or the government and do not seek to speak to or for a particular political or economic group in the country.

Affiliated think tanks seek to be trustworthy sources of information for a specific political party or coalition of parties or for the government itself. Like all think tanks, affiliated think tanks try to produce rigorous, reliable, and useful research and policy recommendations. But affiliated think tanks seek also to be trustworthy to the political actors with whom they are affiliated, by tailoring their policy advice to those actors' political incentives and constraints. There are three ways a think tank may be considered "affiliated." Affiliated think tanks may have a formal or statutory affiliation with the government or with one political party or coalition either because they are an official government organization financed by public funds and directed by government officials, or because they are formally associated with a prominent political party or coalition of parties. Affiliated think tanks may also have an informal affiliation with one political party or coalition because they are informally associated with parties and work to develop policy ideas mainly for one party. Finally, think tanks may be considered affiliated when they have no affiliation with a party but are mission-driven organizations that advocate for a particular ideology through the institution's policy research.

Figure 4.1: Table of Case Study Countries		
Government Effectiveness	**Political Competition**	
	Low	**High**
Low	Zimbabwe	Bangladesh
Medium	Vietnam	Peru

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[12] These measures are also highly correlated with the similar and widely used measures by Freedom House.

Independent think tanks, by contrast, are unaffiliated with the government or particular parties or coalitions. This is either because they want to be perceived as non-political, non-partisan, and non-ideological, or because independence from a party is a part of their mission to seek the best policy (e.g., the welfare-maximizing policy) and to be objective sources of information to all parties and coalitions, not just one.

Evaluating Think Tank Success

We evaluated a particular think tank's success along a four-tier "cascade of influence," shown below, each tier of which is necessary for the following tier to be possible. The first and most basic mark of influence is that policymakers know that the think tank exists. The second tier is that policymakers know about, respect, and use the think tank's research products. The third tier is that policymakers adopt policy recommendations or policies based on the think tank's research. The fourth tier is that policymakers implement policy based on the think tank's research or recommendations. The cascade enabled us to use a more simple, transparent, and relatively more objective method than has been used previously in the think tank literature to assess a think tank's influence across countries and contexts. The cascade conferred one additional advantage in that the levels of influence are independent of the strategy employed. In this section of the report, we focus on the more macro-level strategies of independence versus affiliation and discuss the extent to which these strategies are associated with influence across contexts.

Hypothesizing the Relationship between Context, Think Tank Strategy, and Influence

If we assume that think tanks are trying to reach as far down the cascade of influence described below as they can, we expect both government effectiveness and political competition to be important. Government effectiveness is important because it describes how realistic it is for a think tank to be able to influence the implementation of policy, the fourth tier of our cascade; in ineffective states that implement few policies, it may be reasonable to expect that think tanks influence only the dialogue around policy (tiers 1-3) rather than the government's on-the-ground activities (tier 4). Moreover, in situations in which effectiveness is highly limited, even policy formulation and adoption may be limited, further limiting think tanks' abilities to influence policymakers.

We further expected political competition to be important to think tank influence, and, specifically, to condition whether *affiliated* or *independent* think tanks are more effective, given the level of government capacity. In low political competition states (like Vietnam and Zimbabwe, among our cases), we expected that affiliated think tanks would be more effective because the political system is relatively closed and influence and adoption depends on access, which is much easier for affiliated think tanks that are in longer-term relationships of trust with their intended audiences. In states with higher levels of political contestation, however, consistent influence may depend on staying above the political fray. In states with regular political turnover, an affiliated think tank may be influential when its constituency is in office, but when that actor or party is out of office the think tank is more vulnerable to attacks on the credibility of its research and policy advice by the political opposition. Thus, in states with high political competition and medium government effectiveness (like Peru among our cases), we hypothesized that independent think tanks would be more effective because they can maximize their access no matter which political party/coalition is in power. And even in states with high political competition and low government effectiveness (like Bangladesh), we hypothesized that independent think tanks would be more effective because they can maximize potential for policy adoption in a very fluid political situation: as coalitions shift they can adjust, and not come out on the "wrong" side of an issue or election.

Figure 4.2: Cascade of Influence

1. Know Think Tank exists
2. Know/Use Think Tank products
3. Adapt Think Tank's policy recommendations
4. Implement policy based on Think Tank's research
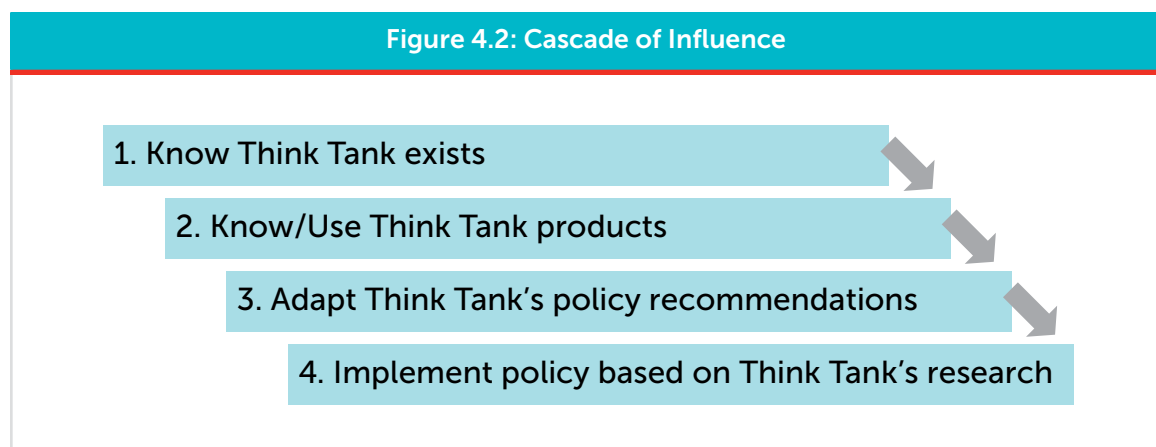
Understanding Country Context

In each case study country, we studied two think tanks, one affiliated and one independent. We began by developing a broad understanding of each country's think tank landscape and its political and economic environment. We examined each country's recent political history to understand the political parties, party system, prominent civil society organizations, and any instances of social unrest. We also compiled details on what scholars and country experts have said about a country's political competitiveness, political culture, and government effectiveness. Then we examined the country's recent economic climate, especially the economic growth rate, primary industries, rural development, economic disparity, poverty, and how it compares economically to other countries in its region.

We also considered the policymaking environment in each country, first assessing whether think tanks in the country were significantly studied in the relevant academic literature, as well as the landscape in which think tanks operate, specifically, the analytic rigor, technocratic networks, foreign funding of think tanks, barriers to research, and think tanks' connections to political parties.

Selecting the Think Tanks

After we gained a broad understanding of each country's political, economic, and policymaking context, we made a list of all of the think tanks that we could find in each case study country referenced in academic literature, think tank databases, and global rankings reports. For each think tank we compiled key details on the think tank itself and designated it as either affiliated or independent based on scholarly and media accounts, or by details on its website. (At this stage, we included all policy research organizations or organizations that described themselves as think tanks.)

For each case study country we then narrowed down our initial list of think tanks to a short list of three affiliated and three independent think tanks, based on their prominence and their engagement in policy research as the primary goal or focus of their work (as opposed to those organizations for which research was secondary). We considered think tanks that are currently active in trying to influence policy so that we could assess their current strategy and influence. We judged which think tanks were most prominent by consulting country experts, academic accounts, and media accounts of the think tank landscape. We chose to focus on the most prominent affiliated and independent think tanks to minimize differences in success that may result from meaningful differences in prominence. We also compared the six think tanks by their dates of founding, sizes of staff, issues of focus, and levels of funding (all of which may be indicators of prominence). Our selection strategy facilitated within country comparison of affiliated and independent strategies for influence by holding as constant as possible think tank size and capacity, but it limited our ability to compare across a wider range of think tank types.

From this set of six we narrowed down the short list to two think tanks: the most prominent affiliated and independent think tanks that match most closely on their dates of founding, staff sizes, focus, and funding. In several countries the think tanks did not match perfectly on the variables for which we hope to control; in these cases we selected the think tanks that were generally deemed to be the most prominent in the academic literature or in the accounts of the experts we consulted.

For the purposes of the write up and at the request of some of the think tanks, we do not refer to the think tanks or individuals interviewed by their real names. We instead refer to each think tank by their country and their type (affiliated or independent). We present the pseudonyms of the selected think tanks in Figure 4.3 below.

		Political Competition	
		Low	**High**
Government Effectiveness	**Low**	**Zimbabwe** Aff: Zimbabwe Affiliated Think Tank (Z-A) Ind: Zimbabwe Independent Think Tank (Z-I)	**Bangladesh** Aff: Bangladesh Affiliated Think Tank (B-A) Ind: Bangladesh Independent Think Tank (B-I)
	Medium	**Vietnam** Aff: Vietnam Affiliated Think Tank (V-A) Ind: Vietnam Independent Think Tank (V-I)	**Peru** Aff: Peru Affiliated Think Tank (P-A) Ind: Peru Independent Think Tank (P-I)

Figure 4.3: Focus Think Tanks by Country

Preparation for Fieldwork

Before the research team traveled to each country we compiled an extensive list of prominent think tank leaders, policymakers, multilateral institutions, economists, and professors whom we wished to interview. We sent each interviewee an email approximately three weeks before the trip to introduce the project and the team and ask for a conversation while the field researchers were in the country. We also sought advice on other individuals to whom we should speak. We added additional interviews in country. To prepare for fieldwork, each field researcher was updated on the project and the country using a briefing document containing the project's theoretical underpinnings, background information on the country's context, and information on each focus think tank in the country. They also received an extensive interview protocol that described the information that we wanted to obtain from each interview and suggested questions to ask and in which order to ask them.

Fieldwork Approach

In each country the field researchers conducted elite interviews of think tank leaders, policymakers, current and former government officials, academics, think tank funders, multilateral organization leaders, and NGO managers. The field researchers conducted an average of 15 interviews during a period of two to three weeks in each country. In each country, the researchers asked interviewees about the policymaking environment, think tank landscape, and the strategy and success of our two focus think tanks. Overall, they sought to triangulate narratives and verify described instances of the think tanks' policy successes.

As explained above, each field researcher was provided with a detailed interview protocol. Interviewers were instructed to frequently ask for examples and stories to flesh out statements from interviewees. The interviewers asked the following specific questions among others:

1. **Think tank landscape:** What are the most prominent think tanks in your country? Has the prominence of certain think tanks changed during the last 5-10 years?

2. **Goals and strategy:** What are the main goals of the think tank and how have these goals evolved over the past 5-10 years? How do you characterize the main elements of think tanks' strategies and how have they changed over time? What are the main mechanisms that think tanks use to engage policymakers and communicate their work?

3. **Audience and success:** Who are the typical primary audiences for think tanks? How do they work to engage with policymakers (elected and appointed government officials, prominent civil servants) and which policymakers are most critical to their success? Has the relationship of most think tanks with policymakers changed in the last ten years? How do think tanks define success? How successful have think tanks been in getting their research adopted and implemented?

4. **Organizational structure:** What are the main sources of revenue for think tanks in your country? How has this changed during the last 5-10 years? How does this funding structure affect the choice of think tank strategy?

5. **Barriers:** What are the most significant barriers to getting research incorporated into public policy and for policy to be implemented? Are some governments more receptive than others to incorporating research?

Nearly every interview included two or more field researchers and most interviews were conducted in English; for those few interviews that we not conducted in English, we employed a translator. Each interview lasted from 45 to 90 minutes. The field researchers also collected documents from the two focus think tanks in each country and from interview sources. All interviewers took detailed notes for each interview, which were later transcribed to electronic form. After the field researchers typed up their interview notes, they each synthesized the interviews into a field report that answered the main field research questions.

We sent two or three researchers to each country to write up independent reports on the interviews so that we would have multiple perspectives on our key research questions. A total of five field researchers participated,[12] and all but one visited more than one country; thus, the researchers also brought a comparative perspective on which to draw when writing their reports. Two researchers stayed within one level of political competition (low political competition) while two other researchers crossed between low and high government capacity and low and high political competition.

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[12] The field researchers were: Amanda Clayton, Javier Crespan, Ashley Fabrizio, Anne Greenleaf, and Evann Smith.

The Influence of Political Competition

Hypotheses

As we have described, we entered the field with several hypotheses around context and think tanks' strategy and influence. We summarize these hypotheses in Figure 4.4 below.

Findings in Low Political Competition Contexts

Our field research in Zimbabwe and Vietnam supported our first hypothesis (in the left-hand quadrants of Figure 4.4) and suggested that in countries with low political competition, think tanks that are affiliated with the government or a governing political party have more access to the policymaking process and, thus, more regular and significant success in getting their research

incorporated into public policy and implemented. In this way, affiliation supports access to policymaking, which in such countries is often not public. Yet we also found that low political competition states also tend to be environments that limit the range and success of a think tank's strategy overall. Our research suggested that in governments in low political competition countries, policymaking processes are either so limited or so internalized within the government that think tanks have limited opportunities for influence.

In Zimbabwe, our low political competition and low government effectiveness country, there are few think tanks, but the most prominent is the Zimbabwe Affiliated Think Tank (Z-A), our affiliated focus think tank. With its direct government affiliation, Z-A is the most frequently consulted think tank in the country and has the largest staff and greatest capacity for research. Z-A often works directly with government ministers to produce research; the government commissions roughly 50 percent of its work. This government-commissioned research also results in the little policy that is made and implemented in Zimbabwe, meaning Z-A reaches the third tier of our cascade of influence.

Figure 4.4: Hypotheses by Country Context		
	Political Competition	
	Low	**High**
Government Effectiveness — **Low**	Affiliated think tanks will be more effective because the political system is relatively closed and influence and adoption depends on access, which is much easier for affiliated think tanks. The probability of influence for unaffiliated think tanks is low; unaffiliated think tanks may not be perceived as trustworthy by policymakers. Such think tanks may have ideological or funder-driven reasons for existence. Case study country: **Zimbabwe**	Unaffiliated/independent think tanks will be more effective because they can maximize potential for policy adoption in a very fluid political situation: as coalitions shift they can adjust, and not come out on the "wrong" side of an issue or election. Case study country: **Bangladesh**
Government Effectiveness — **Medium**	Affiliated think tanks will be more effective because the political system is relatively closed and influence and adoption depends on access, which is much easier for affiliated think tanks. The probability of influence for unaffiliated think tanks is low; unaffiliated think tanks may not be perceived as trustworthy by policymakers. Such think tanks may have ideological or funder-driven reasons for existence. Case study country: **Vietnam**	Unaffiliated/independent think tanks will be more effective because they can maximize their access no matter which political party/coalition is in power. In high competition and relatively high government capacity environments, unaffiliated think tanks have greater credibility. Case study country: **Peru**

Our most prominent independent think tank, the Zimbabwe Independent Think Tank (Z-I), is much smaller and more limited in scope and staff size than Z-A. Unlike Z-A, which the government regularly consults, Z-I's access to government ministers and, thus, the policymaking process depends on the personal network of its founder and director. Its policy of institutional independence from the ruling party, Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), means Z-I has more freedom than Z-A does in its research positions and recommendations, but less access to the policymaking process. According to an interviewee from Z-I, "We've done a few consulting and advisory jobs for government, but we are very much hands off and sometimes very controversial within government, although we have links with individuals, with ministers and officials and so on." The government also uses the work of Z-I in crafting policy and hires its director for some projects, "sometimes acknowledged and sometimes not." Thus it too reaches the third tier of our cascade of influence, though not with the regularity of Z-A.

The success of Z-A and Z-I, like that of most of the think tanks and researchers that we interviewed, is stymied by the ruling ZANU-PF's lack of an institutionalized process for making policy (more on this in the discussion of government effectiveness). For this reason, neither Z-A nor Z-I obviously or regularly reach the fourth tier of our cascade of influence. One interviewee, a former ZANU-PF official, said that a lack of political competition and the strong top-down rule of President Robert Mugabe leads to a culture of fear and is the biggest barrier to policymaking in Zimbabwe. Policy is rarely formulated by non-executive institutions, including government ministries; respondents noted that if you ask three different ministers or party leaders what the policy of the regime is, you will get three different answers, and none may truly represent government policy. According to the former ZANU-PF official, the ZANU-PF "ideology, which isn't very explicit, comes from Mugabe himself. Mugabe surrounds himself with yes-men who tell him what he wants to hear."

Vietnam, our low political competition and medium government effectiveness country, also has relatively few completely independent think tanks and the think tank landscape is dominated by government-affiliated think tanks. Our affiliated think tank is the Vietnam Affiliated Think Tank (V-A), a policy research unit under a government ministry. Given its placement within government V-A is formally affiliated with the government and, by extension, the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP), making its structure and affiliation analogous to Z-A. Most of V-A's research projects are initiated at the government's request and its main goals are government-dictated. In this way, V-A is able to influence governmental policy. The deputy director of V-A suggested that its biggest recent policy success was convincing the government that the

Central Bank should consistently and publically announce its interest rates to ensure transparency and encourage sound investing. In this way, V-A has reached the fourth tier on our cascade of influence: its research is adopted into policy and actually implemented.

Vietnam has no real independent think tanks, but the closest prominent independent institution is the Vietnam Independent Think Tank (V-I). Although it is an unaffiliated policy research and consultancy organization, V-I's director told us that the process to establish an independent research institute was "really cumbersome" and "could have taken years" so he decided to establish V-I as a company. Due to its lack of access to government policymaking channels and funding, V-I has less organizational strength and policy influence. The organization must maintain friendly and non-critical relations with the VCP in order to maintain the more limited channels of influence that it does have in policymaking. Although V-I clearly focuses on social science research over policy advocacy, it still at times pushes hard for its policy recommendations. For example, the director of V-I described an instance in 2009 in which the National Assembly was meeting to decide how to structure a stimulus package to deal with the global financial crisis. He submitted an unsolicited 20-page V-I report to the Chairman of the National Assembly Committee responsible for structuring the package. However, V-I could not list an instance of policy success in which its recommendations were implemented, although our interviewees indicated knowledge of and respect for the organization. As such, it only reached the second tier in our cascade of influence.

Interviewees reported that policymaking in Vietnam is largely opaque and controlled by the upper cadre of the VCP. As a result, think tanks and researchers participate in a very "top-down" process of policymaking. Because the Vietnamese system is based on the former Soviet model of structuring political institutions, there are government-led research units connected to every organ of the Vietnamese political bureaucracy down to the local level. This made it difficult for us to trace how research by affiliated think tanks actually reaches the top group of party members who influence policy. Furthermore, many interviewees described the decisions of the VCP as a "black box" in which their research enters (if they're lucky) and policy comes out; knowledge of the private decision-making processes of the highest organs of the VCP is limited to very few. V-A clearly has more channels to directly access policymakers than does V-I, but real influence is only held by a few researchers in upper management positions. This left a few of our interviewees despondent about their abilities to influence public policy from their positions within the vast bureaucracy of the Vietnamese research landscape in general. Thus, while government affiliation gives a think tank more influence than independence, affiliation is not

a sufficient condition to ensure a think tank's access and influence among policymakers. For a think tank in Vietnam to have influence its leadership must be able to access and network with key decision-makers at the upper levels of the government and VCP.

Findings in High Political Competition Contexts

We hypothesized that in countries with political competition independent think tanks are more effective because they can maximize access to government regardless of which party or coalition is in power (Figure 4.4). Our field research in Bangladesh and Peru supported these hypotheses: independent think tanks are substantially more likely to get their research incorporated into public policy and actually implemented by the government.

In Bangladesh, our high political competition and low government effectiveness country, most think tanks cultivate their independence from the government, particular political parties, and particular political ideologies. The most prominent independent think tank in Bangladesh is the Bangladesh Independent Think Tank (B-I), which believes it is "important to be perceived as nonpartisan." B-I tries to stay relevant to both major parties and, indeed, though some government officials will criticize B-I publicly, these officials still attend B-I events to stay relevant to policy discussions, even after they have left office. According to many of our interviewees, B-I's research is often heard by prominent government leaders and is incorporated into the policymaking process; its researchers and leaders also sit on many government committees, including the readymade garments committee and the transit policy committee. Through these government committees, B-I's ideas and recommendations are regularly acknowledged and incorporated into policy and laws. Particular examples of B-I's successes in implementing policies include recommendations taken up by the government in its "Vision 2021" policy document from 2006, its violence against women policy, and its green growth strategy. The Bangladeshi government also used B-I's research to expand economic coordination, connectivity, and trade in the region. In this way, B-I reached the fourth tier on our cascade of influence.

There are few affiliated think tanks in Bangladesh, but the most prominent is the Bangladesh Affiliated Think Tank (B-A). B-A used to play a larger role in policymaking in the 1980s and 1990s, but it is currently both less utilized by and less openly critical of the government in addition to being less prominent in policy debates. Its usefulness appears to depend on the openness to research of the Planning Minister. The B-A researchers whom we interviewed had trouble naming specific recent policy accomplishments save for a recommendation on food security issues that made it into the budget. B-A reached our third tier on the cascade of influence. (Interviewees could point to "many instances of unpopular recommendations" by B-A that the government took into consideration and then adopted, including 1990s research on removing distorted agricultural subsidies that led the government to change its policies, privatization of state-owned enterprises, trade liberalization for which B-A "took the heat in the media because of [politicians'] dogma but it paid off.")

Like Bangladesh, in Peru, our high political competition and medium government effectiveness country, most think tanks are independent. We thought that the most prominent think tank was the Peru Independent Think Tank (P-I), whose researchers are often called in by government ministers and committees to give opinions and recommendations. There is also a revolving door between P-I and the executive branch. One prominent recent example is an economist and senior researcher at P-I, who is a former national Peruvian Minister. Government officials also appear to have a higher demand for policy research in Peru than in Bangladesh. Policy researchers are often called to give opinions and recommendations at the national level.

Much of P-I's research has been incorporated into government policies and laws and ultimately implemented. One major example is P-I's financial inclusion policy, which was widely implemented and based on several pilot programs. The government occasionally even plagiarizes P-I's published research for its policies. For example, one of P-I's prominent researchers described writing a book and later seeing laws passed that "borrowed" paragraphs from the book in the bill's text. In this way P-I clearly reached the fourth tier on our cascade of influence in significant ways.

As in Bangladesh, there are few affiliated think tanks in Peru, and none affiliated with the government or political parties. The affiliated think tank that we studied is the Peru Affiliated Think Tank (P-A), which is ideologically affiliated with and funded by the corporate sector. P-A is newer and much smaller than P-I, but it also demonstrates its influence on policy, mostly through Congress. Most think tanks do not target Congress because it is seen as ineffectual due to the lawmakers' relatively low levels of education and political experience, and because most policymaking is seen to happen at the Cabinet level. One P-A interviewee, however, said that they try anyway: they "fight things out in Congress though you fail a lot and it's hard."P-A appears to work extensively with lawmakers because they are more open to P-A's agenda than is the executive branch. Through this avenue, P-A sometimes succeeds in getting its research incorporated into laws that are then passed. One example is the research P-A did on mining taxes, which was used by Congress. According

to P-A, the law "basically used our language" and was ultimately implemented. Reflecting P-A's success with the mining law, one informant interviewed said that P-A has been able to find an audience in Congress because of Congress's capture, to some extent, by the mining industry.

Because of this access to and limited success in Congress, P-A sometimes reached the fourth tier of our cascade of influence. But P-A's successes were infrequent. Consistent with our hypotheses, P-I was far more frequently and significantly consulted by the government and its research was incorporated into policy and implemented more often and, thus, we found that it was the more influential of the two think tanks.

In the low state capacity environments of Bangladesh and Zimbabwe, we noted not only that a think tank's influence depends on its affiliation and strategy, but that it can be critically limited by the state's weak capacity to formulate policy and its limited policy making processes. We discuss below government effectiveness as a key mediating factor in understanding the influence of context on think tank strategy.

The Influence of Government Effectiveness

Government Effectiveness and Implementation of Policy

Our fieldwork suggested that political competition is highly important in explaining whether affiliated or independent think tanks are more influential. Our second exogenous variable, government effectiveness, influences think tanks in a different way: it affects the degree to which think tanks can progress from the third tier in our cascade of influence—that research is incorporated into public policy or laws—to the fourth tier—actual implementation of a public policy based on a think tank's research. Furthermore, government effectiveness interacts with political competition in important ways: namely, a lack of government effectiveness may somewhat level the playing field between affiliated and independent think tanks by effectively capping the level of influence that any think tank may attain. As discussed in the previous section, in Zimbabwe and Bangladesh, our low government effectiveness countries, only one of four think tanks was able to reach the fourth tier of our cascade of influence; in comparison in Vietnam and Peru, our medium government effectiveness case study countries, three out of four focus think tanks were able to regularly reach the fourth tier of our cascade of influence. In addition, we found that government effectiveness affects think tanks' relationships with international donors in important ways.

Among our cases, Zimbabwe had the lowest levels of government effectiveness (slightly lower than Bangladesh); in this environment, think tanks—whether affiliated or independent—have a very difficult time getting any policies implemented by the government. Researchers end up having many conversations with government officials and hosting many conferences about policy, but there is little medium- or long-term planning on policy and, according to an interviewee from a different government-affiliated organization, "no space at all for implementation." The prevailing sense is that the ZANU-PF-led executive branch does not have enough revenue or political will to create much new policy at this time. When we asked about this issue, officials at one national government agency replied that policy does not move into implementation because it is "held up at the level of designing technical implementation because of a lack of capacity in certain ministries," especially the public works ministry. This was the situation even during the brief period of unity government during which the MDC had ministers and members in Parliament. Officials from the affiliated organization noted above, for example, felt that they were most effective and had the most access to public officials during the unity government, when some of their language was expressly incorporated into budgets. However, they had difficulty identifying the actual implementation of this language or the policies.

Likewise in Bangladesh, a major barrier to policy implementation cited by many interviewees is a lack of government capacity to implement laws that are passed. For example, a major recent success is the recent Right to Information Act. But there has been little implementation of the law; interviewees described it as "a paper exercise" or "a paper tiger" because so many exceptions were introduced during its implementation. One researcher at B-I attributed such disconnects to the influential groups involved in policymaking that pursue divergent policy agendas and to members of Parliament who do not want to give resources, authority, and power to the local levels of government. B-I sees part of its role as a monitor of this disconnect. Another explanation is the lack of an effective governmental check on whether laws are implemented. One economist from the World Bank office in Dhaka said that there is no independent judiciary at the lower levels (at the magistrates); "the separation is there in theory but not in practice" so political and economic factors get in the way. There are good policies on the books but no honest implementation. "It's a patronage system," he said. "Middlemen and non-experts are running things."

The contrast between low government effectiveness countries (Zimbabwe and Bangladesh) and medium government effectiveness countries (Vietnam and Peru) was stark. Few interviewees in either Vietnam or Peru mentioned any disconnect between laws on the books and the actual implementation of these laws.

Government Effectiveness and International Donors

Low levels of government effectiveness in combination with political competition also affect the relationship between think tanks and donors, both in terms of funding and in terms of relative power and influence. When governments cannot pay to contract research from think tanks, organizations often rely on donors to pay for their research expertise. Most of the think tanks that we studied in our four case study countries cited a reliance on international donors for their funding, particularly international foundations and development agencies. This reliance was particularly pronounced in Zimbabwe and Bangladesh, the two cases with particularly low government effectiveness. In countries with very low levels of government effectiveness, both affiliated and independent think tanks must rely to some degree on external funding, either regional or international. This gives external actors more of a voice in policy research than might be expected in a country like Vietnam, in which the government can afford to support its own domestic think tanks. It also provides more space for affiliated and independent think tanks to be somewhat critical of current government policies, both in their research and in direct policy recommendations to government. This stems both from think tanks' reliance on donor funds, but also from the knowledge that they are unlikely to be explicitly punished or ostracized the same way that they might be in a high capacity state.

In Zimbabwe, the lack of government funding does not significantly affect the strategy or influence of independent think tanks, as they do not believe that they would have access to such funding even if it were available, according to an interviewee from an independent research and advocacy organization. The lack of government funding, however, appears to result in affiliated think tanks pursuing "parallel" research tracks. That is, they pursue the "demand-driven" research in line with government requests, as well as independent research designed to solicit international funding. Affiliated think tanks' pursuit of dual research agendas was confirmed by an economist at a different affiliated think tank and a consultant at USAID's Strategic Economic Research & Analysis program in Zimbabwe. This dual pursuit, however, does not seem to dramatically affect the influence that affiliated think tanks have either positively or negatively, perhaps because there is nearly universal recognition of total lack of funding within Zimbabwe and affiliated think tanks have no choice but to rely on external funding.

Indeed, in both Zimbabwe and Bangladesh, the affiliated think tanks Z-A and B-A maintain a minimal degree of independence from the government in order to secure necessary international funding. Both Z-A and B-A, in fact, explicitly stated that they were "independent" from

the government in conducting their research even when they were clearly affiliated with government agencies and managers and researchers at both think tanks conceded that their research took into account to some extent the political concerns of the party in power. These self-characterizations reflect the need of the think tanks to attract contracts from international donors that emphasize independence from political concerns.

In countries with higher levels of state capacity the government potentially can afford to pay or at least commission research. But in Vietnam this funding appears primarily to benefit affiliated think tanks, while in Vietnam—which shares a level of government effectiveness with Peru but has a far greater degree of political competition—the government allocates few of its resources to policy research.

In Vietnam, V-A's affiliated status clearly bolsters its organizational strength and its ability to provide policymakers with rigorous research, and the Vietnamese government dedicates significant resources to all the research divisions. At the independent think tank V-I in Vietnam, by contrast, the government does not pay for research and it has a much smaller research scope and budget.

Because the Peruvian government funds little policy research, there is very little funding available to build think tanks' research and staff capacity beyond financing from foreign donors. Government ministries will sometimes even take money from development agencies in order to hire think tank researchers to do contract work. This occurred recently in the case of P-I: the government needed the technical capacity of think tanks, especially in the social ministries, so the IADB paid for the government to hire these researchers. Given this lack of public funds, many interviewees cited concern that in the last decade or so there has been a decline in foreign aid, as funders have grown reluctant to fund a country perceived to be too economically successful to need it.

Think Tank Strategies in Context

Think Tanks Going Against the Grain

While our field research suggested that think tanks generally thrive more easily when they follow the strategy that aligns with the relevant quadrant of Figure 4.4, we also found examples in each country of think tanks going against the grain. For example, think tanks maintained their independence in environments in which affiliation was generally a more successful approach. These think tanks often went against the grain with creative strategies that used other tools in society—namely, international organizations, donors, and the media—to achieve policy influence. The adaptability that think tanks showed in these strategies is important because think tanks cannot easily change from independent to affiliated or vice versa. Much of a think tank's identity and strategy is based on its relationship to government, a particular political party, or ideology. To change its affiliation would likely also upend its sources of funding or complicate relationships with donors.

In Zimbabwe, for example, some independent think tanks mentioned employing what we term a "boomerang strategy" of getting policymakers to consider their policy proposals and research (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Although Zimbabwe still maintains a degree of international isolation, the ZANU-PF government has some demand for an independent view and listens to prominent voices from the international community, especially the World Bank and Southern African Development Community. According to one interviewee, a former member of ZANU-PF, recently implemented policies like greater representation for women and holding more democratic elections, originated as "outsider ideas" from surrounding countries that exerted pressure on the government of Zimbabwe to adopt them. Knowing that this avenue exists, our independent focus think tank in Zimbabwe, Z-I, works with and presents research conclusions to international organizations like the World Bank and SADC in the hope that they will pressure government ministers to incorporate the think tank's research in the policymaking process. When these international actors then present the policy recommendations or project plans, they frequently omit mention of the local think tanks that conducted the research and analysis. Our interviewees confirmed that this is because the ruling ZANU-PF is highly suspicious of domestic think tanks.

In Bangladesh, our affiliated focus think tank, B-A, also made use of its relationships with international organizations and donors to maintain policymaking relevance in an environment in which government ministers typically choose not to make use of its research

capacity. By pursuing contracts with outside donors, B-A claims that it maintains its ability to produce high-quality international development research and retain highly qualified staff. Although B-A is funded in part by a government trust, to support core institutional functions of B-A, donor agencies and foundations provide significant resources for its research activities. Among other things, the resources from these outside contracts supplement the low salaries that B-A employees receive as public employees.

As an affiliated but ultimately academically-oriented think tank, B-A uses one creative tactic to retain policy relevance outside of the government—and thus to ultimately shape domestic policy. It emphasizes publishing in foreign languages and in academic journals. Because of its affiliated status, B-A is reluctant to be openly critical of the government. However, B-A has more room to be critical if their work is seen as limited to a foreign or academic context. This is because the government sees their work as academic products instead of potentially inflammatory critiques of government policy. B-A also publishes a prominent peer-reviewed development journal. The journal is the refereed quarterly journal of the Institute that publishes research articles, notes, and book reviews by B-A researchers and national and international scholars. This journal is well regarded domestically and internationally, and although it is generally too abstruse for the media or general public to understand, B-A is not especially concerned because "B-A doesn't need the media attention." These two B-A tactics allow it to portray itself as "the place to go" if "you really want something serious," said researchers from B-A.

In Vietnam, the monetary and access benefits that think tanks gain by being directly affiliated with the government mean that there are few independent think tanks. In this context, even an independent think tank must be careful. For example, the founder of V-I, our independent focus think tank in Vietnam, tries to position V-I both as a go-to organization for policy advice for the government and also as an organization that can win competitive consulting projects from the government and international organizations. To do so, V-I carefully portrays itself as a non-ideological consulting-based research institute in order to appear less adversarial to the Vietnamese government. Most of its work is in the form of consulting projects, and the VCP likely views consulting-based research institutes as less threatening than advocacy groups. Indeed, there does not appear to be any independent advocacy-based think tank operating in Vietnam, at least none that our interview respondents could recall as having any influence on the policymaking process in the country.

In countries that have a free and vibrant media, think tanks can use the media to try to augment their influence on

policy. In Peru, where the environment favors independent think tanks, our affiliated focus think tank P-A (which is affiliated with the corporate sector, not the government) uses the media to advocate for its policy goals and put issues on the national policymaking agenda. Several interviewees described that the media are increasingly interested in hearing from technocrats and about academic studies, possibly because, as one interviewee put it, the media are more interested in evidence-based decision making than they have been in the past when Peru was less economically and politically stable. P-A describes itself as having an aggressive strategy with the media in order to shape public dialogue particularly through television, newspapers, and the radio. According to its staff, P-A publishes columns in newspapers and publishes "an opinionated report" three times per week, and its researchers are guests on radio programs. They also "make noise in a crisis" and "wage a war" in the papers and on television, though they send their less visible staff members so as not to create too inflammatory an impression of its leadership and thus undermine their policy work. More so than our independent think tanks, P-A's audience is the public. P-A is a small outfit that has no more than 15 employees, which is much smaller than the prominent independent think tanks in Peru. But through its "somewhat reactive" emphasis on debating and critiquing government policy via the media, P-A has been able to have an outsize influence in shaping public policy.

Influence of International Donor Organizations

As discussed in the previous section, the think tanks in our case studies, especially in the low political competition countries, benefit strategically from relationships with international donor organizations in a number of less obvious ways. By contracting with international development organizations like the World Bank, think tanks gain more prominence both in the international community and in their own countries. International development organizations, in turn, are able to access the networks of and deep domestic knowledge available in these think tanks.

In Zimbabwe, there is a conspicuous lack of indigenous funding for think tanks of all types. As a result they all—both independent and affiliated—turn to international donors. An interesting result of these relationships is that the think tanks' work sometimes is more influential outside of the country than inside it. Work that the independent think tank Z-I has done with the World Bank, for example, has influenced the work of foreign scholars.

In Zimbabwe, independent think tanks pursue policy relationships with international organizations in spite of the government's somewhat contentious relationship

with international actors for two reasons. First, they lack meaningful access to government policymakers and, thus, this represents their only real avenue of influence. Second, international organizations often have funding to implement projects independent of government policy, such as water purification projects in response to the recent cholera outbreak. Furthermore, the difficult funding environment in Zimbabwe for all think tanks, but especially for independent think tanks led interviewees to characterize organizational strength not so much in terms of think tank size (e.g., number of employees), but rather in terms of the think tanks' ability to secure funding in order to consistently do research and produce reports.

In Vietnam, because the government is much less donor-dependent than it is in Zimbabwe, international and regional actors have less of a voice in influencing domestic policy. Fewer think tanks, therefore, engage in the sort of "boomerang strategy" that we observed in Zimbabwe. Instead, in Vietnam, international organizations work with affiliated think tanks to boost the international organization's domestic policy influence. International organizations solicit consulting projects from independent think tanks when they want more rigorous academic-quality research. That is, both affiliated and independent think tanks work with international organizations to boost the credibility and prestige of their organizations so that they can gain access to more prestigious social networks with greater connections to influential domestic policymakers.

Furthermore, while international organizations offer independent think tanks in Vietnam funding opportunities, affiliated think tanks also see these organizations as avenues for policy influence and media access. Within the government-affiliated think tanks in Vietnam, working with an outside organization is perceived to provide individual researchers with another medium in which to publish their findings. This can be important to individual researchers, some of whom said that they feel that their work has the tendency to get lost in the ministerial bureaucracies. It can also be a helpful career move as researchers try to get more publicity for their work. For instance, an interviewee from a government policy research unit said, "As an individual researcher, I have very little influence but when I talk to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) or others at international organizations, they take me seriously, they follow up, they support you, they will put it in the newspaper. We have a saying in Vietnam: 'The Buddha in the home temple is not sacred.' There is a mentality that sometimes we don't want to listen to our own people. That is my observation."

Conclusions

Our field research in Peru, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, and Vietnam strongly suggested that political competition and government effectiveness fundamentally influence think tanks' effectiveness. Government effectiveness affects how far down the "cascade of influence" think tanks can go: whether they can influence the implementation of government policies or must settle to influence the policy dialogue and government policy positions in countries in which the government does little effective policy-making. Political competition affects whether a think tank's affiliation or independence is a more effective strategy. In countries in which politics is contested, think tanks benefit from staying above the political fray and offering themselves as sources of trusted analysis and advice irrespective of who is in power. In countries in which politics is uncontested, however, think tanks benefit from building trusted long-term relationships with political actors who have firm grips on power, incorporating these actors' particular political constraints and incentives into their analyses. These conclusions are strongly supported by similar patterns that we observed across the pairs of cases in our case matrix. For example, Bangladesh and Peru have little in common, but in both environments political competition clearly favors independent think

tanks over affiliated ones, to the extent that there are few affiliated think tanks in either country. The think tank environment in those countries differed starkly from that in Vietnam and Zimbabwe, equally different countries in which a lack of political competition clearly favors affiliated think tanks.

The virtue of in-depth case studies is their ability both to illuminate general phenomena and to uncover the nuance and complexity with which these phenomena play out in real life. While our case studies revealed the benefit to think tanks of playing to the political context and the difficulty that think tanks face in getting policy implemented in environments of limited state capacity, they also revealed considerable diversity in the way that think tanks are able to operate—and adapt—given their environment. This is true even when that environment seems hostile to them. For donors supporting think tanks, surely the most interesting pattern is in the role of donors and international institutions. Donors of course are invaluable sources of resources across all the cases. Yet, our cases also showed that donors can provide invaluable prestige (Vietnam) and influence (Zimbabwe) to think tanks fighting to put forward independent policy advice in the inhospitable environment of an ineffective one-party state.

Think Tank Survey

Introduction

The Think Tank and Context Survey targeted executive directors at more than 380 think tanks in a range of developing, transitional, and developed countries around the world. As noted in the introduction, our assessment of the context and effectiveness literature found few quantitative and comparative analyses. Our survey research was designed to address this gap by operationalizing indicators of a think tank's endogenous capacity and self-reported policy outcomes, and by exploring their relationship to exogenous context factors through a series of hypotheses that we developed based on the literature review.

A majority of those who responded to the survey met the target population criteria (Executive or Executive Director position); however, the overall response rate was only about 25 percent. This rate in combination with item non-response and the possibility of measurement error on more than a few questions led us to conduct exploratory analysis, describing variation in endogenous capacities and exploring simple associations between endogenous capacities and exogenous characteristics.

The survey results demonstrate the feasibility of operationalizing think tank capacities in terms of their levels of credibility capital, communication capital, social capital, and resource capital. To explore further, we merged the data with exogenous country-level context indicators.

We carried out initial exploratory methods using frequencies, data tabulation, pairwise correlation, and scatter plots of endogenous indicators and exogenous factors. Unfortunately, we did not conduct a more sophisticated analysis of the relationships between think tank capacities, context and outcomes due to a combination of factors. First, although 94 think tanks responded to the survey, not all respondents completed the survey in its entirety. Item non-response rates were quite high on several questions. Second, the sample was primarily (but not entirely) assembled from donor lists of contacts. As a result, the sample elements tended to already have ties to donors and, therefore, did not represent the full range of think tanks in existence.

As a result, the analysis that we present here focused on describing the endogenous capacities of think tanks

using indicators developed from the survey responses, and examined their relationships to context using simple pairwise correlation and cross-tabs. We report cases in which we observed significant associations, but make note of the limited insights that we can draw from these cases in the absence of other controls.

Survey Method

We developed a convenience sample of about 380 think tank contacts using lists obtained from three main sources: the Think Tank Initiative (TTI), Results for Development Institute (R4D), and the Think Tank Fund (TTF). Sixteen percent of the sample elements came from TTI, 44 percent came from the R4D list, which consisted of existing contacts and internet searches of developing-country think tanks, and 41 percent originated from the TTF list. Colleagues and partners passed the survey forward to an additional unknown number of respondents on behalf of the project.

The survey was implemented using the web-based survey provider SurveyMonkey and was made available in Spanish, French, and English. A modified version of the survey was provided to TTI respondents. The modified version removed three questions whose content was identical to questions asked in the annual TTI monitoring questionnaire. We later obtained the responses from the three missing questions from the TTI 2012 dataset and matched them to the TTI think tanks' responses to complete the survey data set.

Researchers contacted think tank directors by email multiple times. The initial contact consisted of an email in mid-to-late November 2013 from TTI, R4D or TTF, which invited the think tanks' respective executive director contacts to participate in the upcoming online survey. Live links to the online questionnaire were provided in English, French, and Spanish on November 27, 2013. R4D conducted additional follow-ups with non-respondents on December 11, 16, and 19, until the survey was closed on December 20, 2013. The survey consisted of 60[13] questions and took participants on average between 45 to 60 minutes to complete.

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[13]The version of the survey that we sent to TTI participants consisted of 57 questions.

Survey Content

The survey was divided into six sections, covering background and organizational characteristics, human capital and staffing, think tank finance, measuring performance and success, political context and strategy, and civil society, media, and NGO environment. Details are shown in Table 5.1 below.

Analytical Approach

The analytical approach explored the relationship between endogenous capacities of think tanks and the exogenous context factors identified in the research literature. We first developed and examined indicators of the four endogenous capacities that we identified in the literature review: credibility capital, communication capital, social capital, and resource capital.

Appendix Table A.3.2 shows how we operationalized the endogenous capacities using survey data. Appendix Table A.3.3 maps the four exogenous factors that we found in the literature to be widely available country level indicators and their data sources. Finally, Table 5.2, presents hypotheses about the expected relationships between endogenous capacities and exogenous characteristics.

Our methods included frequencies, data tabulation, pairwise correlation, and scatter plots of endogenous indicators and exogenous factors. A demonstrated correlation between endogenous capacities and context factors would suggest

that think tanks respond to external conditions. An observed relationship would merit further analysis using additional methods such as chi2 test, anova, and regression.

Hypotheses

The following discussion summarizes the expected positive, negative or mixed impact of exogenous context factors on endogenous indicators. These hypotheses are consolidated and presented in Table 5.2.

Political and Economic Context

We operationalized the political and economic context using indictors of political competition and government effectiveness, and the country level of economic development (see Table A.3.3 in the Appendix for detail). The hypotheses that we developed with respect to political and economic context mainly consider the effects of an increase in political competition, which is important because of its likely role in driving a number of think tank decisions and strategies. We expected think tank credibility indicators to be fairly unresponsive to increases in political competition because of the high regard think tanks hold for establishing and retaining research credibility independent of country context, as discussed in the literature review. We hypothesized that an increase in political competition and government effectiveness was unlikely to affect how think tanks rank research credibility, the percentage of their staff with a PhD, quality control

Table 5.1: Survey Content Area		
Section	**Title**	**Content Areas**
Section 1	Background and Organizational Characteristics	Country, mission statement, specialization, policy areas, key audiences, and approximate budget size.
Section 2	Human Capital and Staffing	Staff counts, full and part-time staff, organizations from which think tank recruit new staff, staff-to-government mobility, board of governors, and their mobility between government and think tank service.
Section 3	Think Tank Finance	Numbers of active funders, funders that finance the think tank's work, funding received, and whether funding was unrestricted "core" funding or project-specific funding.
Section 4	Measuring Performance and Success	Success metrics, outcome measures, communications tools, audience size, and amount of attention paid to each type of communications output. Prioritization/rank of policy influence and organizational credibility activities, and quality control mechanisms. Self-reported policy outcomes achieved at three levels.
Section 5	Political Context and Strategy	Hands-on/hands-off approach, external scepticism, formal and informal political and party ties and influence. Access to data and quality of data; demand for research and analysis and barriers to their more widespread use. Policymaker attention to think tank outputs.
Section 6	Civil Society, Media, and NGO Environment	Civil society openness, NGO level of development, senior researcher access to policymakers, and organizational partnerships.

indicators, the share of board members and staff with government experience, or the percentage of projects in core funding.

We anticipated that communications capital indicators were likely to be more sensitive to changes in political and economic context. Research has shown that the number of political parties and competition increases demand for policy alternatives and opportunities for think tanks to act. As a result, we expected to see effort on the part of think tanks to attempt to reach a broader number of audiences. This would have been evidenced by greater diversification in the kinds of communications channels used, increases in the number of dedicated communications staff members, and indicators of a higher volume of media outreach activity.

We hypothesized that the number of institutional and individual social ties was likely to increase with positive changes in political competition, as civil society tends to develop in tandem with increased political competition. The literature shows that these two factors contribute to the development of the marketplace of ideas, and increase competition among think tanks and policy research organizations. We anticipated that this would lead think tanks to form a larger proportion of institutional ties to other civil society organizations and a larger proportion of direct political ties (e.g., a larger proportion of board and staff members who have, in the past, worked in government or who do so now). Therefore, we expected to see the number of social ties increase and diversify among think tanks operating in more competitive environments.

Increased government effectiveness has been shown by researchers to co-vary with the level of economic development. As countries move up the Effectiveness/GDP curve, their ability to absorb and utilize donor finance expands and demand for policy analysis rises. As a result, we expected to observe a positive association between think tanks in states with high government effectiveness and a larger proportion of research staff, larger annual budgets, more donor diversification, and more core funding on average, in comparison to think tanks in states with low government effectiveness.

Donors

We used the net flow of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to countries as an indicator of donors' activity. Ideally, the measure would have directly captured net international flows to think tanks; however, this data was not readily available in an internationally comparable format.

The spread and growth of developing country think tanks has been linked to the widening availability of donor funding for governance and civil society in middle- and low-income countries (Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal 2010); yet it is unclear what effects this will have on think

tank credibility capital. On the one hand, any donor-imposed quality controls will increase demand on think tanks to produce research and measurements that meet international standards, which may raise the level of analysis required by their grantees and aid recipients. The demand, combined with the growing availability of better data in most countries, could improve research credibility by pressuring local think tanks to do more rigorous analysis. However, donors have been known to substitute away from local research capacity by relying on their own staff to evaluate programs and policies; this would have the opposite result. Beyond these two factors, we anticipated that the results of increased ODA were likely to be mixed because of differences in the amount of direct exposure a think tank can have to a donor operating in its country.

Donor capacity-building programs are commonly used instruments designed to train think tank staff in strategic planning, communications, and policy engagement. Capacity-building efforts directly impact the communications capacities of trained think tanks, but, in addition, likely generate a positive externality for competitor and partner think tanks. Direct and indirect effects of training have the potential to raise the general level of communications skill in the market. Thus, we expected to see the communications capacity of think tanks rise in tandem with increased development assistance.

We expected to see qualitative shifts in the institutional and individual social ties of think tanks as development assistance increased. For example, we expected that think tanks would form more donor relationships as the level of official development assistance increased simply because donor staff members were present in the country doing workshops, participating in conferences, and conducting or funding research. As a result there was more opportunity for exposure, which we thought was likely to increase opportunities for think tanks to develop and cultivate social ties.

The direct impact of increased development assistance varies across think tanks, however, as more donor resources become available, and think tanks and civil society organizations become direct recipients of donor aid. Therefore, in countries with higher ODA levels, we expected that think tanks' budgets would be larger than average budget size, relative to countries in which there are lower levels of ODA. This relationship rests on the assumption that a majority of developing country think tanks are supported by international donor funds, and that that availability of local finance is still emerging in many countries.

Intellectual Climate

A country's intellectual climate for think tanks includes the general level of respect for education and research, the quantity and quality of human and research-skills

Table 5.2: Hypotheses regarding the relationships between endogenous capacities and exogenous characteristics				
Exogenous and Mixed Exogenous Context	Definition/Construct	Country-level indicators of context	Endogenous capacities	Positive, negative or negligible impact of exogenous context on endogenous indicator
Political and Economic Context	Country-level factors related to the ability to govern, the characteristics of government, political history, and the attitudes and attributes of policymakers. The following key sub-factors were examined in this group: Governance and government capacity; Political parties and competition; Concentration of power; Political transition; Policy relevance and windows of opportunity; Policymakers; Economic development and liberalization.	1. Political competition 2. Government effectiveness 3. Level of economic development	1. Credibility capital 2. Communication capital 3. Social capital 4. Resource capital	1. Zero: No change in data/research/skill quality preferences, which will remain paramount 2. Positive: Increased media outreach and political ties, greater diversification of communications and larger communications staff 3. Positive: Increase in number of and diversity of ties, more government ties 4. Positive: Resources increase as absorptive capacity goes up
Donors	Multinational organizations, bilateral and multilateral agencies, foundations, and international non-governmental organizations that have financed think tanks and civil society organizations in developing countries. The following key subfactors were examined in this group: Donor funding; Donor influence on research agenda; and Democracy assistance.	1. NET ODA	1. Credibility capital 2. Communication capital 3. Social capital 4. Resource capital	1. Zero: Increase in rigor with larger international donor presence, but may substitute away from local capacity 2. Positive: Increase in communications staff size on average, diversification of media channels 3. Zero: Qualitative shift to donor social ties 4. Positive: More resources on average, and increase in core funding percentage
Intellectual Climate	Factors refer to the quantity and quality of human capital inputs to think tanks, the accessibility of and financial support for tertiary education, and whether the country environment is permissive of independent analysis and policy contribution. The following key subfactors were included in this analysis: Cultural respect for education and research; Brain drain; Policy research capacity among local institutions.	1. Tertiary education Expenditure 2. Research and Development Expenditure 3. Emigration rate of tertiary educated	1. Credibility capital 2. Communication capital 3. Social capital 4. Resource capital	1. Zero: Think tank prioritization of research quality will not change 2. Positive: Increase in direct policymaker ties, public media channels 3. Positive: Increase in ties with government 4. Positive: Increase in R&D expenditure, availability of skill capital, direct inputs to Think Tank production
Civil Society	The atmosphere in which civil society is able to engage, as well as the network of private and public individuals and associations that engage in public discourse and service provision meant to act as counterweights to the state. The following key subfactors were included in this analysis: NGO effectiveness; Public interest; Media attention; Openness to civil society; and Political, Historical, and Economic Origins.	1. Voice and Accountability 2. Freedom House Civil Liberties (Freedom House) 3. Number of think tanks	1. Credibility capital 2. Communication capital 3. Social capital 4. Resource capital	1. Zero: Think tank prioritization of research quality unchanged 2. Positive: Diversification of communications channels goes up 3. Positive: Diversification of ties goes up 4. Positive: Diversification of funding increases

capital, the accessibility and financial support for tertiary education, and whether the country is permissive of independent analysis and policy contribution.

We anticipated that positive shifts in indicators of intellectual climate were unlikely to have any direct impact on the way think tanks already prioritized their research credibility. On the other hand, we hypothesized that increases in the factor inputs to think tanks would evidence directly observable increases in communications capital, social ties, and think tank resources. An increase in government funding for research and development and academic research will directly increase the resources available to think tanks for research, potentially increase the overall size of the think tank market, and generate more employment opportunities for those educated at the college level and beyond.

Civil Society

Civil society context includes the atmosphere in which civil society engages and the size and scope of non-state private and public individuals and associations engaging in public discourse and providing services to improve public welfare.

We anticipated that increased activity in the civil society sector was unlikely to shift how think tanks prioritized their research credibility. However, countries that have more civil society activity should have a greater diversity of media channels available to think tanks and, thus, think tanks should have a greater ability to engage the general public. As a result, we expected to see evidence of increased communications capital as think tanks leveraged access to new channels and audiences. Similarly, as the number of civil society actors increases, think tanks should have more opportunities to form institutional linkages and partnerships, especially in areas of overlapping research interest and, thus, we expected a greater diversification in the range of ties that think tanks form in societies in which civil society is more active. A higher level of civil society development implies greater availability of resources to support civil society organizations. With respect to these financial resources, however, implications are ambiguous for think tank capacities. A larger number of smaller think tanks may proliferate in these climates, leading to smaller budgets on average, or else average budget size will increase because more resources are flowing into the sector generally. The actual impact of increased resources likely also depends on whether the sector is contracting or growing, and level of policymaker demand for policy research.

Data

In sum, 94 think tanks responded to the survey, an overall response rate of 25 percent. Of the 94 think tanks that responded, 76 were non-TTI and 18 were TTI.

Think tanks in 48 countries responded to the survey. An average of two think tanks responded from each country with a minimum of one and a maximum of six. A complete list of the countries and the number of respondent think tanks is provided in Appendix 3 (see Table A.3.1.). The survey was offered in English, French, and Spanish. About 82 percent of think tanks (77 think tanks) responded to the English version of the survey, 15 percent responded in Spanish, and 2 percent in French.

Completion Rate and Item Non-response

The survey questionnaire completion rate was 61 percent: of the 94 individuals who began to answer the survey questions, 57 responded to the questions in the survey in their entirety. Completion rates were much higher for Think Tank Initiative (TTI)-sponsored think tanks, about 89 percent, in comparison to non-TTI think tanks (54 percent).

The sampled think tanks were drawn from countries with a range of income levels. Table 5.3, below, provides the number of responding think tanks by country income group and survey completion (1 indicates a completed survey and 0 indicates otherwise). Seven observations (one from Andorra and six from Argentina) are missing data on income group and are, therefore, missing from the table below. As a result, the total number of think tanks in the table does not match the number of observations in the sample.

Table 5.3: Number of Observations by Country Income Group and Survey Completion			
Income Group (2011)	Complete?		Total
	No	Yes	
Low-income	6	12	18
Lower-middle income	10	22	32
Upper-middle income	7	15	22
High-income	10	4	14
Total	33	53	86

The sample drew responses from a mixed group of think tanks based on their home-country income grouping. A higher proportion of complete responses came from low and lower-middle income countries than came from upper and high-income countries.

Item non-response was mixed or very high on several questions. For example, on the question of formal ties, very few respondents provided information on formal organizational ties (e.g., an MOU with a business, party, religious organization, etc.); the response rate was between 0 and 26 percent, depending on the item. On the question of data quality, response rates were very low, varying between 2 and 56 percent, depending on the item.

Response rates to other questions were mixed. For example, on the question that pertained to recruiting ties the response rate was 51 percent for academic institutions, and between 24 and 37 percent for the remaining institutional recruiting sources. It is not clear why there was a difference in response rates according to the recruiting source. One possibility is that respondents skipped over the remaining items after they read the first item on the list. Alternatively, they may have responded only when ties were present, rather than respond "no ties" (an active response is required in the online survey questionnaire to report zero ties). In this case, a non-response translated to a missing value, rather than assuming that there were no ties.

Responses to the communications questions, 20 through 28, for which detailed information was requested on more than 25 communications methods (e.g., radio, television, twitter, blogs), were also mixed. Response rates were between 57 and 65 percent on most of the "Tracking" questions. However, the response rates on questions that requested additional detail on the number of radio broadcasts or television audience size were much lower.

Finally, the response rate on organizational ties was 60 percent overall, but varied by item and was particularly low on several types of ties, e.g., partnerships of any kind with unions and political parties.

Assessment of Data Quality

The data in this study is limited in several ways. First, there is no known sampling frame from which to draw a random sample of think tanks. To date, any effort to collect a complete list of think tanks has not been made publicly available. Until a sampling frame is developed, researchers who wish to conduct global quantitative analyses of think tanks will be limited. Using a convenience sample limits the generalizability of any findings derived from the analysis.

The lists that we used to generate the sample in this study came from think tanks' donors, an NGO partner of developing-country think tanks, and from internet searches of think tank forums, conferences, and events. Although it is impossible to determine, the sample likely included a higher proportion of think tanks from developing and low-income country settings, and included think tanks that have developed ties with external donors or that participated in international think tank events and conferences. We sought to keep these elements in mind when we interpreted the results.

The survey response rate was about 25 percent of all think tanks that we contacted. Far fewer of those think tanks that responded actually completed the survey. Although we have examined completion rates to determine patterns of missing data, it is not evident that any single observable characteristic predicted the likelihood of non-response.

Item non-response varied on a number of survey questions. As a result, we were unable to use more complex analytical techniques, such as regression, because they were inappropriate due to the very small sample sizes. Finally, as with all survey responses, data was self-reported. Although we have every reason to believe that think tanks responded accurately, we do not have the ability to assess the accuracy of the responses provided.

We keep the data shortcomings in mind when interpreting the analysis.

Sample Characteristics

A majority of those who responded to the survey reported that they held the Executive or Executive Director position in their respective think tank. A total of 55 respondents provided their title: Of those who responded with their title, 64 percent held CEO, Executive Director, or Director

Table 5.4: Survey Respondents		
Respondent Title	N	Percent
CEO, Executive Director, or Director	35	64
Research Officer	6	11
Communications Officer	4	7
Deputy or Program Director	3	5
DK	3	5
Executive Secretary	3	5
Program Manager	1	2
Sum	55	100

positions; 11 percent were Research Officers; and 7 percent were Communications Officers. Five percent of respondents reported they were in the Deputy or Program Director positions, Executive Secretaries, or else the position title was not recognized (don't know (DK)).

Think tanks in the sample reported employing 22 full time staff members on average, and nearly an equal number of part time staff. The smallest organization reported that it employed one full time staff member, and the largest employed 88. The average think tank in the sample reported that it employed 10 research staff members 5 of whom were PhD researchers. On average, think tanks reported that they employed nearly six full time administrative staff, five full time support staff, and about two communications staff members.

Close to 49 percent of think tanks reported that they had a budget greater than $500,001 US dollars; 34 percent reported annual budgets that were greater than $150,001 but less than $500,000; 9 think tanks reported budgets between $50,001 and $150,000; and 5 reported budgets of less than $50,000. Roughly 90 percent of think tanks responded to the question characterizing their approximate budget size.

The remainder of this section is structured as follows: First, we summarize the sampled think tanks' endogenous capacities in order to validate that they can be measured using the data that we collected in the survey. Second, we examine outcome indicators of policy influence. Third, we present our results from merging exogenous context

Table 5.5: Staff Composition					
Staff Composition	Obs	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Full time Staff	57	22	20.0	1	88
Part time staff	59	22	44.9	0	291
Full time Research Staff	69	10	8.4	0	34
Full time Administrative Staff	59	6	7.9	0	50
Full time Support Staff	47	5	6.2	0	27
Full time PhD Research Staff	42	5	7.5	0	34
Full time Communications Staff	53	2	2.5	0	13
Full time Survey Staff	38	1	2.7	0	15

data regarding the relationship between endogenous characteristics and exogenous context. Finally, we share the results of the direct test of the hypothesized relationships that we carried out primarily through analysis of pairwise correlation between the endogenous capacities and exogenous characteristics of think tanks.

Figure 5.1: Budget Size
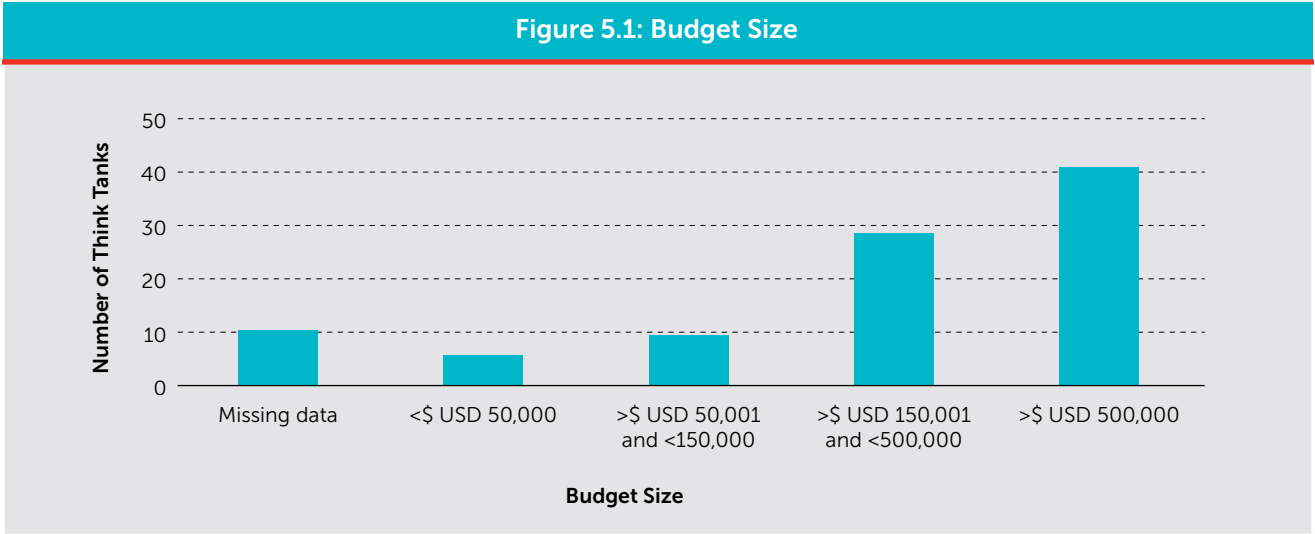
Results

Endogenous Characteristics

This section presents tabulations of the indicators that we developed for each of the four endogenous capacities that we identified in the literature review: credibility capital, communications capital, social capital and resource capital.

Credibility Capital

We developed the following indicators of a think tank's credibility capital using information collected from seven survey questions:

1. **Credibility Factor Ranking, Question 30:** Respondents were asked to rank the eight factors that were most important to maintain organizational credibility: Reputation of the individual who founded the organization; Existing relationships and ties of executive director and research staff; Quality of research staff; Quality of research produced; Consistent presence in major debates over time; Ability to respond to pressing issues in the short run; The ability to communicate its findings and recommendations effectively; or Reputation and importance of board members.

2. **Staff Count, Question 7:** The percentage of staff with a PhD.

3. **Quality Control, Question 31:** Whether the "organization [has] a formal internal review process covering the analysis of data?" (E.g., internal, peer review of data collection methods, data quality and analytical methods applied).

4. **Quality Control, Question 32:** Whether the "organization [has] a formal internal review process for research work that will enter into the public domain? (e.g., peer review of working papers and documents to be published, or other internal evaluation process)."

5. **Board Members' Relation to Government, Question 13:** The percentage of board members who serve now or previously served in government.

6. **Core and Self-Defined Project Funding, Questions 17 & 18:** The share of projects related to the think tank's research agenda; the amount of the budget from unrestricted or core funding.

Credibility Factor Ranking: Maintaining Organizational Credibility

Sixty-nine percent of survey respondents ranked "quality of research produced" as the factor of the highest importance to maintain organizational credibility. About 8.6 percent of respondents ranked "research staff quality" as the single-most important factor.

Table 5.6: Top factor considered most important to maintain organizational credibility		
Top factor	**Freq.**	**Percent**
Quality of research produced	40	69
Research staff quality	5	9
Debate presence	3	5
Effective communication	3	5
Board's reputation	2	3
Founder reputation	2	3
Think Tank ties	2	3
Short run responsiveness	1	2
Total	58	100

Note: Numbers may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Staff Count

On average, think tanks in the sample reported that research staff made up 54 percent of full time staff; however, respondent think tanks varied widely in terms of the percentage of research staff that they reported, from a low of 0 percent to a high of 100 percent. On average, more than 16 percent of full time research staff had attained a PhD, with wide variation across the think tanks. For example, the smallest percentage of staff with PhDs was zero and the largest share reported was 50 percent.

Quality Controls

A substantial percentage of the think tanks that responded to questions about research and publication quality controls reported that they have institutionalized quality controls. For example, 41 think tanks responded to the survey questions on quality controls. Of these, 78 percent reported that they have a formal internal review process covering the analysis of data (e.g., internal, peer review of data collection methods, data quality, and analytical methods applied).

Seventy-two percent of the 43 respondent think tanks reported that they have a formal internal review process for research work that will enter into the public domain (e.g., peer review of working papers and documents to be published, or other internal evaluation processes).

Table 5.7 shows the pairwise correlation between the indicators of a think tank's credibility capital. The correlation

between reporting a formal internal review process covering the analysis of data and for research work that will enter into the public domain is 0.6098 and is statistically significant at the 5 percent level, indicating that many think tanks institutionalize both forms of quality control.

However, our analysis suggested that there might be a relationship between organizational staff size, composition and quality control. Specifically, the correlations suggested that smaller organizations have a larger proportion of research staff but also have a lower probability of reporting that they use quality control methods. For example, the reported presence of quality controls significantly and negatively correlated with the share of research staff that have PhDs with coefficients of (-0.6720*) for review of methods and (-0.4124*) for publications review at the 5

percent level of significance. Both quality control methods negatively correlated with the percentage of research staff; however, the correlation cannot be statistically differentiated from zero. In the absence of other controls this suggested that as the percentage of PhD research staff increased, the likelihood that a think tank reported quality control methods decreased.

Although organizational size was positively associated with the presence of quality controls, the correlation was not significant. However, we found a significant, negative association between the proportion of full time communications, administrative, and support staff with institutionalized review of methods and data (and negative but non-significant association with publications review).

Table 5.7: Pairwise Correlation of Credibility Capital Indicators							
	review_meth2	review_pubs2	Phd_share	RschStaff_share	CommStaff_share	support share	admin share
review_meth2	1.0000						
review_pubs2	0.6098*	1.0000					
Phd_share	-0.6720*	-0.4124*	1.0000				
RschStaff_share	-0.3721	-0.1584	0.3384*	1.0000			
CommStaff_share	-0.7859*	-0.2270	-0.1423	-0.1190	1.0000		
supportshare	-0.5156*	-0.1657	-0.1427	-0.3463*	0.1703	1.0000	
adminshare	-0.4574*	-0.3132	0.2903	-0.4047*	0.0214	0.1810	1.0000
Res_Full	-0.0753	0.0788	-0.0393	0.1245	0.0212	-0.0417	-0.1095
Svy_Full	.	0.2493	0.1579	-0.1174	0.1490	-0.1077	0.2815
Comm_Full	-0.0338	0.1092	0.0365	-0.2087	0.5390*	0.1399	0.1691
Adm_Full	-0.0493	-0.0668	0.1013	-0.3429*	0.1570	0.2154	0.6138*
Sup_Full	-0.5173*	-0.2221	-0.0963	-0.2973	0.0752	0.5801*	0.1579
Staff_Full	0.1829	0.1991	-0.1351	-0.2903*	0.1035	0.1965	0.1990
Staff_Part	-0.0448	-0.0736	-0.0864	-0.0353	0.0193	-0.1184	-0.0097
	Res_Full	Svy_Full	Comm_Full	Adm_Full	Sup_Full	Staff_Full	Staff_Part
Res_Full	1.0000						
Svy_Full	0.3019	1.0000					
Comm_Full	0.5490*	0.3830*	1.0000				
Adm_Full	0.5393*	0.6596*	0.5774*	1.0000			
Sup_Full	0.5669*	0.1105	0.4069*	0.5413*	1.0000		
Staff_Full	0.8553*	0.4037*	0.7090*	0.8019*	0.7907*	1.0000	
Staff_Part	0.1214	0.1496	-0.0136	0.1178	0.0476	0.1370	1.0000

Summary

In sum, despite wide sample variation in the proportion of research staff and PhD research staff, we found that a majority of think tanks prioritized research and staff quality over other ways to establish their credibility. This result was consistent with the literature. An overwhelming majority of think tanks (40 of 58) in the sample reported that quality of the research produced was the single-most important factor that contributed to the maintenance of organizational credibility. The second-highest ranked factor was research staff credibility (5 of 58 think tanks selected this option).

Although response rates were relatively low (about 44 percent) on the two quality control questions, a majority of respondents, 60 percent, indicated that their organization had institutionalized quality controls both for the review of data and methods, and for publications destined for the public domain. This result was consistent with the literature showing that successful think tanks implement peer review of publications and methodologies to ensure the consistent production of credible research results.

The associations between organizational size, the proportion of staff by function, and the institutionalization of quality controls suggested some interesting trends; however, low-response rates on the quality control questions suggest measurement error may also bias these results. First, we found overall that smaller think tanks in the sample reported a significantly higher proportion of research staff, and a higher proportion of PhD staff, although this result was not significant.

Second, the correlations suggested that there was some relationship between the proportion of staff by function and the presence of institutionalized quality controls, although it was difficult for us to parse these trends too closely in the absence of additional controls. In general, think tanks with a larger proportion of PhDs, and communications, support and administrative staff reported using data or methods quality controls with significantly less frequency; and although the frequency of reporting publication quality controls was also lower, it is not significantly so.

The positive but not significant association in the number or size of full time staff and the presence of quality controls, suggested that smaller organizations, with fewer full communications, research, and administrative staff on-hand, might be less likely to report implementing quality controls, but the evidence that we gathered is far from conclusive.

Communications Capital

Communications capital includes factors that contribute to the organization's ability to produce and present high-quality, policy relevant research using a broad array of channels, including communications staff capacity and use of the media. We developed the following indicators of a think tank's communication capital using information collected from twelve survey questions:

1. **Staff Count, Question 7:** The share of full time communications staff.

2. **Audience, Question 5:** The audience that think tank sees as most important for its work.

3. **Communications Channels, Questions 20-28:** The number of communications channels and tools that the think tank used and tracked, as well as the number of items produced, e.g., number of newsletters, roundtables held, and audience size.

4. **Policy Attention, Question 52:** The number of ways in which the think tank reported getting policymakers to pay attention to the information the organization produced.

Staff Count: Communications Staff

On average, communications staff make up about 7.8 percent of think tank staff, with staff sizes ranging from a low of 0 percent to a high of 33 percent of all staff.

Audience

Eighty-one think tanks responded to the question: "Who do you see as the most important audiences for your work?" in which they were asked to rank the list of options shown in the Table below. Nearly 43 percent of think tanks in the sample reported national civil servants/national

Table 5.8: Top-Ranked Audience		
Top-Ranked Audience	**Freq.**	**Percent**
Civil Servants	35	43
National Politicians or Parties	16	20
Average Citizens	10	12
Academics	8	10
NGO audience	5	6
Local Politicians or Parties	3	4
Media	3	4
Intl Donors	1	1
Total	81	100

policymakers as the single-most important audience for their work. Nearly 20 percent of think tanks reported that national politicians or political parties are the most important audience, while slightly more than 12 percent reported that average citizens are the most important audience for their work. NGOs, the media, international donors, and local politicians or parties were only infrequently reported as being the first-ranked audience.

Communications Channels Used and Tracked

The survey asked respondents to report which of 20 communication activities their organization tracks. The list of communication activities included the number of roundtables, webinars, publications in international and domestic journals, as well as working papers, newsletters, weblog postings, RSS feeds, op-eds, press releases, press conferences, invited presentations, appearances on television and radio, Twitter followers, Facebook likes, posts written on the think tank's weblog, mentions of the organization in the newspaper, calls from reporters/media, and citations of written works produced by the think tanks.

Table 5.9 below shows the number of communications activities and the percentage of think tanks that reported that they track the communications activities as an indicator of their performance success. This indicated that in addition to using the communications channels, the think tanks also collected data on the communications outcomes that they attained.

Think tanks tracked an average of between 10 and 11 types of activities. Think tanks most commonly tracked traditional forms of communications. More than 70 percent of respondent think tanks tracked their radio appearances, national and international journal publications, newsletters, television appearances, press releases, and roundtables. Think tanks tracked RSS feeds, webinars, op-eds, posts others had written on the think tank's weblog, and its number of Twitter followers less frequently.

Table 5.9: Number of think tank respondents and the share that reported that they track the communications indicator			
Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.
Roundtable	58	0.86	0.35
Press release	54	0.85	0.36
Television appearances	56	0.82	0.39
Invited presentation	58	0.81	0.40
International journal publication	59	0.75	0.44
Newsletters	53	0.72	0.45
National journal publication	56	0.71	0.46
Radio appearances	56	0.71	0.46
Facebook likes	51	0.69	0.47
Media attention of the think tank in the newspaper	52	0.67	0.47
Press conference	49	0.67	0.47
Blog postings	48	0.60	0.49
Follow-up calls or queries from the media	53	0.57	0.50
Working paper publication	54	0.54	0.50
Citations of works produced by the think tank	51	0.51	0.50
Twitter followers	49	0.45	0.50
Posts on think tank's weblog (by others)	45	0.42	0.50
Op-ed	44	0.36	0.49
Webinar	54	0.20	0.41
RSS Feeds	44	0.07	0.25

Policy Attention: How Think Tanks get Policymakers to Pay Attention

Think tanks were asked: "How do you get policymakers to pay attention to the information your organization produces?" In their responses, think tanks were allowed to select as many options as applied to their organizations (from the list of strategies shown in the table below).

Most think tanks reported that they used a combination of methods to gain policymaker attention. The average think tank used between three and four different methods.

Think tanks reported that 'communicating through the media' was the most widely used strategy. A total of 38 think tanks reported 'seeking windows of opportunity,' and 37 reported 'targeting specific ministries.' The least prevalent strategy was 'influencing policy formation within a political party,' a strategy reported by just five think tanks.

The literature has shown that to be effective, think tanks must be able to communicate their high-quality research using a variety of methods and channels. Forty-three percent of the think tanks in this sample rated civil servants and national policymakers as their most important audience, while 20 percent reported that national politicians or political parties occupied the most important audience role. A smaller proportion prioritized civil society members and organizations as their primary audience.

Think tanks reported a wide range in the number of communications staff that they employ to reach these priority audiences. Typically, communications staff averaged around 7.8 percent of all full time staff, but this percentage varied from a low of 0 to a high of 33 percent of all staff. On average, sampled think tanks reported using and measuring themselves on between 10 and 11

different communications outcomes. Most of the think tanks in the sample continued to use traditional forms of communications, including roundtables, reports, and publications. A few experimented with newer communication forms such as RSS feeds and tweets.

The most prevalent self-reported methods that think tanks used to get policymakers to pay attention to the information that they produced, such as communicating through the media, targeting specific ministries, and seeking windows of opportunity, were consistent with the value that think tanks placed on using institutionalized mechanisms to communicate research results.

Think tanks typically produced communications that could easily be observed and measured by researchers using routine data on think tanks' publications, news stories, and events. However, communication was also involved in the more informal face-to-face meetings think tanks held with policymakers and others as they sought to build relationships. We discuss the results of these relationships in the next section on social capital.

Social Capital

Social capital includes factors that help think tanks to build reputations of trustworthiness over time, such as the development of formal and informal institutional linkages and relationships between individual think tank staff members and researchers. We developed the following indicators of a think tank's social capital using information that we collected from six survey questions:

1. **Recruiting Ties, Question 9:** Diversity of recruiting ties (number of sources, discrete)

2. **Government Ties, Question 11:** Number of staff ties to government (discrete)

Table 5.10: Strategies	
Strategies	**Number of Think Tanks**
Communicate through the media to inform the public or mobilize the public around an issue to get it on the agenda	41
Seek windows of opportunity	38
Target specific ministries	37
Influence policy formulation within the government (e.g., the legislature or the executive) generally	29
Influence the factors considered by government officials charged with implementing policy	28
Influence executive/head of state	12
Influence policy formation within a political party	5

3. **Government/Board of Director Ties, Question 13:** Number of board directors with government ties (discrete)

4. **Formal Institutional Ties, Question 46:** The diversity in the number of ties formalized through memoranda of understanding (MOU) (discrete)

5. **Ties of Senior Researchers to Policymakers, Questions 56/57:** Number of policy maker ties (discrete)

6. **Organizational Partnerships, Question 58:** Diversity of organizational partnerships by type of organization and by function.

Recruiting Ties

Recruiting ties indicate the breadth and characteristics of ties between think tanks and organizations that produce or attract individuals that have similar or related skill sets. Approximately 69 percent of respondent think tanks (about 65 observations) provided information about the organizations with which they had recruiting ties, or from which they recruited their new staff in the last two years.

Think tanks reported that they recruited new staff from between two and three different kinds of institutions on average over the past two years. Table 5.11 provides the number of respondents by institutional category, and the average number of new staff that respondent think tanks recruited from each type of institution. Think tanks reported that they most frequently recruited new staff from academic institutions, through internship programs hosted by the think tank, and from degree-granting PhD, MA, or MPP programs. A total of 48 think tanks responded to the question about recruiting staff from an academic

institution. Among this group, three new staff members were recruited, on average, from academic institutions, with a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 28.

Government Ties: Think Tanks' Directors Who Currently Hold or Previously Held a Position with the Government

The proportion of the members of a think tank's current board of directors who have in the past served or who presently serve in the government indicates the extent to which the think tank retains close social ties with the government.

Although 58 think tanks responded to the question, 2 observations were dropped because their values exceeded 1. The effective response rate was close to 60 percent. Of the 56 think tanks that responded to the questions about their board of directors, 32 percent (18 think tanks) reported that no members of their board presently hold or previously held a position with the government. The remaining 68 percent reported that at least one member of the board of directors has or has had government ties, and 14 percent reported that all of the members of their board of directors have a current or previous tie to the government. On average, think tanks reported that 33 percent of directors currently hold or previously have held a position with the government.

Formal Institutional Ties

We asked think tanks, "Does your organization have any formal ties (such as a Memorandum of Understanding or other written agreements) with any of the following kinds

Table 5.11: Average Number of New Staff Recruited from Each Institution					
Variable	**Obs**	**Mean**	**Std. Dev.**	**Min**	**Max**
An academic institution	48	3.0	4.8	0	28
An internship program at this think tank	35	2.0	2.4	0	10
Directly from a PhD/MA/MPP program	26	1.9	2.7	0	10
A multilateral or bilateral institution	26	1.3	1.7	0	5
Another think tank	31	1.3	1.5	0	5
A government ministry	26	1.3	1.7	0	5
A donor organization	23	1.0	1.6	0	5
The prime minister's office	24	0.8	2.1	0	9

of organizations? Please mark as many as applicable." A total of 39 think tanks responded to the question, a 42 percent response rate, by selecting at least one of the following options, including 'other':

- A business or business organization

- A union

- A religion or religious organization

- An international donor or foundation

- A political party or coalition of parties

- A branch of the government

Half of the respondent think tanks reported having one formal tie, and the other half reported having two or more formal ties. We found that 56 think tanks did not respond to the question at all; either these were non-responses, or these organizations do not have any formal ties. In the future we would revise this question to provide think tanks with the option to respond: "No formal ties."

We broke down formal ties by the type of tie reported. Our analysis indicated that think tanks forged the largest number of formal ties with internal donors and government. Of the think tanks that provided information on their formal ties, 24 think tanks reported ties to an international donor or a foundation (this is not surprising, given that much of the sample is drawn from TTI and from TTF aspirants), and 17 think tanks reported formal ties to the government. No think tanks reported formal ties to a religious organization or to a political party.

Thirteen think tanks reported having other kinds of formal ties, including formal arrangements with universities and academic institutions, other think tanks, or links to a Ministry, Parliamentary Committee, or civil society organization..

Ties of Senior Researchers to Policymakers: Senior Staff Meetings with Government

Think tank response rates on the six questions pertaining to informal meetings with government officials and policymakers ranged from a low of 33 percent to a high of 43 percent.

Table 5.12 reports the mean number of times in the last year that a senior staff member at a think tank met with someone in the Prime Minister or President's office (2.5 times); Parliamentarians or Legislators (close to 12 times) and with Ministry officials (14 times).

The table also reports the mean number of times in the last year that a government requested a senior staff member at a think tank to provide public testimony directly to someone in the Prime Minister's or President's office (1 to 2 times), to Parliamentarians or Legislators (between 3 and 4 times), and to Ministry officials (more than 5 times) on average. As we did not define public testimony in the question, we do not know how respondents interpreted the concept. Providing public testimony requires a highly formalized institutional process in the U.S. but may have been interpreted differently in other country contexts. If we use this question in the future, it should be re-phrased.

Organizational Partnerships

Sixty percent of the think tanks that we sampled responded to the survey's last question regarding organizational partnerships. The question requested a yes/no response to a matrix of nine potential partners by five partnership functions.

Table 5.12: Number of Times Senior Staff Met or Gave Testimony to Policymakers					
Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Met with Ministry Officials	42	14	14.0	2	80
Met with Parliamentarians or Legislators	40	12	12.3	0	60
Gave Testimony to Ministry Officials	40	5	8.8	0	40
Gave Testimony to Parliamentarians or Legislators	31	4	4.9	0	20
Met with someone in the Prime Ministry or President's Office	39	3	3.0	0	15
Gave Testimony to someone in the Prime Ministry or President's Office	40	2	2.8	0	12

Number of Ties	Int'l Donor	Domestic Donor	Advocacy Groups	Policy Research Org.	Civil Society Org.	University/ Academic	Political Party	Business	Union
Table 5.13: Number of Ties Think Tanks Report to Other Organizations									
0	0	5	13	4	7	10	23	18	23
1	4	8	6	9	6	7	7	7	7
2	7	12	3	9	10	9	1	7	3
3	13	10	8	13	8	10	1	3	1
4	20	7	3	6	5	6	1	2	0
5	12	3	5	5	5	4	1	1	1
N	56	45	38	46	41	46	34	38	35

We tested the following nine potential partnerships: international donors or foundations (bilateral and multilateral donors and foundations); domestic donors, foundations, or philanthropists; advocacy groups; think tank or other policy research organizations; civil society organizations (not a think tank); research university/academic institution; a political party or coalition of parties; a business or business organization; a union; or other (an open-ended text box was provided for responses).

The five functions were as follows:

- obtain funding;

- perform research;

- build organizational capacity or skills;

- work on an issue campaign; and,

- produce an event or communicate results (e.g., roundtable, seminar, conference).

Diversity of organizational partnerships

Respondent think tanks reported an average of between 13 and 14 ties across different types of organizations and functions. However, the intensity of the partnership is not really reflected in averages. To examine the intensity of partnerships, we cross-tabulated the number of functional areas in which think tanks reported partnering with the nine kinds of partnerships tested in the survey.

Table 5.13 shows the number of think tanks that reported ties to other organizations according to the number of functional areas in which they have these ties. For example, in column 2, 56 think tanks reported that they had ties with international donors. Four think tanks reported ties to an international donor in 1 functional area, while 12 reported ties in all 5 functional areas. A response that a think tank partners with international donors in all five functional areas (obtain funding, perform research, build organizational capacity or skills, work on an issue

campaign, produce an event or communicate result) indicated a high intensity partnership. The higher the number of ties, the more intense the partnership is likely to be. The table shows that 12 think tanks (more than 21 percent) reported working with donors across all five functional areas.

Table 5.14 shows the pairwise correlation coefficient in the types of partnerships that think tanks reported. A star indicates that the coefficient is significant at the 5 percent level. A higher correlation indicates a higher likelihood that we observed a single think tank with both types of partnerships. For example, the correlation between think tanks partnering with advocacy groups and civil society organizations is positive (0.5443*) and significant at the 5 percent level. This suggests that think tanks in this sample that reported partnering with civil society organizations also partnered with advocacy groups more than half the time. Think tanks that partnered with international donors also partnered with domestic donors in some capacity about half the time (0.5055*).

Think tanks partnered with other organizations to accomplish a wide variety of tasks. All 55 respondent think tanks reported partnering to obtain funding; 54 think tanks reported partnering to perform research; 50 reported partnering to build capacity or skills; 39 reported partnering to work on an issue; and 50 think tanks reported partnering to communicate results (see Table 5.15 below).

The pairwise correlation analysis that we conducted of the ways in which think tanks partner according to function suggested that the think tanks that partnered to undertake research also had a high likelihood of partnering with other organizations to build capacity. Those think tanks that partnered to work on an issue also had a high likelihood of partnering with other organizations to communicate results or produce an event. Many think tanks that partnered with other organizations to undertake research also partnered with other organizations to communicate results and work on issues or undertake campaigns.

Table 5.14: Pairwise Correlation Coefficient in the Types of Partnerships Think Tanks Reported									
	Int'l Donor	Domestic Donor	Advocacy Groups	Policy Research Org.	Civil Society Org.	University/ Academic	Political Party	Business	Union
Int'l Donor	1								
Domestic Donor	0.5055*	1							
Advocacy Groups.	0.2112	0.4044*	1						
Policy Research Org.	0.2962*	0.4805*	0.4213*	1					
Civil Society Org.	0.1384	0.1793	0.5443*	0.2829	1				
University/ Academic	0.1422	-0.0243	0.2224	0.1936	0.2618	1			
Political Party	0.2195	0.1748	0.4883*	0.1767	0.2997	-0.0211	1		
Business	0.158	0.2251	0.3655*	0.1549	0.2597	0.2331	0.3435	1	
Union	-0.1717	0.0935	0.2764	0.0637	0.1716	0.1979	-0.1018	-0.1853	1

Think tanks partnered with universities and academic institutions both to cultivate talent and benefit from the academic culture. Think tanks reported that they most commonly recruited new staff from academic institutions, graduate programs, and from their own internship programs. Aside from cultivating academic ties to recruit new staff, 36 of 46 think tanks also reported having some kind of informal linkage to a university.

Most but not all think tanks reported informal linkages to government. For example, more than 66 percent of think tanks reported that at least 1 member of their board of directors had current or previous government ties but about 33 percent reported that their board had no such ties. Informal meetings between senior think tank staff and various public representatives most frequently occurred with Ministry officials, followed by Parliamentarians or Legislators, followed by someone in the Executive or President's office.

Table 5.15: Sum of Think Tanks by Function and by Number of Ties					
Number of Ties	Funding	Research	Build Capacity	Work on Issue	Produce an Event
0	—	—	2	9	—
1	12	6	17	13	9
2	14	12	10	7	7
3	11	15	9	6	10
4	8	6	6	4	5
5	4	11	4	3	7
6	4	2	2	3	3
7	2	1	2	2	8
8	—	1	—	1	1
9	—	—	—	—	—
N	55	54	52	48	50

A hyphen indicates no think tanks reported ties at this number

Table 5.16: Pairwise Correlation of Partnership Types by Function					
	Funding	**Research**	**Build Capacity or Skills**	**Work on an Issue**	**Produce Event/ Communicate Results**
Funding	1.0000				
Research	0.4135*	1.0000			
Build Capacity or Skills	0.3813*	0.6132*	1.0000		
Work on an Issue	0.3643*	0.4829*	0.4446*	1.0000	
Produce Event/Communicate Results	0.3619*	0.5318*	0.4198*	0.6203*	1.0000

Summary

Think tanks most commonly created formal linkages with donors and government, while a few engaged in formal ties with universities, academic institutions, other think tanks, ministries, or civil society.

Respondent think tanks reported that they had an average of between 13 and 14 ties across different types of organizations and functions. Think tanks reported that they partnered most intensely with international donors. We found that some functions went hand in hand. For example, think tanks that partnered to undertake research were significantly more likely to partner to build capacity. Similarly, those that worked on an issue, partnered to communicate results or produce an event, and those that undertook research together partnered to communicate results and work on issues or undertake campaigns.

Resource Capital

Resource capital includes financial measures, such as a think tank's amount of institutional funding, fundraising, income, and expenditures, that all combine to enable the think tank to hire and pay staff, manage the organization, and undertake communications and operations tasks. We developed the following six indicators of Resource Capital by analyzing six survey questions:

1. **Staff Size, Question 7:** Number of full time staff; share of full time research staff

2. **Budget, Question 6:** Annual budget size

3. **Funding Diversity, Question 15:** Number of donors from which funding was received

4. **Funding Received, Question 16:** Funding amount received

5. **Funding type, Question 17:** Funding type (project-based)

6. **Core funding, Question 18:** Share of core funding

Annual Budget Size

Close to 90 percent (84 think tanks) of the think tanks that we surveyed responded to this question. Of these, close to 49 percent of think tanks reported a budget greater than $500,001 U.S. dollars; 34 percent reported annual budgets that were greater than $150,001 but less than $500,000; 9 think tanks reported budgets between $50,001 and $150,000; and 5 reported budgets of less than $50,000.

The number of organizations from which think tanks reported receiving funding was an indication of funding diversification, which has been identified in the literature as having a stabilizing effect on think tanks' finances. The response rate to this question was low: 35 out of a potential 94 respondents responded, yielding a 37 percent response rate.

Table 5.17: Budget Size		
Budget	**Freq.**	**Percent**
< $ USD 50,000	5	6
> $ USD 50,001 and < 150,000	9	11
> $ USD 150,001 and <500,000	29	35
> $ USD 500,001	41	49
Total	84	100

Note: Numbers may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Table 5.18: Number of Funders from which a Think Tank has Received Funds in the Last Two Years

Number of Funders	Freq.	Percent
0	1	3
1-2	7	20
3-5	10	29
5-10	15	43
more than 10	2	6
Total	35	100

Close to 23 percent of respondent think tanks (8) reported between 0 and 2 funders in the last 2 years. Ten think tanks (more than 28 percent) reported between 3 and 5 different funding sources. Seventeen think tanks (48 percent) reported having received funding from more than 5 sources in the last 2 years.

Project-Based and Core Funding

The survey asked think tank respondents: "Of the projects that you began in 2012, for what percentage did you define the topic, or did you pursue (e.g., in a competitive call) because the topic fit into your research agenda/strategy?" The response rate on this question was about 38 percent. Respondent think tanks reported that about 73 percent of the funding that they received fit with their research agenda/strategy. Thirty-five think tanks responded to the survey question that asked: "What percentage of the budget for all new projects in 2012 came from unrestricted or core funding?" Among the respondents, about 28 percent of their budgets, on average, came from unrestricted or core funding.

Summary

In sum, the sample captured think tanks of various sizes according to the number of full time staff that they employed and the budget information that they reported. Think tanks reported that they employed 22 full time staff on average, with the number of full time staff evenly distributed across the four size categories examined. The distribution of budget information was more uneven. About half of the sampled think tanks reported a budget greater than $500,001 U.S. dollars (the highest category), whereas about 6 percent reported a budget in the lowest category.

Think tanks built and increased their resources by hiring and retaining highly educated staff capable of performing the high quality research that they need to produce, by diversifying their funding sources, and by balancing core and project-based funding to meet their organizational needs. The annual budget size of a think tank is a direct measure of the resources it has available to it to undertake policy research and effect change. Unfortunately, the response rates on the other indicators of resource capital were low, about 37 percent. About half of the think tanks reported that they received funding from five or more sources in the last two years, while the remaining number of think tanks were about evenly split between zero to two and three to five different sources of funding.

Response rates were also low on the questions of project-based and core funding (about 38 percent). On average think tanks indicated that 73 percent of their funding fit within their research agenda or strategy, and 28 percent of their budget came from unrestricted or core funding.

Policy Outcomes

We next discuss the three main self-reported outcome variables that we tested in the survey. Similar to the cascade of influence, these three outcomes increase in the difficulty of attaining them, with the first outcome being lowest on the scale and the third outcome being the most difficult to achieve. The policy outcomes differ from the cascade of influence in that policymakers assess the latter, whereas the former, policy outcomes, are self-reported by think tanks. To illustrate the difference, consider the first level of policy influence in the cascade: whether a policymaker 'knows that the think tank exists,' and the second, they 'know or use the think tank's products.' Since we did not conduct a survey of the policy community, we used the self-reported measurements to assess whether the think tank's products have been named or used in policy discussions.

The survey asked respondents to indicate the kinds of outcomes that they had achieved in the last two years. Respondents were asked to answer the following questions by choosing numerical responses from the enumerated categories {0, 1-2, 3-5, 5-10, and more than 10}:

- **Outcome 1 (policy discussion):** In the last two years, roughly how many of your policy outputs have been named or used in policy discussions

- **Outcome 2 (changes in government policy implementation):** In the last two years, roughly how many of your policy outputs have led to changes in the way the government implements its programs and services in your country?

- **Outcome 3 (policy adopted by government):** In the last two years, roughly how many of your policy outputs have been adopted as policy by the government?

In addition to claiming the outcomes, think tanks were asked to briefly describe up to three areas in which they had achieved policy impact. A majority of respondents provided at least one example. For instance, with respect to Outcome 1, 50 of the 53 think tanks completed an open-ended question box in which they described the impact, and we observed the same empirical regularities in the other two policy outcomes.

Think tanks reported having policy impacts on all three outcomes. The responses are summarized in Table 5.19 below. Forty think tanks reported that their work had an impact on policy discussions, and a majority of these reported that their work had an impact on policy discussions more than five times in the past two years. Just 5 percent of respondent think tanks reported that their work had no impact on policy discussions.

Forty-eight thinks tanks reported that their work had an impact on government policy implementation in the last 2 years. Twenty-two think tanks said this occurred between 1 and 2 times and 13 said that they achieved this impact between 3 and 5 times.

Thirty-eight think tanks reported the government adopted their policy output as policy. Nineteen said this occurred between 1 and 2 times in the last 2 years while 11 said this occurred 3 to 5 times.

Think tanks did not commonly report that their work had zero impact on policy outcomes in the first two categories. Just two think tanks reported that they had no outcomes that had an impact on policy discussions and three reported no outcomes that changed government policy implementation. In contrast, 11 think tanks reported having no outcomes in which a policy was adopted by government.

Respondent's self-reported success claims are difficult for the research team to verify. However, the fact that a vast majority of respondents took the time to briefly document the project on which they claimed success lent some additional credibility to the think tanks' responses. Even so, self-reported and perceived rates of success were very high. Think tanks claimed that their work had the greatest amount of impact on policy discussion and changes in government policy implementation: between 94 and 95 percent of respondent think tanks claimed impact. Think tanks were less likely to claim wholesale impact on policy adoption: 78 percent of think tanks reported that they had some kind of impact.

Exogenous Context

We next discuss the results that we obtained by merging the survey data with the exogenous context data. Table A.3.3 in the Appendix maps the four exogenous factors that we found in the literature to be widely available country level indicators and their respective data sources. The indicators that we used in the analysis are shown in Table 5.20.

We dropped one observation due to a lack of available matching data for the country. As a result, the sample size decreased to a total of 93 observations after merging.

We conducted a thorough review of the exogenous context in which the think tanks in this sample operate. Our review used cross-tabulations, graphical analysis, and scatter plots to ensure sufficient variation in exogenous context to pursue further study of the relationships between endogenous characteristics of think tanks and exogenous characteristics of the countries in which they operate.[14]

Importantly, our review of country exogenous indicators for the think tanks that we included in this sample indicates substantial variation. This result suggests that the sample

	Table 5.19: Self-Reported Outcomes					
Number of Outcomes	Policy Discussion		Changes in Government Policy Implementation		Policy Adopted by Government	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
0	2	5	3	6	11	22
1-2	7	17	22	43	19	39
3-5	11	26	13	25	11	22
5-10	19	45	8	16	3	6
More than 10	3	7	5	10	5	10
N	42	100	51	100	49	100

[14]These graphs and tables are too numerous to include in this report, but are available by request from the authors.

is drawn from a wide range of country contexts. This variation enabled us to examine simple relationships between endogenous capacities and exogenous context indicators, which we discuss in the next section.

Exploratory Analysis

The exploratory analysis investigated the relationship between exogenous factors and endogenous capacities using pairwise correlation. Our discussion of the analysis is organized according to the four exogenous capacities, starting with political and economic context, followed by donors, and civil society. We did not investigate intellectual climate due to a lack of available contextual data.

We first examined a pairwise correlation of Party Competition, Government Effectiveness, and GDP per capita and the three outcomes examined in the survey. A significant correlation is shown by a star (*) and indicates a significant association between variables.

Of the three relationships that we tested, we observed only one significant correlation. The association between GDP per capita and outcome 3, the number of times that think tanks reported having a policy adopted by the government, is negative and significant at the 5 percent level. The correlation coefficients on each self-reported outcome became increasingly more negative in relation to GDP as they moved from outcome 1 to outcome 3, and as the self-reported outcomes became increasingly more comprehensive. This suggested, in the absence of other controls, that think tanks operating in countries with higher development levels are significantly less likely to report the wholesale adoption of their policy recommendations by government.

The following section reports pairwise correlation between political and economic context and measures of credibility capital, communications capital, social capital, and resource capital in turn. The complete correlation matrix is shown in Appendix Tables A.3.4-A.3.6.

Table 5.20: Exogenous Variables Merged and Analyzed with the Survey Data			
Exogenous Context	**Variable Name**	**Definition**	**Source**
Political and Economic	Parcomp	The extent of government restriction on political competition: 1 = repressed, 2 = suppressed, 3 = factional, 4 = transitional and 5 = competitive	Polity IV Project, Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2012
	GovEffect: Government Effectiveness	Percentile Rank captures perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies.	Worldwide Governance Indicators, The World Bank
	GDPPC_WDI	GDP per capita	World Development Indicators
Donor	NETODAAid	Net official development assistance and official aid received (current U.S.$). Net ODA consists of disbursements of loans made on concessional terms (net of repayments of principal) and grants by official agencies of the members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), by multilateral institutions, and by non-DAC countries to promote economic development and welfare in countries and territories in the DAC list of ODA recipients.	World Development Indicators
Civil Society	VoiceAcct: Voice and Accountability	Percentile Rank captures perceptions of the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media.	Worldwide Governance Indicators, The World Bank
Intellectual Climate	BrainDrain	Emigration rate of tertiary educated individuals shows the stock of emigrants ages 25 and older, residing in an OECD country other than that in which they were born, with at least 1 year of tertiary education as a percentage of the population age 25 and older with tertiary education.	World Development Indicators

Table 5.21: Endogenous Variables	
Variable Name	**Description**
att_methods	Number of different ways a think tank reports gaining attention of policy makers
Budget	Annual budget size (scale)
CommStaffShare	Full time communications staff as a share of full time staff
Comtrak	Number of communications indicators tracked
Divscore	Overall diversity of organizational partnerships score
frml_tiesum	Number of formal organizational ties think tank reports
funders_coded	Number of funders from which think tank received funds in the last two years
Himeet	Number of times a senior researcher met with a Ministry official, Executive/President, or Parliamentarian
Hitest	Number of times a senior researcher gave invited testimony to a Ministry official, Executive/President, or Parliamentarian
Phd_share	Full time research staff with a Phd as a percentage of full time staff
ratiogovbrd	Share of board members who have served or are serving in government
rec_tiestot	Sum of entities from which think tank reports recruiting new staff
Review_meth2	Whether a formal internal review process covers analysis of data
Review_pubs2	Whether a formal internal review process covers work entering the public domain
RschStaff_share	Full time research staff as a percentage of full time staff
Staff_Full	Number of full time staff
topicdefine	Percentage of projects started in 2012 in which topic fit with think tank research agenda
Toprnk_aud	Audience think tank deemed its primary/most important audience
Toprnk_cred	Top factor considered most important to maintain organizational credibility
TTNumber	Number of think tanks (McGann)
unres_rsch	Share of budget for all new 2012 projects from unrestricted core funding

Political and Economic Context and Endogenous Capacities

We next analyze the impact of political and economic context on think tank capacities. Of the relationships examined, we find just one that is significant. Think tanks that operate in countries with higher levels of economic development (GDP per capita) reported that a significantly lower percentage of their budget came from unrestricted core funding (-0.4961*). This relationship is inconsistent with our hypothesis, which was that higher levels of GDP per capita would have no impact on indicators of think tank credibility. We might have observed this negative relationship because of our sample composition, which was primarily drawn from lists of think tanks supplied to us by think tanks' donor agencies. Indeed, the relationship that we observed might be the result of donor targeting, namely the transfer of donor resources to think tanks with the fewest alternative domestic sources.

We observed no significant relationship between credibility priorities (the top-ranked factors that think tanks consider to be most relevant to their credibility) and the exogenous indicators of political competition, government effectiveness, and GDP per capita. This result is consistent with our hypothesis, which we developed based on the literature and our interviews, which show that think tanks prioritize research credibility regardless of external context.

We found a significant association between GDP per capita and the audience that think tanks rank as their most important. Because the number assigned to audience is arbitrary, we explored this relationship further by cross tabulating top-ranked audience against mean GDP per capita.

The data that we present in Table 5.23 suggests some small qualitative differences that may indicate support for our hypothesis that think tanks' communication channels will be more diverse in higher-income contexts. Among

Table 5.22: Pairwise Correlation Matrix of Political and Economic Context and Self-Reported Outcomes								
	parcomp	GovEffect	GDP per Capita	Net ODAid	Voice Acct	Policy Discussion	Change in Policy Implementation	Policy Adopted
parcomp	1.0000							
Gov Effect	0.5604*	1.0000						
GDP per Capita	0.3818*	0.7739*	1.0000					
NetODAid	0.1145	0.3383*	0.1303	1.0000				
VoiceAcct	0.6548*	0.8328*	0.7571*	0.0484	1.0000			
Policy Discussion	0.2164	0.2021	-0.0096	-0.1028	0.2269	1.0000		
Change in Policy Implementation	0.1661	-0.0324	-0.2654	0.0418	-0.1324	0.5544	* 1.0000	
Policy Adopted	0.0488	-0.2669	-0.4496*	-0.1952	-0.2321	0.2699	0.6538*	1.0000

countries whose GDP per capita places them at or above the 80th percentile (relative to the other think tanks in the sample), NGOs, average citizens, and the media are more likely to be reported as their top-ranked, primary audience.

We found that there were no significant associations between the indicators of political and economic context and measures of social capital. This result was inconsistent with our hypothesis that think tanks would participate in more partnerships and have more well developed social ties in higher-income and more politically-competitive contexts.

We found that country's level of development significantly and negatively correlated with the number of full time staff who think tanks reported employing (-0.2766*), and with the share of funding for think tanks' 2012 projects that came from unrestricted core funding sources (-0.4961*). Think tanks in countries that have lower levels of development reported a significantly larger staff and significantly more research autonomy, in the absence of other controls.

Summary

Our test of the hypothesized relationships between exogenous political and economic context and endogenous capacities found a few significant associations with the level of economic development, but no significant association between the amount of political competition or government effectiveness and the endogenous capacities of the think tanks that we examined in this study.

We found that think tanks that operated in countries with a higher-level of per capita development reported that a significantly lower percentage of their budget comes from unrestricted core funding (-0.4961*), and reported that they employed significantly fewer full time staff members. Think tanks that operate in countries with lower levels of development reported a significantly larger staff and significantly more research autonomy, in the absence of other controls.

Table 5.23: Top-Ranked Audience			
Toprnk_aud	Mean GDP per cap	Std. Dev.	Freq.
National civil servants or policymakers	8428	8315	29
National politicians or political parties	5792	3986	16
Academics	5980	5053	8
Average Citizens	12744	9688	8
NGOs or other community organizations	10697	16914	4
Local or regional politicians or political parties	2453	2307	3
Media	14490	4474	3
International donors or foundations	4397	0	1

There is some evidence that think tanks in countries in the highest-income group are more likely to target NGOs, average citizens, and the media as their primary audiences, relative to the other think tanks in the sample. We found no significant associations between the indicators of political and economic context, and measures of social capital. We also found no significant relationship between the factors that think tanks consider to be and rank as most relevant to their credibility, and the indicators of political competition, government effectiveness and GDP per capita. This suggests that think tanks in the sample behaved consistently with those discussed in the literature: they prioritized research credibility regardless of external context.

Donor Context and Endogenous Capacities

We found no significant association between donor context and indicators of a think tank's credibility, communications, and social capital. Consistent with our hypothesis, we found no evidence that the amount of Net ODA per capita affects how think tanks rank the factors that they consider most important to maintain their credibility (the correlation coefficient is close to zero and not significant (0.0465)).

Donor context does not appear to affect the number of communications staff that a think tank employs, the audience that think tanks ranked as being most important to their work, the number of communications channels that they reported using, or the number of methods that they used to gain the attention of policymakers. We found no significant correlation between Net ODA / Aid and the total number of entities from which think tanks reported recruiting new research staff, the proportion of think tank board members that serve or previously served in government, the number of formal organizational ties that think tanks reported, the overall number of informal ties that think tanks reported having with a range of other organizations, or the number of times senior researchers met with or gave testimony to someone in the Executive or President's office, to members of the Ministry, or Parliamentarians.

The budget size of think tanks in the sample was negatively and significantly related to the Net ODA and Aid flows per capita (-0.2549*). Think tanks in countries that received less Net ODA per capita tended to report larger budgets in comparison to think tanks in countries that received more ODA per capita. Donor context is not significantly correlated with the other indicators of resource capital, namely, the number of full time staff (the coefficient is also negative, but it is not significant), the number of research staff, the number of funders think tanks reported (positive, but not significant), the amount of unrestricted funding, or the self-reported ability to define topics as they relate to the think tank's research agenda (e.g., its research autonomy).

The pairwise correlation showed no significant relationship between aid flows per capita and staff size; however, a negative statistically significant association (-0.4287*) was shown between the number of think tanks in each country, as reported in McGann (2012), and Net Per Capita ODA.

Intellectual Climate and Endogenous Capacities

The research team was unable to examine the relationship between the intellectual climate and endogenous think tank capacities because of insufficient data in the sample. Therefore, we do not report any results for Intellectual Climate.

Civil Society Context and Endogenous Capacities

Think tanks that operate in countries that have a lower ranking on the global scale of Voice and Accountability and have fewer think tanks reported that a larger percentage of their budgets for all new 2012 projects came from unrestricted, core funding. The data evidences a significant, negative correlation in both instances, namely (-0.5191*) with respect to Voice and Accountability and (-0.5290*) in the number of think tanks. Think tanks in countries that have lower levels of Voice and Accountability also reported less research autonomy, i.e., a lower proportion of projects that the think tank started in 2012 concern topics that fit with the think tank's research agenda (0.3580*).

A country's global rank on Voice and Accountability does not seem to bear on its relationship to other indicators of think tanks credibility. Specifically, we observed no significant associations between Voice and Accountability rank and the top-ranked credibility factor reported: the percentage of staff with a PhD, the percentage of research staff, and the presence of quality control methods such as peer review of data, methods, and reports.

Our analysis found no evidence of a significant association between a country's Voice and Accountability rank and the percentage of communications staff that think tank employs, the most important audience that it targets, the number of communications channels against which it measures itself, and the ways in which it attempts to obtain the attention of policymakers.

We found no significant association between a country's Voice and Accountability rank and the number of think tanks in that country or measures of think tank social capital. More specifically, we did not find that Voice and Accountability rank was associated with the number of

institutions from which think tanks reported recruiting new staff members. Although the correlation coefficients were all negative on the following relationships, none were statistically significant: the proportion of board members who serve or served in the government (meaning think tanks in countries with a higher Voice and Accountability rank reported fewer close Board/Government ties); the number of formal institutional ties, and informal ties to other organizations; and instances of giving testimony to a member of the Executive or President's office, a Ministry official, or a Parliamentarian.

The pairwise correlation between the number of organizational partnerships that think tanks reported (divscore, diversity of ties score) and exogenous measure of voice and accountability indicated no significant relationship between the diversity (number) of organizational ties reported and the country's level of Voice and Accountability or perceptions of the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media. Voice and Accountability rank is significantly and positively associated with the number of think tanks, a finding consistent with McGann and Johnson (2005). We observed a correlation coefficient of (0.3515*) which is significant at the 5 percent level.

We additionally examined pairwise correlations with all the sub-components of the diversity of organizational ties variables with Voice and Accountability. First, we provided a list of the sub-components included in the divscore and then the pairwise correlation matrix. We looked to see if there were any relationships of interest between Voice and Accountability (the last row) and the kinds of organizational ties that think tanks reported.

Neither Voice and Accountability nor the country's number of think tanks showed a significant association with any of the forms of organizational ties think tanks reported.

We found a negative association in the percentage of a think tank's budget that came from unrestricted, core funding in countries with a higher rank on the scale of Voice and Accountability (-0.5191*), and with more think tanks (-0.5290*). The level of Civil Society development does not appear to significantly affect other indicators of resource capital. For example, we found no significant relationship to the percentage of full time staff and the percentage of research staff that think tanks reported employing, the reported budget size, the number of funders a think tank reported, or their ability to define research topics.

Conclusions

Our analysis demonstrated the feasibility of operationalizing a think tank's endogenous capacities using an online survey instrument. Although data was sufficient for us to test some hypothesized relationships between the endogenous capacities and exogenous country characteristics, limitations with respect to our sample and the quality of our data made it infeasible for us to conduct a more sophisticated analysis of these relationships.

Think tanks vary in terms of their self-reported credibility, social, communication, and resource capital. We found wide variation in the proportion of research staff and PhD research staff, and evidence to support the results that we found in the literature that think tanks prioritize research and staff quality over other ways of establishing their credibility. Forty of 58 respondent think tanks reported that the quality of the research that they produced was the single most important factor contributing to the maintenance of their organizational credibility, while research staff credibility was the second-highest ranked factor. Most think tanks, about 60 percent, have institutionalized quality controls such as peer review of data and methods, and of publications.

Most of the think tanks that we sampled targeted civil servants and national policymakers as their most important audience (43 percent), while 20 percent saw national politicians or political parties in that role. A smaller proportion prioritized civil society members and organizations as their primary audience.

We found evidence from the survey that think tanks communicated through a wide range of channels. Think tanks reported using and measuring themselves on between 10 and 11 different communications outcomes. Most of the think tanks in the sample use traditional forms of think tank communication, including roundtables, reports, and publications; however, a few reported experimenting with newer communication forms such as RSS feeds and tweets.

Think tanks reported having extensive and diverse informal social ties and partnerships. Respondent think tanks reported an average of between 13 and 14 informal ties across different types of organizations and functions. Think tanks reported that they partner most intensely with international donors, and maintain informal ties to academic institutions through staff recruitment, and through more formal arrangements and commitments.

Some, but not all think tanks retain informal social ties to government. For example, one-third of think tanks reported none of the members of their board of directors currently or formerly served in the government; two-

thirds report having one or more board member with active government ties. Think tanks reported regular meetings between their senior staff and Ministry officials, Parliamentarians or Legislators, and individuals in the Executive or President's office, but there was variation in the number of meetings across think tanks.

Think tanks most commonly formed formal linkages with donors and government, while a few reported that they had formal ties to universities, academic institutions, other think tanks, Ministries or civil society organizations.

Although we observed differences in the outcomes that think tanks reported, our analysis found only one significant association with context: GDP per capita and the number of times that think tanks reported having a policy adopted by the government. This negative and significant association suggests that it is more challenging for think tanks to obtain policy adoption outcomes in higher-income contexts.

Our test of the hypothesized relationships between exogenous political and economic context and endogenous capacities found a few significant associations with the level of economic development, but no significant association between the amount of political competition or government effectiveness and the endogenous capacities of think tanks that we examined in this study.

We found that think tanks that operate in countries with a higher-level of per capita development reported that a significantly lower percentage of their budget came from unrestricted core funding (-0.4961*), and that they employed significantly fewer full time staff members. Think tanks that operate in countries with lower levels of development reported a significantly larger staff and significantly more research autonomy, in the absence of other controls.

Although think tanks in countries that receive less Net ODA per capita tended to report larger budgets in comparison to think tanks in countries that receive more ODA per capita, we found no significant association of donor activity with a think tank's top prioritization of research and staff quality in maintaining its credibility, and no significant associations between donor context and indicators of think tanks' communication capacity, or the formal and informal institutional social ties that think tanks form.

Think tanks that operate in countries with lower ranking on the global scale of Voice and Accountability and with fewer think tanks reported that a larger percentage of their budgets for all new 2012 projects came from unrestricted, core funding. The data evidences a significant, negative correlation in both instances, namely (-0.5191*) with respect to Voice and Accountability and (-0.5290*) in the number of think tanks. Think tanks in countries that have lower levels of Voice and Accountability also reported less research autonomy, i.e., a lower proportion of the projects that they started in 2012 concerned topics that fit within their research agendas (0.3580*).

Consistent with the literature, a country's global rank on Voice and Accountability does not seem to bear a relationship to other indicators of think tanks' credibility. Specifically, we observed no significant associations between Voice and Accountability rank and the top-ranked credibility factor reported, the percentage of staff with a PhD, the percentage of research staff, and the presence of quality control methods such as peer review of data, methods, and reports.

Our analysis yielded no evidence of a significant association between a country's Voice and Accountability rank and the percentage of communications staff that a think tank has, the most important audience it targets, the number of communications channels against which it measures itself, and the ways in which it attempts to obtain the attention of policymakers.

Finally, we found no significant association between a country's Voice and Accountability rank and measures of think tanks' social capital.

Think Tank Focus Group Discussions and Executive Director Interviews

Introduction

Based on our understanding of the literature and previous conversations with think tank experts, it is clear that context already has been actively evaluated and considered in many research projects. However, the strategies developed in response to context may not always be openly acknowledged, making it difficult for think tanks to share insights and learning both within organizations and across the sector. Thus, we held a series of focus group discussions (FGDs) and executive director interviews in Rwanda and Indonesia to develop a better understanding of how think tanks actually evaluate and respond to context in practice.

The FGDs brought together five to seven research and communications staff from similar organizations to discuss how context affects their decision making related to developing, undertaking, and communicating their research programs. Through the discussions, we sought input on the list of context factors that we developed using the literature, in order to ensure it was both comprehensive and relevant to the actual experiences of think tanks. We also solicited stories and examples from think tanks' staff about their experiences defining policy problems, performing research, and communicating results.

We also conducted executive director interviews to capture information about the role of political, social, and economic context factors on the individual executive director's and think tank's research and communications decision making. The think tank directors were asked to describe their decision making around four important decision points in which context likely comes into play: outcomes, audience, research problem, and policy problem.

Methodology

Country Selection

We used two key dimensions of civil society development to select countries: the level of civil society development as measured by the World Governance Indicators (Voice and Accountability) and the Open Budget Index, and the number of think tanks reported in the 2012 Global Think Tank report. Indicators of Voice and Accountability and

the level of democratization are strongly associated. For example, the pairwise correlation between Voice & Accountability (from the World Governance Indicators (WGI)) and level of democratization (democ, Policy IV) in 2011 was 0.84 and significant at the 5 percent level; correlations between Voice & Accountability and number of think tanks is also positive and significant at the 0.05 level, but has a much lower correlation coefficient, which is 0.24. By using the number of think tanks in addition to the Voice and Accountability indicator we avoided selection on the level of democratization, which is an important but not determinant factor in think tank development.

Our analysis of the literature indicated that participation and competition between multiple institutions in the political/civic space increases the level of debate, and competition for ideas among think tanks. Variation in the level of debate likely influences both think tanks' research topic selection and communication strategies.

We argue that level of civil society development will affect the number of media outlets available in a country and ability of a think tank to leverage civil society and popular opinion to affect policy change. Both will use personal networks to access elites and policymakers; however, think tanks that operate in more developed civil society contexts gain access to a broader range of media channels and institutionalized civil processes.

The level of civil society development and competition may also affect the number of non-taboo research topics available for open debate in each country. For example, think tanks that operate in countries with low levels of civil society development have used the strategy of performing less confrontational and more "benign" research functions (e.g., data collection and improvement in Armenia).

We sorted countries into three categories, low-, middle-, and high-civil society development, according to their score on the two criteria dimensions we described. Project constraints made our selection of two countries feasible for focus group study, and we selected one country each from the low- and middle-civil society development levels, Rwanda and Indonesia, respectively.

Think Tank Selection

In each country, we selected think tanks based on R4D's existing networks and IDRC's referrals. The respective size of the think tank market in Rwanda and Indonesia affected the scope and number of contacts that we developed in each country. While Indonesia has a large number of diverse think tanks, Rwanda's think tank market is relatively new and emerging. We contacted nine Rwandan organizations, including a range of think tanks, research-based advocacy organizations, for-profit research contractors, and university-based research institutions; six agreed to participate in the focus group discussion. We contacted 13 think tanks in Indonesia and nine participated, but due to the large numbers of think tanks, we are not confident that the sample is representative of all Indonesian think tanks. Of the Indonesian think tanks that participated in our study, a range of organizations were represented, including those that reported doing research-based advocacy, advocacy, and traditional policy research. This is significant in that, depending on the research strategy adopted by an organization, there may be implications on the audiences that think tanks seek to involve and influence with their research.

FGD Participant Selection

R4D recruited think tank researchers and communications staff by contacting think tanks' executive directors and asking them to nominate one or two of their staff members. Executive directors were interviewed individually using a separate interview protocol.

Executive Director Participant Selection

The target participants for our in-country interviews were think tanks' executive directors. From our conversations with 17 executive directors, we aimed to get a better sense of how they understood the overall organizational mission and strategy of the think tank, and how they set priorities or allocated resources to research and communications activities accordingly.

In most instances, the executive directors we spoke with also nominated members of the research and communications staff to participate in our focus group discussions. However, in some instances (in Rwanda in particular), we were able to interview directors of organizations that were not represented in our FGDs, largely due to staff availability.

Also in Rwanda, given the lower level of civil society development and limited think tank environment, we held a number of interviews with individuals who either did not

self-identify as executive directors, or did not classify their organization as a traditional think tank. Such individuals included the head of research at a national university, the director of a policy consulting firm, and the chair of the board of a recently formed think tank.

The interviews were each approximately one hour in length and followed a semi-structured format based on think tank decision points described in Figure 6.1.

Focus Group Discussions

Purpose

Our approach to the FGDs assumed that think tank researchers and communications staff either explicitly or implicitly consider context when they make research, communication, and policy decisions. However, the literature and interviews suggested these frameworks were not systematic.

As a result, we designed the FGDs to enable research and communications staff to share their tacit knowledge by nominating and discussing context factors that they believed to be important to the research and communications process, ranking context according to its importance, and linking context to specific decisions made at the project level.

The research team sought to generate a comprehensive and explicit list of context factors that think tank researchers and communications staff take into consideration when making strategic decisions, gather stories that linked successful strategies for approaching various context factors, and illustrate the tradeoffs of certain decisions and how those play out in different scenarios.

Format

We conducted a total of three FGDs (two in Indonesia and one in Rwanda), each of which involved between five and seven think tank research and communications staff, with a maximum of two participants from any one organization. Each FGD was approximately two hours long, and was composed of three main activities to gather feedback and stories from think tank participants.

FGDs began with a self-introduction of all participants, followed by a brief overview of the research project by the facilitator. The facilitator described the four exogenous and mixed exogenous context categories defined in the literature review with examples to illustrate what they each mean. A simple four-step model of research and

Policy Problem or Desired Improvement → Research Problem, Methods, and Analysis → Results Communication and Audiences → Policy Influence
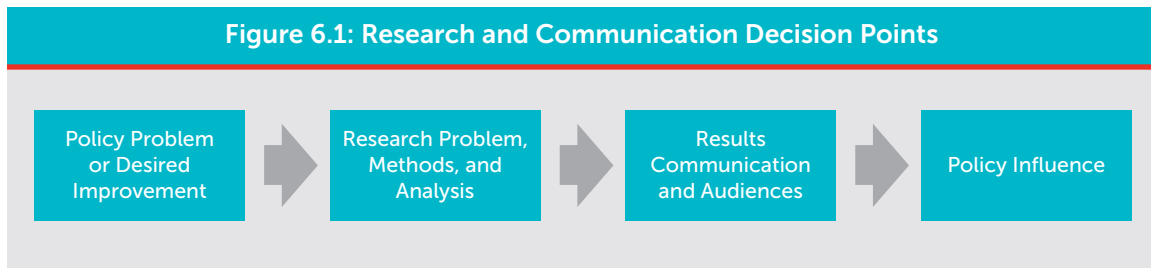
communications decision points was introduced to help orient participants to the areas in which context can come into effect (depicted in Figure 6.1 above).

Brainstorming Context

The first exercise invited FGD participants to consider the four decision points and share their perceptions and experiences with context factors in the research and communications process. Verbatim descriptions of the context factors discussed during the brainstorming session were recorded on large-format paper in real time. Each suggested context factor was mapped to one of the four exogenous context factors identified in the literature review.

Ranking Context

When the list of context factors recorded during the brainstorming session was finalized, FGD participants were asked to vote on the factors that they considered most important. This activity was designed to prioritize and rank context factors according to think tank staff. Each participant was allowed three votes. Participants cast their votes by physically placing a sticker dot on the brainstorming flipcharts next to their top-ranked factors. Participants were allowed to cast their votes according to their own preferences: by assigning all three of their votes to a single context factor, or distributing them across three different factors. The votes were tallied after voting, which produced a list of the three most significant context factors according to participants. The top ranked factors fed into the third and final activity, the "Tell Your Story Exercise."

Tell Your Story Exercise

The final activity of the FGDs was the "Tell Your Story Exercise." In this activity, we divided FGD participants into two groups, both of which included an R4D staff member. Participants from the same think tank were kept together. Taking the three top-ranked factors from the previous exercise, participants were asked to consider how

these three factors specifically affected how they made decisions on a recent research project. Colleagues from the same organization were asked to think of one research project on which they had jointly worked.

Representatives from each think tank walked through the exercise in front of their group, with guidance from the R4D staff member. They first were asked to provide background information on the project, including the funder, objective, and project size. Once the background of the project was established, each think tank walked through the series of decision points described in Figure 6.1, noting the context factors that played the greatest role in influencing their decision making at each stage.

Throughout the exercise, participants from other think tanks were encouraged to ask questions and suggest strategies that they had used in similar research projects to address context factors. After all think tanks had the opportunity to present, all participants reconvened in a large group to share any final thoughts or takeaways from the last activity and FGD overall.

Analytical Approach and Method

We recorded focus group discussions using an audio voice recorder, and documented the notes from each of the three exercises (Brainstorming Session, Ranking, and Tell Your Story Exercise) on large-format paper. We made an abridged transcript from each recording, documenting participants' responses to the main questions that we asked in the three exercises. We combined the information from the field notes and abridged transcriptions and entered it into a spreadsheet. We divided the spreadsheet into three worksheets, one for each exercise.

Brainstorming Context

Along with the date and country, the key information that we recorded in the spreadsheet was the context factors, as defined by FGD participants, and their verbatim stories or examples demonstrating each factor's importance.

Our analysis of the data from the brainstorm exercise sought to answer the following four main questions:

1. What is the complete list of context factors?

2. How do they fit with the literature review categories?

3. Are there differences across the two country contexts? What are these differences?

4. Does our categorization of context based on the literature make sense? Or does it need to be updated with the new information from the focus groups?

We used the data to generate a table combining all brainstormed factors suggested in the FGDs. We grouped related factors by applying the literature review definition as a decision guide. Each brainstormed context factor was mapped to one of the four main exogenous and mixed exogenous context groups. We then used the brainstorm context table to evaluate our existing definitions to determine if our group or factor definitions, as determined by the literature, needed to be updated.

We separately analyzed the brainstorm exercise content from Rwanda and Indonesia and compared them for important distinctions in the context definitions. We drew qualitative conclusions using the above questions as a guide based on the information and differences in the level of civil society development.

Ranking Context

We additionally used the excel spreadsheet to record the number of votes each brainstormed factor received, with particular focus on the top three (or four, in the case of a tie) factors that were selected in each FGD. This information was evaluated against the following three questions:

1. What are the top three context factors in each focus group?

2. Which exogenous groupings received the most attention from participants (in their discussions which came first, which came last)?

3. What are the key differences across the countries?

In order to analyze this data, we created a table that listed out the top ranked factors for each FGD, assigning the percentage of votes received and mapping each factor to one of the four main exogenous and mixed exogenous groupings. We used this table to visualize the main factor groupings of importance to think tanks, as well as to compare variances in top ranked factors across countries. We also produced a second table in which we listed all brainstormed factors in accordance to the number of votes that they received across FGDs, in order to get a wider view of the number of votes assigned to each of the broader

context categories, as well as to get a sense of the factors considered to be of least importance to FGD participants. When we analyzed the two tables, we looked to see if any factors were common to all focus groups, or if there were any categories that were more likely to receive attention.

Tell Your Story Exercise

The "Tell Your Story Exercise" was designed to have participants share a real-world story of how context impacted their decision making. Since we recorded participants' project stories in a highly structured way, the analysis mapped research and communications decisions to the factors that participants said impacted them. We also used these stories to better understand the strategies that think tanks use to mitigate or leverage certain factors that they encounter throughout their research and communication processes, highlighting particularly effective strategies and strategies that were consistently mentioned across think tanks.

Focus Group Discussion Results

Brainstorming Context

FGD participants listed between 14 and 19 factors in each session. A consolidated version of the brainstormed factors can be found in Table 6.1. Table 6.1 maps the brainstormed context factors to the four exogenous categories and records which focus groups discussed them.

Consistent with the literature, participants most frequently discussed political and economic context factors, suggesting that they are of greatest concern to the think tank research and communications staff. Four items related to donor context came up in the FGDs, namely donor funding, donors' and clients' objectives, donors' requirements, and the kinds of donors. Fewer of the brainstormed factors mapped to the intellectual climate and civil society groupings, suggesting that these exogenous categories are less important or do not immediately come to mind for most participants. This was particularly so in Rwanda where none of the participants nominated a context factor in the intellectual climate or civil society categories.

Commonly Brainstormed Factors

In both Rwanda and Indonesia, government openness and political will emerged as factors of key importance to think tanks in making research and communications decisions, largely confirming what was seen in the literature.

In Indonesia, think tank research and communications staff reported a lack of openness by policymakers to civil

Table 6.1: Brainstorming Context Factor Results		
Factor Grouping	**Context Factor**	**FGD**
Political and Economic Context	Government openness	Indonesia 1, Indonesia 2, Rwanda
	Legal environment	Indonesia 1, Indonesia 2, Rwanda
	Political will	Indonesia 1, Indonesia 2, Rwanda
	Election cycle and changes in leadership	Indonesia 1, Indonesia 2
	Decentralization	Indonesia 1, Indonesia 2
	Government effectiveness	Indonesia 2, Rwanda
	Economic crises	Indonesia 1
	Access to information	Indonesia 2
	Political oversight	Rwanda
	Sensitivity of issue	Rwanda
Donors	Donor funding	Indonesia 1, Indonesia 2, Rwanda
	Donor and client objectives	Indonesia 1, Indonesia 2, Rwanda
	Donor requirements	Indonesia 1
	Donor type	Indonesia 1
Intellectual Climate	Well informed society	Indonesia 1, Indonesia 2
	Availability of human resources	Indonesia 2
	Policy research quality of local institutions	Indonesia 2
Civil Society	Needs of civil society	Indonesia 1
	Public interest in participating in research	Indonesia 2
Endogenous Factors	Social ties	Indonesia 1, Rwanda
	Feasibility of research	Rwanda

society, referring to it as an "adversarial relationship." They cited a need for civil society actors to build their credibility as sources of evidence-based input, in order to convince policymakers to listen to them. Contrastingly, think tanks in Rwanda discussed government openness as it related to the government's proactive and strong-willed manner of getting things done. In order to accomplish their priorities, the Rwandan government turns to civil society actors as a means of assistance. However, the type of research and results that think tanks can produce is under greater limitations in Rwanda, where, although policy advice is generally accepted by government, it is not an effective strategy to openly criticize government policies. In both instances, think tanks sought to create relationships with government and involve government actors throughout the research process in order to increase their buy-in as a strategy to mitigate the government's lack of openness.

Political will was more consistently defined across countries. In both Rwanda and Indonesia, think tanks referenced the government's need for and interest in research. One Indonesian think tank participant stated that the think tank would not do research unless there was political will, whether from national or local government. In Rwanda, research topics are selected nearly entirely on the basis of the government's priorities. In both countries, political will and interest in the policy problem are seen as necessary in order for think tanks to actually achieve results through their research.

Second to government openness and political will, donors' objectives and funding also emerged as factors of importance across all FGDs. Related to the availability of donor funding, Rwandan and Indonesian think tanks expressed the same concerns over having adequate funding to support their work. However, their views varied

rather significantly when it came to the impact of donors' objectives on their work.

In Indonesia, think tank participants emphasized how shifts in donors' priority issues can have a significant impact on their work. For instance, many think tanks receive funding from AusAID, which had previously designated funding for work related to inequality and poverty. However, in recent years, the donor's attention has shifted to private sector development and job creation. This shift has required think tanks to adjust their own priority issue areas and strategies in order to maintain funding. Indonesian think tanks expressed concern over becoming dependent on donors and, thus, restricted in their research by donors' objectives and priorities. In discussing funding options, the first Indonesian FGD also elaborated on the nuance between different types of donors and donor relationships, asserting that think tanks do have some control over their funding options by targeting specific types of donors and understanding the power relations between types of donors and the levels of their donations.

In Rwanda, while donors' objectives did come up during the brainstorming exercise, greater emphasis was placed on clients' objectives. When referring to clients, think tanks referenced government, international organizations, or private sector groups for whom they produce research. While in Indonesia donors' objectives may be seen to play a guiding role in influencing research decisions, in Rwanda, these objectives take the backburner to the government's and other client's priorities. Rather than responding to donors' demands, think tanks typically take the opposite approach: think tanks approach donors with proposed research agendas based on the research topics that the government has prioritized. Though this strategy has not always proven to be effective, Rwandan FGD participants agree that meeting government priorities is of greater importance than meeting the objectives of donors. This being said, a limitation that many Rwandan think tanks also mentioned was their inability to propose and procure funding for independent research topics outside of priority issues for the government.

Variation Across Countries

Although some differences in the definitions of commonly brainstormed factors have already been discussed, other differences emerged with respect to the types of factors brainstormed across the two FGD countries. The most striking variation was related to the role that civil society plays in affecting think tanks' decisions. In Indonesia, where there is a greater level of civil society development, the needs of civil society actors are taken into strong consideration by think tanks when they make research and communications decisions. For example, in one Indonesian think tank's research project, they sought to fill the perceived lack of qualified researchers

in Eastern Indonesia. They recognized that each province in the region had specific issues and it was necessary to adapt their research based on the expressed needs of government and civil society in each province in order to bolster uptake of research recommendations.

Given existing networks of civil society actors in Indonesia, researchers take into consideration the type of research they need to produce and disseminate in order to provide civil society with the necessary ammunition to advocate for policy changes. While undertaking research on the equalization fund, a legally sanctioned cash transfer from central to local government, one think tank found that a number of similar studies had already been undertaken, which had produced limited policy affects. Knowing this information, the think tank took alternate strategies to communicate research results, leveraging the work of other NGOs and the international community.

Indonesian think tanks also reported a perceived willingness by citizens to participate in their research processes. This was described as a "culture" that allowed for the proliferation of research projects. Contrastingly, in Rwanda, no reference was made to civil society during the brainstorming activity or, largely, throughout the other FGD activities. Rather, emphasis was placed on meeting the government's priorities and objectives, with very limited interest in involving citizens in the research or communications process.

The civil society context factors brainstormed in Indonesian FGDs closely link to the intellectual climate factors, which was not the case in Rwanda. During both Indonesian FGDs, participants listed "well-informed society" as a factor that impacts their ability to undertake research and communications strategies. By society, they referred to not only an informed general public, but also an informed civil bureaucracy that has the ability to take research and put it into action. A well-informed society goes beyond just the government and civil society sector, extending to academic institutions and citizens. Again, this was not something that arose during the Rwandan FGD.

The context brainstorming activity also revealed some important historical and political differences between the two FGD countries. Indonesia's 1999 Reformation began a radical decentralization of power to local leaders, who emerged as one of the key audiences FGD participants reported that they sought to influence. Along with decentralization, Indonesia's multi-party democracy has been both beneficial and detrimental to think tanks' abilities to influence policy. On one hand it has created an open marketplace for ideas, but in order to do so, it relies on frequent election cycles and, therefore, frequent changes in government leaders. As think tanks across both countries have taken the strategy of building relationships with government officials, frequent turnovers in government

positions can negate the targeted work that think tanks have done in regards to building strong government champions. For example, BAPPEDAS, the Indonesian regional body for planning and development, elects new representatives every five years. One think tank's strategy for mitigating changes due to political turnover is to focus its collaboration with the civil servants employed in the government ministries, rather than with elected leaders whose collaboration may end with the next election cycle.

In Rwanda, a very different political system emerged after the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. Since President Paul Kagame came to power in 1994, a strong single-party rule has been firmly in place. FGD participants expressed less concern with election cycles or decentralization and, instead, focused their discussion on the political sensitivity of research topics, political oversight, and the specific interests of policymakers. As there is less frequent turnover of government positions in Rwanda, it may be a more effective strategy here to build strong relationships with government champions in order to further an organization's research goals, an approach many Rwandan think tanks report taking. Think tanks in Rwanda also report more limited potential to raise research topics that are sensitive or controversial in the eyes of a more narrow government, given the oversights and permissions that are in place. For instance, one think tank that was interested in doing an impact evaluation based on a report that showed problems with the poverty policy in Rwanda was met with resistance from government, who would only allow a perception survey.

Literature Review Categorizations

By and large, the brainstormed context factors mapped to those identified in the literature review. However, one key factor that emerged in the FGDs, which did not receive the same level of attention throughout the literature, was the legal environment for think tanks. It emerged in all FGDs that think tanks need to be concerned with their ability to actually conduct research, which is dependent on the legal framework and regulations of a country. For example, in Rwanda, it is necessary for think tanks to receive approval from government in order to do research, which requires them to adhere to a specific method of obtaining permission through the line ministry most closely related to the topic area they are working in. In Indonesia, while the process is less standardized, think tanks also noted the importance of undertaking research that does not go against any existing legal regulations. Legal environment also relates to the legal permissions required to form as an independent organization, which many young think tanks in Rwanda cited as a lengthy, arduous process.

In all focus groups, there were also instances in which endogenous factors, those within think tank control, were brought up during this exercise. We found this to be consistent with the literature, in showing that there are many factors that think tanks' research and communications staff take into account that are within their control when they make research decisions. The main endogenous factor noted across countries was relationships with government officials. In Indonesia, these relationships were referred to as government "know who," while in Rwanda it was termed as building "government champions." In both instances, these factors were brainstormed in tandem with other factors related to political will and government effectiveness, as strategies for creating greater buy in with government.

Interestingly, in Rwanda, in particular, endogenous factors seemed to be more prevalent than exogenous factors during the brainstorming activity. Relationships with government officials, or social capital, continually came up throughout the discussion, as it related to other political and economic factors. In addition, other endogenous factors such as feasibility and cost of research activities were discussed in turn. This may give some indication of where the main concerns of think tanks' research and communications staff lie, with their primary focus being on building various aspects of organizational capital. It is also worth noting that while social capital is an endogenous capacity of think tank executive directors, it may act as an exogenous capacity in the decisions of think tanks' research and communications staff who do not have control over the relational ties of the organization's leader.

Ranking of context

The results of the ranking context factors activity were consistent with what we learned from the brainstorming session. FGD participants ranked political and economic factors highest, followed by donor factors. For the most part, the top-ranked factors included those that were brainstormed across all FGDs, particularly related to political will, government openness, and donor funding and objectives, indicating there may be factors that appear more universally important than others.

When considering all factors, not just those that were top ranked, political and economic context factors received 49 percent of all votes,[15] an overwhelming majority (see Table 6.3). Donor factors received 30 percent of all votes. Although civil society was one top-ranked factor in Indonesia, overall, civil society and intellectual climate factors received a nominal percentage of the votes.

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[15] Sum of all votes cast is equivalent to the 3 x N, where N = the number of FGD participants.

Top Ranked Factors

Political and economic context factors played an extremely important role in shaping the research and communications decision making of FGD participants. Of the ten top-ranked factors displayed in Table 6.2, seven fall within this factor grouping. While there are slight variations across FGDs in regards to the language they used to describe the political and economic factors of greatest importance to them, there are common themes with respect to government openness, political will, and policymaker priorities across both countries. Participants in both countries report the need for space in which civil society actors can operate, as well as some political incentive and interest in their research, in order for think tanks to have their best chances of achieving policy success.

Donor funding and objectives ranked highly in Indonesia, and received a smaller percentage of the overall vote in Rwanda (each following closely behind legal context with 10 percent of the vote). This may be related to the nuanced differences in donor objectives between the two countries as described in the brainstorming context section above, where Rwandan think tanks tend to be more focused on matching research to government priorities and client objectives.

Although civil society factors only received 12 percent of the total vote, all concentrated within Indonesia, the needs of civil society was ranked as the second most important context factor in the first Indonesian FGD. We learned through the FGDs and executive director interviews in Indonesia that many think tanks and CSOs are working closely together in their research and advocacy, forming networks and coalitions of organizations in an effort to increase their influence. Given the decentralization of government and large shifts of power to local leaders, there is a much greater opportunity in Indonesia for civil society to be involved in the policy process. Another contributing factor could also be the fact that many of the think tanks we spoke with in Indonesia took a research-based advocacy approach to their work, which relies heavily on involving and influencing citizens during both research and communications processes.

The level of civil society development in Rwanda is low relative to Indonesia, and we note stark differences in what FGD participants report. For example, Indonesia's strong networks of CSOs and NGOs lend themselves to greater opportunities for joint advocacy and research activities. In contrast, this type of collaborative research-based advocacy was not reported by FGD participants in Rwanda. Rather, we observed that there are one or two well-known think tanks in Rwanda, whereas the other actors are often unknown, limiting potential for collaboration.

We made some interesting comparisons between countries based on the number of votes some factors received. For instance, in Rwanda, legal context emerged as a top ranked factor. While this factor was also mentioned in both Indonesian FGDs, it did not receive any votes in either ranking activity. This implies the lesser weight of legal context in Indonesia compared to Rwanda, where it plays a much larger role in shaping a think tank's ability to firstly, exist, and secondly, perform research.

There were also interesting variations that emerged within Indonesia. In both Indonesian FGDs, participants brainstormed government decentralization, but it received only one vote in the first FGD, and instead was ranked as one of the top factors in the second Indonesian FGD (as it related to local leadership). A caveat to this is that the second Indonesian FGD was made up of a smaller number

FGD	Top Ranked Factors	Percentage of Vote	Factor Grouping
Table 6.2: Top-ranked factors			
Indonesia 1	Donor objectives	24	Donors
	Needs of civil society	24	Civil Society
	Political will	19	Political and Economic Context
Indonesia 2	Government openness to civil society	27	Political and Economic Context
	Donor funding	27	Donors
	Access to information	13	Political and Economic Context
	Local leadership	13	Political and Economic Context
Rwanda	Government priorities	24	Political and Economic Context
	Government attitude	19	Political and Economic Context
	Legal context	14	Political and Economic Context

Table 6.3: All Context Factor Votes					
Factor Grouping	Context Factor	Indonesia 1	Indonesia 2	Rwanda	Total
Political and Economic Context	Government openness	0	4	3	7
	Legal environment	0	0	4	4
	Political will	4	0	5	9
	Election cycle and changes in leadership	1	0	-	1
	Decentralization	1	2	-	3
	Government effectiveness	-	0	2	2
	Economic crises	0	-	-	0
	Access to information	-	2	-	2
	Political oversight	-	-	0	0
	Sensitivity of issue	-	-	0	0
		6	8	14	28
Donors	Donor funding	3	4	2	9
	Donor and client objectives	5	0	2	7
	Donor requirements	1	-	-	1
	Donor type	0	-	-	0
		9	4	4	17
Intellectual Climate	Well informed society	0	0	-	0
	Availability of human resources	-	1	-	1
	Policy research quality of local institutions	-	0	-	0
		0	1	-	1
Civil Society	Needs of civil society	5	-	-	5
	Public interest in participating in research	-	2	-	2
		5	2	-	7
Other	Feasibility of research	-	-	2	2
	Social ties	1	-	1	2
		1	-	3	4
Total Votes		21	15	21	57

of participants, which meant that even with a relatively low number of votes, some factors were able to be ranked as "top" factors. This also may be related to the types of think tanks represented within each FGD. In Indonesia, we met with think tanks that both professed a strong advocacy-based strategy to research, which heavily involved civil society, as well as think tanks that were primarily concerned with producing high quality research to be disseminated at the national level. Finally, we could also argue that there is not a huge distinction between ranking the needs of civil society

and local leadership highly across the Indonesian FGDs, as these are both indirect results of the decentralization process that occurred. However, there is nuance in regards to where think tanks are putting the main focus of their attention, some in policymakers and others in citizens.

Another interesting result of the ranking activity, specifically related to Indonesian FGDs, was that election cycle and political turnover only received one combined vote in both FGDs, although being one of the first factors brought

up during each discussion. Similarly, the unique factors that emerged in the Rwandan FGD (i.e. political oversight and policy sensitivity) did not receive any votes, which may imply that although there was some variation across countries regarding the total lists of factors that were brainstormed, the factors of greatest importance were fairly consistent across the board.

Finally, the clear outlier in regards to the four main exogenous and mixed exogenous groupings is intellectual climate. As already discussed within the brainstorming factors section, few participants suggested intellectual climate context factors. However, even more telling is that, of the factors that were brainstormed, the entire category only received one vote, related to the availability of human resources to fill think tank staffing needs. This is of particular interest when we take into account that staffing needs and limited human resources was a concern mentioned by many think tank executive directors during our individual interviews in both Indonesia and Rwanda.

Tell your story exercise

We analyzed data from the tell your story exercise by mapping the strategies discussed and context factors participants mentioned to the four key research and communications decision points: policy problem or desired improvement; research problems, questions, and analysis; communication and audiences; and policy influence. We examined the number of times that a context factor was mentioned with respect to each decision point (depicted in Table 6.4 below).

Political will, government openness and local leadership, were reported as being the most influential factors shaping think tank research and communications decisions. In Rwanda, the evidence suggested that government priorities dictate decisions along each decision point. Similarly, we also saw that some factors that seemed to be of greatest importance to FGD participants during the ranking exercise, did not necessarily play as large of a role in their decision making, or played a much more targeted role at certain decision points, than they may have originally anticipated.

Policy Problem or Desired Improvement

The think tank representatives who participated in our FGDs discussed a wide range of policy projects that they have recently completed, or worked on for a number of years. Projects ranged from short, six-month research projects, to longer nine-year policy assessments that were being completed for a range of funders and government agencies.

In Rwanda, where government priorities are clearly articulated and presented to the public, there was complete agreement across think tanks that these priorities are the primary factor influencing the policy problems that think tanks seek to address. The majority of think tanks discussed research projects that were in line with the government's short- or long-term strategic objectives.

FGD	Factor	Policy Problem	Research Problems, Questions, and Analysis	Communications and Audiences	Policy Influence	Total
Table 6.4: Total mentions of context factors throughout the exercise						
Indonesia 1	Political will	3	3	2	4	12
	Needs of civil society	2	-	1	1	4
	Donor objectives	-	2	2	0	4
Indonesia 2	Government openness	1	1	2	1	5
	Local leadership	2	-	1	2	5
	Access to information	-	1	-	-	1
	Donor funding	-	-	-	-	0
Rwanda	Government priorities	5	2	3	1	11
	Government attitude	-	2	2	2	6
	Legal environment	-	2	-	-	2

Table 6.5: Factors Related to Policy Problem		
FGD	**Factor**	**Number of mentions**
Indonesia 1	Political will	3
	Needs of civil society	2
Indonesia 2	Local leadership	2
	Government openness	1
Rwanda	Government priorities	5

For example, two think tanks discussed research related to EDPRS, the Rwandan government's flagship national development plan.

Although the trend was not quite as clear in Indonesia, political will and local leadership were the top factors along this decision point. However, the reason these factors were ranked as most important was not always consistent. In some instances, political will was noted as a negative factor, limiting a think tank's policy research scope, while in others, political will and strong local leadership were what created the space that allowed think tanks to pursue policy problems of interest. For instance, one think tank that was assessing a direct cash transfer policy after fuel price hikes in Indonesia referenced the importance of having political will to address possible social unrest that might arise as a result of the monetary crisis. Conversely, another think tank cited a lack of political will as the factor that necessitated their review of the village law governing rural development, which was not receiving necessary support from central government due to disinterest in devolving authority to the local level.

The majority of the secondary factors that arose were much more closely linked to the feasibility of undertaking research focused on a specific policy problem, rather than being the driving forces that shaped a think tank's decision to focus in that area. Other factors that emerged in Indonesia, outside of the top ranked factors in each FGD, included: network of CSOs/NGOs; windows of opportunity; corruption of policymakers; and access to information. In Rwanda, secondary factors included: feasibility; donor interest in research topic; government implementation; and shift in government agenda.

Research Problems, Questions, and Analysis

The think tanks we spoke with discussed a wide range of data collection methods, ranging from quantitative methods, such as surveys and cost analyses, to qualitative methods, including interviews and focus group discussions. Despite different methods for gathering data, the majority of think tanks, particularly in Indonesia, noted the importance of gaining the perspective of multiple stakeholders through their data collection methods as well as using research methods as an opportunity to gain buy-in from government ministries.

Although it is not depicted in Table 6.6, access to information is an important factor for think tanks when they select research problems, questions, and analytic methods. Although this was only listed as a top ranked factor in the second Indonesian FGD, this came up again and again in regards to shaping the research methods a think tank selects, with mentions in 5 out of 13 tell your story exercises. In some instances, think tanks have had to adjust their research methodologies, and even their research objectives, because they had inadequate access to information. However, access to information often was not listed as a standalone factor. It was frequently closely connected to political will. Not only

Table 6.6: Factors Related to Research Problems, Questions, and Analysis		
FGD	**Factor**	**Number of mentions**
Indonesia 1	Political will	3
	Donor objectives	2
Indonesia 2	Access to information	1
	Government openness	1
Rwanda	Government priorities	2
	Legal environment	2
	Government attitude	2

does information need to be available to the public, but also, in order for it to be available, the government has to have an interest in disclosing this information.

Also not reflected in Table 6.6, in Indonesia, many think tanks mentioned the importance of regional or local differences in leadership and priorities in shaping their research questions and methods, although think tanks did not always cite this as the most important factor that shaped their decisions. As some of the research problems that Indonesian think tanks were seeking to address were concentrated at the local level, variations in leadership based on location impacted the way that they conducted and communicated research. This was closely linked with political will generally. In some instances, donors played an important role in shaping the research methodology used, providing trainings on particular tools.

In Rwanda, although legal context was not listed as the top ranked factor for every think tank, it came up in nearly every story at some point. For think tanks there, in order to pursue a specific research topic and methodology, they need prior approval from the Rwandan government. For example, the National Bureau of Statistics blocked one Rwandan think tank from following the research method that it believed would be most useful in answering the research question. Government priorities and attitude were also consistently ranked high, in terms of providing support for research. However, this was with the qualification that the project first needed to receive permission to be completed.

Other factors that emerged included provincial priorities; decentralization; fiscal mismanagement; and lack of coordination of research projects by government.

Results Communication and Audiences

Think tanks reported using many of the same communications strategies and products. Most FGD participants listed a range of dissemination products and activities that they use to push their research forward with target audiences, including policy papers and

briefs, organization websites, email communication with stakeholders, direct dialogue with policymakers, and workshops, among others. Overall, direct dialogue with policymakers and workshops with key stakeholders (as determined by the think tank for that project) appeared to be the most effective forms of communication. Particularly effective were validation workshops, in which results are presented and there is opportunity for feedback from stakeholders, which was cited as an effective strategy in both Indonesia and Rwanda. In Rwanda, these validation workshops were used to present initial findings to policymakers and other stakeholders so as not to appear as confrontational if they were, rather, to release these findings first to the media.

In Indonesia, think tanks expressed a preference for more regionally dispersed methods of communication, ranging from national to local levels, depending on the focus of the project. Some think tanks focused only on the local level. Rwandan think tanks primarily expressed a preference for the opposite approach, focusing first and foremost on national level dissemination of results, with only one think tank noting the importance of reaching out to citizens.

Despite some country variations, the primary audience for all think tanks was clearly policymakers. While Indonesian think tanks have a greater interest in citizen and NGO involvement, their main focus still is influencing those who can directly shape policy. However, while in Rwanda the main focus of dissemination activities is policymakers, Indonesian think tanks did support bringing together a wider range of stakeholders when discussing policy recommendations in order to allow a more diverse set of opinions.

Regarding the factors of greatest importance in shaping a think tank's communication strategy and target audiences, it was more difficult to draw out trends as they related to this decision point. Donors came out more here than in other decision areas in Indonesia, influencing the types of communication products produced. The most interesting trend to note may be the variation between the strategies that Indonesian and Rwandan think tanks take in regards to

Table 6.7: Factors Related to Research Communication and Audiences		
FGD	**Factor**	**Number of mentions**
Indonesia 1	Political will	2
	Donor objectives	2
	Needs of civil society	1
Indonesia 2	Government openness	2
	Local leadership	1
Rwanda	Government priorities	3
	Government attitude	2

Table 6.8: Reported Policy Influence	
Reported Policy Influence	**Number of Mentions**
Policy change at local level	3
Policy change at national level	2
Research adopted by government	1
Short-term change in government structure	1
Increased demand for review of policy	1
Local support for policy recommendations, but no action	1
Invitation to participate in government working group	1
No reported policy influence	3

their target audiences. While Indonesian think tanks value a wide range of stakeholders, that include local leaders and citizens, taking different strategies for targeting local versus national leaders, Rwandan think tanks have a much narrower set of stakeholders, largely eliminating citizens and civil society completely.

In regards to local leadership in Indonesia, one think tank discussed how changes in leadership can completely change not only the way research is communicated, but the nature of the research project itself. Given high rates of political turnover, think tanks constantly need to be adapting their strategies based on the priorities of those in power. One think tank's strategy for mitigating political turnover was to instead turn to international bodies for support, as international pressure carries much greater weight than the support of local authorities.

Given government priorities and attitude in Rwanda, many think tanks noted that they need to be sensitive in how they go about reporting their findings. It is not seen to be an effective strategy to go immediately to the media with results. Instead, meetings and dialogue with government need to be organized in order to first discuss the findings so that government does not feel attacked or unprepared to respond to any findings that may be controversial.

Another strategy suggested by one Rwandan think tank that did express greater interest in involving citizens in the communications process was to adapt communications products based on local capacity. Rather than producing lengthy reports and policy briefs, they saw producing posters and other communications products that rely heavily on images as a more productive strategy, as these products are more digestible for a population with high rates of illiteracy.

Other factors that emerged include: network of NGOs; international pressure; corruption of local leadership; controversy of findings; local capacity; high priority topics; and human capital in country.

Policy Influence

It was much more difficult for think tanks to discuss policy influence, than the steps that led them to this. In some instances this was because the project was not yet complete, or had only recently been completed, and so it was difficult to measure its influence.

Influence is also difficult to measure because there is a wide range of influence that think tanks can achieve. During the exercise, the types of influence described

Table 6.9: Factors Related to Policy Influence		
FGD	**Factor**	**Number of mentions**
Indonesia 1	Political will	4
	Needs of civil society	1
Indonesia 2	Local leadership	2
	Government openness	1
Rwanda	Government attitudes	2
	Government priorities	1

ranged from actual changes in policy or policy adaptation, to influence over the policy debate or changes in government structures, as laid out in Table 6.8. In Indonesia, the type of influence many think tanks were seeking to achieve was much more localized than in their Rwandan counterparts.

Through the "tell your story exercise," a range of strategies for achieving policy influence emerged. Multiple think tanks noted the importance of involving government from the beginning of the research process (starting at selecting the policy problem). In so doing, there is the opportunity to increase government buy-in to the research project, which may influence their decision to accept and implement its findings down the road. As a precursor to involving government throughout the research process, it is important for think tank staff to develop personal ties with those in power who they can rely on as issue champions. In Rwanda, where there is single-party rule and greater sensitivity around research topics, the ultimate strategy agreed on by all think tanks is to present findings in a way that shows government not only what could be improved, but also what they have done well. By forming close ties with government and creating personal relationships, think tanks can present controversial findings more easily without government officials feeling attacked.

In Indonesia, political will was ranked as the most influential factor in achieving policy influence. Though seemingly obvious, it is important to recognize that in order for policy change to be achieved, there needs to be willingness of those in power to adapt these changes. Given that the second Indonesian focus group did not include political will as one of their top ranked factors, instead, local leadership emerged as most important. Though slightly more nuanced, the sentiment remains the same. The executors of power at the local level also must have the will and interest to make policy changes. Similarly, in Rwanda, government priorities and attitude were consistently ranked as the most important factors. In order for think tanks to achieve influence, they need to focus foremost on meeting government priorities, by understanding the changes that government is seeking. Other secondary factors that emerged include: economic stability; political turnover; and timing.

Executive Director Interviews

Purpose

Think tanks' executive directors have unique roles in guiding their organizations through research and communications strategies, building institutional capacities, and making progress toward larger organization-wide objectives related to policy influence. While these roles parallel those of research and communications staff, executive directors face a different set of decisions that are influenced in distinctive ways by exogenous context factors and existing endogenous capacities. Specifically, executive directors make decisions regarding the overall strategy and management of the think tank in the areas of communications, research, and policy influence, whereas project teams are generally more focused on project or program-specific decisions.

According to the framework developed as part of this project, there is a set of exogenous factors that influences both the decisions of executive directors and the effectiveness of their decisions. On the first point, directors may change their choices regarding issues such as the policy areas on which to work and communications strategies based on the context factors identified in the literature review. On the second point, these factors may also affect how successfully the executive director influences policy or achieves other organizational goals.

While the executive director interviews were not designed to understand the relationship between directors' decisions and endogenous capacities, some respondents did address these relationships in their responses to our questions.

Through 17 interviews that we conducted with think tanks' executive directors in Indonesia and Rwanda, we sought to gather evidence about the relationship between executive director decisions and the following exogenous factors:

1. **Policy Problem:** What are the priority policy areas, and what is the process for determining them?

2. **Research Problem:** What kinds of research projects do organizations undertake, and how does the organization choose to undertake a new research project?

3. **Policy Engagement and Communications Audiences:** Who or what needs to hear the research results, and how does the organization decide?

4. **Policy Influence and Outcomes:** How is policy influence defined and measured, and how is this determined?

In asking these questions, we sought to understand the ways in which exogenous context factors enter into the decisions that think tanks' executive directors make.

Analytical Approach and Method

We recorded executive director interviews using an audio voice recorder, and transcribed notes from the interviews into a spreadsheet. We grouped questions according to type of decision to which they corresponded – policy problem, research decisions, communications audiences and channels, or policy influence. We reviewed the responses in each question category for discussion of

influencing context factors. We then tallied and grouped these responses according to the categories of context factors that we defined in the literature review. We discuss the results of this analysis below and where appropriate, supplement them with stories and strategies explained by respondents in relation to particular context factors.

Interview Results

Role of Executive Directors

Before we develop a stronger understanding of the relationships between executive directors' decisions, think tanks' influence, and context, we must understand how executive directors conceptualize their roles within the organizations that they lead. We designed our questions to executive directors around the four categories of decisions described in the framework: the policy problem; research problems, methods, and analysis; communications channels and audiences; and policy influence.

Components of the roles that executive directors play fit with the four decision points in the process described above. For example, three directors noted that one of their primary responsibilities is to ensure alignment between the decisions regarding the policy problem and the organization's vision and intended outcomes. Many others indicated that work program development – a component of the policy problem - was an important part of their role. For example, one respondent in Rwanda described his major role as coordinating the development of the strategic five-year work plan for the organization. Many respondents similarly cited involvements in strategic plan development in their roles.

More respondents highlighted their leadership in high-level research and communications strategy decisions that contribute to the development of specific organizational capacities. For example, executive directors reported

building credibility and communications capital through new communications and research staff decisions, building formal and informal ties with other organizations and policymakers (social capital), and ensuring the financial sustainability and continued resource mobilization for the organization (resource capital).

We interviewed three executive directors who both founded and currently lead think tanks. Each pointed to specific external circumstances that affected their decision making at the think tank's inception. For example, two Rwandan organizations cited the delays caused by onerous legal registration requirements. During the extended periods in which they were not allowed to work publically, both directors focused on social capital, specifically on building the capacities that they could without legal recognition. In one case, the executive director stated that he participated in many government meetings and interacted with local governments at the district level and the sectors. Despite not being able to publish research without a license for the organization, she explained that he found value in developing these relationships with government. In the Indonesian case, the director focused heavily on building credibility capital in the early years of the organization to address deficiencies that he saw in the availability of rigorous, evidence-driven policy work at other organizations. Notably, the organization developed as a spin-off of another organization because the executive director and others felt that the original organization was not conducting strong enough research. In all three cases, the directors reported the value of taking such strategies in retrospect.

Determining the Policy Problem and the Role of Context

One of the key ways in which executive directors guide organizational direction is through their decisions regarding the policy problems that their organizations will pursue. These decisions include defining policy areas (longer term decisions for the organization) and making specific decisions

Table 6.10: Policy Program Areas for Think Tanks[17]	
Policy Program Area	Frequency
Public services accountability and effectiveness	5
Budget transparency and analysis	4
Poverty	3
Democracy and governance	3
Gender	2
Local planning and development	2

[17] In addition to these policy areas, several areas were pursued by a single responding organization, including extractive industries, climate change, energy, rural livelihoods, private sector, agriculture, peace building, food security, land and labor issues.

Table 6.11: Context Factors Influencing Policy Program Areas		
Factor Category	**Frequency**	**Specific Factors**
Political and Economic Context	9	Government priorities
		Government transparency
		Government attitude/openness
		Government decentralization
		Government effectiveness
		Legal Frameworks
Donor Factors	5	Donor priorities
		Availability of funding
Civil Society Factors	4	Work of other civil society organizations

about particular topics to pursue (shorter term project-level decisions). In this section, we review the decisions and related context factors for these two tiers individually.

Policy Program Areas

Our summary of policy program areas indicates the range of topics being pursued by the think tanks (Table 6.10). We gathered this information in response to the question that asked which policy and program areas think tanks primarily pursue.

In all interviews, executive directors pointed to specific context factors that influenced their decisions concerning the policy program area on which to focus. Specifically, political and economic context, donor environment, and civil society environment all influenced executive directors' decision making (Table 6.11). For the purposes of our analysis, we grouped factors stated by directors in the categories defined in the literature review based on the definitions and explanation provided by interview respondents. As such, the factors cited are not in all cases the exact terms that the directors used; however, they are defined consistently across the directors.

Executive directors most frequently cited political and economic factors in relation to their choice of policy program areas. Factors related to government priorities and attitudes in particular were factors that were noted most frequently.

Political and Economic Factors

Several respondents cited government priorities as one determinant of policy program areas. Based on the explanations provided by respondents, government priorities are the stated policy areas or problems on which key government audiences are focused. While this factor was one cited by many directors, the expressed importance of this factor differed among those interviewed. In all but

one case in Rwanda, government priorities appeared to be one of the most significant factors influencing the decisions of executive directors regarding policy program areas. In most of these cases, the Rwandan think tanks chose to focus on areas that the government had declared of high priority; for those think tanks that selected other policy areas, directors still discussed using high government priority areas to frame their work.

A related factor in Rwanda is government transparency. Respondents discussed how the government makes its agenda and priorities public each year, allowing think tanks to respond directly to policy priorities from the national government rather than guess the priorities for a given year. Organizations in Rwanda, particularly those focused on areas that are not prioritized by government, expressed that government attitude and openness regarding research and policy recommendations contributed to an environment in which they could focus on different emerging areas of work. For example, one organization in Rwanda that focuses explicitly on issues of gender equality expressed that it can research this area even if it is not a priority stated by the government because the government leaders are generally open to research.

While political and economic factors were also prominent in the responses of Indonesian executive directors, the specific factors mentioned differed from those reported in Rwanda. First, multiple directors discussed the role of government decentralization in guiding decisions about policy program areas. Even think tanks based in the capital remarked on the shift in their attention to sub-national policymaking.

A second factor cited by two executive directors is government effectiveness, or how well the government is able to implement policies. The executive directors stated that think tanks contribute valuable research comparing de jure Indonesian policy (which they considered generally strong) against progress towards its actual implementation by responsible agencies.

Donor Factors

The donor environment was also found to be a significant factor for organizations in Indonesia and Rwanda alike. Executive directors mentioned two specific factors that influenced their decisions about the policy agenda. First, multiple directors cited donors' priorities as an influence on their decision making and a factor that became a key decision point for them in their decisions about whether to work with certain funders. In some cases, respondents reported adjusting policy areas to match those outlined by major funders; however, in other cases, particularly in Rwanda, multiple think tanks reported making choices to avoid working with specific donors that disallowed flexibility in defining policy areas.

The decision whether to work with donors potentially is related to the second factor that arose in interviews with executive directors, the availability of donor funding. While we found that some organizations have stronger fundraising capacities than others, there are also trends at the country level regarding the funder base, diversity, and overall level of funding available for independent research. Along these lines, at least one organization in Indonesia reported widening its policy areas to be able to attract more and different types of funding, including contracts with the World Bank and others.

Civil Society Environment

In addition to the attention paid to key audiences (often government) and funders (donors), executive directors reported seeking information on other civil society organizations to help them carve out a research niche. For example, four directors reported that they specifically reviewed the work of other organizations in the country in order to identify policy program areas that were unique to their own organization.

Endogenous Capacities and History

Executive directors reported that organizational capacities such as their credibility and social ties also affected the policy agenda. For example, three executive directors in Indonesia reported seeking work on policies in which they already had established a strong institutional or research reputation.

In a few examples, think tanks defined a core policy program in response to a major historical event corresponding to its origin. Significant and defining events in both countries, namely the fall of Suharto in Indonesia and the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, generated tectonic shifts in both countries. Two Indonesian organizations and three Rwandan organizations reported developing core policy programs in direct response to these shifts.

Policy Topic Areas

Beyond multi-year decisions regarding policy program areas, the majority of think tanks' executive directors reported at least some involvement in the selection of the specific policy topics and questions on which the organization works. The policy topics that executive directors discussed are summarized in Table 6.12.

Political and Economic Factors

As with policy program areas, executive directors cited political and economic factors as among the most influential in their decision of policy topics. Unlike policy areas, however, the specific factors revealed in this category were fairly limited. Government priorities remain the major influence on decisions. Because topics can be added more easily to a work agenda than larger policy areas, a government's changing priorities are more easily captured in decisions about policy topics, and, in some cases, directors shared that they would generally uptake policy topics at the request of government, even if the topics did not fit neatly into existing policy areas. Several directors in both countries stated that responding to government priorities on a regular basis presented challenges to the research agenda because of regular changes to the government's policy topics of interest. A comment from an Indonesian think tank director encapsulated this widely held concern: think tanks must constantly balance their responses to government priorities while staying true to their mission. This is especially true when topics can be added with little strategic planning.

As with policy areas, government transparency affects executive directors' choices of policy topics in Rwanda. There, organizations can respond to the government's open and publicly available statements about their

Table 6.12: Context Factors Influencing Policy Topics		
Factor Category	**Frequency**	**Specific Factors**
Political and Economic Context	5	Government priorities
		Government transparency
Donor Environment	5	Donor priorities
Civil Society Environment	2	Community/citizen priorities
		Media priorities

priorities. Indonesian directors did not discuss government transparency in this sense; however, it is unclear whether this factor is unique to Rwanda.

Donor Environment

A number of executive directors reported that their policy decisions were affected by donor priorities, but not necessarily the strategies that they developed in response. In some cases, directors selected topics of importance to donors either because funding was available or because they sought to attract new donors by demonstrating their capacity in a new or related policy topic. In other situations, executive directors reported that they selected donors for the explicit reason that they would leave policy topic decisions in the exclusive domain of the think tank. Many of the directors who felt the acute effects of donor priorities on their policy topic selection reported actively pursuing strategies to develop more independent and unrestricted funding sources, including funding from book sales, for example.

Civil Society Environment

While civil society environment was also an important category in the selection of policy program areas, the specific factors differed greatly in policy topic decisions. Two organizations reported that they obtained direct input and feedback from citizens and communities regarding topics that were of interest and that the think tank should pursue. In addition, one organization sought the input of the media to identify topics for uptake; however, it is not clear whether the media priorities could be seen as a proxy for government priorities in this case.

Endogenous Capacities

As with policy program areas, several executive directors cited credibility capital and social capital, while endogenous, as having influenced the policy topics that the organization selected.

Take Aways — Policy Problems

- **Many stakeholders influence decisions regarding policy areas.** Identifying policy areas and topics is not a process that is undertaken strictly within a think tank's walls. Instead, these decisions are influenced heavily by the groups that think tanks seek to influence (government), the entities that fund the work (donors), and those who ultimately benefit from policy improvements (citizens). Further, the influence of the priorities of each of these different actors should not be viewed in isolation. It is likely that the role of government priorities may be different depending on whether these priorities agree with those of citizens, donors, or even the media. However, this interaction of influence is worthy of further study.

- **Government priorities appear to have the greatest influence over policy area and topic decisions.** A clear trend emerged regarding the importance of government priorities. While not all think tanks chose to align their policy areas and topics with the government's priorities, this remained an important context factor for almost every executive director that we interviewed. Challenges remain for think tanks that align with government priorities, specifically the risk of an organization losing sight of its longer-term mission and vision. Priorities may be even more important in locations such as Rwanda in which the government is open and clear about its agenda and priorities. Seeking to improve government openness about priority areas could be a worthwhile pursuit in more closed locations.

- **While civil society environment is important, what may be most important is where a think tank fits among its peers.** One of the most cited factors that executive directors discussed as having an influence on the think tank developing new policy areas was whether other think tanks were working in that area. One organization expressed that it is one of four explicit criteria that it used to decide on new areas in which to work.

- **Stocks of endogenous capacities play a role as well.** In addition to external forces, think tanks' executive directors considered their think tanks' own organizational strengths and weaknesses in pursuing policy areas and topics. In particular, credibility capital and social capital appear to play a significant role in the decisions of directors.

Designing the Research Problems, Methods, and Analysis and the Role of Context

Unlike other decision points for organizations, think tanks' executive directors did not report having a major role in making research-related decisions beyond decisions regarding the think tanks' policy areas and topics of focus. Only one respondent reported that he was involved in decisions about actual research methods, and this was because the methods themselves involved participatory research and were a core part of the organization's mission and vision. However, executive directors did express that they had a role in some decisions about the larger research agenda for the organization.

Political and Economic Factors

While there was a general sense from respondents that exogenous factors did not influence the research decisions beyond decisions about policy areas and topics, one factor that was brought up in Rwanda was government attitude, particularly regarding the value of evidence. One respondent expressed that the current political leadership in Rwanda had come out very strongly as an advocate

Table 6.13: Context Factors Influencing Research Agenda		
Factor Category	**Frequency**	**Specific Factors**
Political and Economic Context	2	Government attitude (regarding evidence and research)
		Government transparency
Donor Environment	0	

of evidence-based policymaking; as a result, many organizations (even those that have not traditionally been involved in research) were investing in more and higher quality research in order to achieve policy influence.

Government Transparency

Respondents cited government transparency, particularly related to access to information, as an important factor. Executive directors must consider the availability of data in making decisions regarding research. Accordingly, official access to information shapes some of the decisions that executive directors make regarding the research agenda and, particularly, regarding the use of primary and secondary data.

Donor Factors

While respondents did not cite donor factors, it is worth noting here because it was mentioned explicitly as a factor that does not influence research decisions. In fact, one respondent expressed that he felt comfortable working with some funders that influenced policy topics because he still felt that he could make independent decisions regarding research design and methods.

Endogenous Capacities

The factors that were frequently cited by executive directors as influencing the research problem, methods, and analysis were by and large endogenous capacities. Nine respondents discussed internal policy decisions regarding quality control of research products as a response to the continual need to build credibility capital as a high quality research institute. Further, one director in Indonesia stated that her organization partnered with other think tanks and researchers in conducting research activities as a strategy to build credibility capital.

Take Aways — Research Problems, Methods, and Analysis

- **Endogenous capacities and, specifically, credibility capital appear to be more important in influencing research decisions than exogenous factors.** Only two executive directors expressed that exogenous factors influenced their research agenda decisions. However, capacities, such as the organization's reputation for having strong research (credibility capital), were cited by nine respondents as influencing decisions related to research.

- **Government attitude toward research is critical.** Interviews from Rwanda show the influence of having political leadership that is invested in building policy based on solid evidence. This suggests that think tanks that work in countries in which government officials put less stock in evidence should advocate for more evidence-based policymaking.

Deciding on Audiences and Channels for Communications and the Role of Context

Context is likely to enter into the decisions and influence of think tanks in the policy engagement and communications phase through the audiences that they seek to influence and channels that they use for dissemination and communications. As such, we begin by mapping the different types of audiences that think tanks reported trying to influence (Table 6.14).

The diversity of audiences extends to the common strategies that think tanks' executive directors reported

Table 6.14: Think Tank Audience	
Policy Program Area	**Frequency**
Government officials	10
General population/citizens	5
Other think tanks and like organizations	2
Non-governmental organizations	1
Service providers	1
Donors/development partners	1
Media	1

were most effective in their settings and in light of the reputation and focus of their organizations. Overall, respondents from Indonesia were more likely to have reported the use of informal individual meetings with policymakers while those in Rwanda utilized more formal large-scale events to engage in policy dialogue, debate, and recommendation sharing. In addition, organizations across the countries reported strategies including the use of new technologies (website dissemination), community radio and newspapers, and billboards and leaflets.

Further, some interesting trends emerged regarding changes in communications channels. Both of the university-based organizations that we interviewed (one in Rwanda and one in Indonesia) expressed a recent and continuing shift from purely academic dissemination to policy briefs and papers. Further, another organization discussed a change in its primary audience from civil society organizations to government, aligning with the increasing sophistication in the research reputation of this organization.

Turning to the context factors that influence communications audiences and channels and effectiveness of executive directors, many of the factors that we identified earlier in the paper again emerged as important (Table 6.15).

Political and Economic Factors

The common factors of government priorities, transparency, attitude, and structure that are influential in program area and topic decisions were also cited as influential in the design and implementation of communications. Several directors described government priorities as a factor that influenced their communications channels and audiences. Two directors (one in each country) independently described a strategy of identifying those in government whose interests and priorities are aligned with policy areas for the think tank and of engaging in communications with these individuals before even beginning a new initiative. As a result, these individuals come to the think tank for policy engagement rather than vice versa.

A related strategy emerged in relation to government attitude and openness. One think tank director stated that one key to success in their communications decisions was their ability to identify policymakers who are especially open and interested in evidence-based policymaking. No government is homogenous, and this director reported that finding champions who support evidence helped to smooth their communications efforts.

One factor that was revealed as both challenging and an opportunity to those think tanks that faced it was government structure, particularly decentralization. Three think tanks in Indonesia expressed that, while they considered working at subnational levels important in a country that is increasingly decentralized, the spread of decision making power across different levels of government down to very small units brought unique challenges to building an effective communications plan.

Finally, one think tank director reported that government transparency, and, in particular, access to information, helped the organization gain credibility during their interactions with government in disseminating findings. Because their work was based on analysis of publically available data, government officials seemed less likely to raise doubts about the accuracy of their analysis.

Civil Society Factors

Unlike other components of think tank work, civil society environment factors were cited more frequently than even political and economic factors as influential in communications decisions. It is possible that this fact is related to the multiple audience types that are encompassed in this category, including citizens themselves, civil society organizations, and the media. A few respondents in Rwanda, particularly those focused on influencing citizens directly, cited several characteristics of citizens that influenced their decisions regarding communications. Given the popularity of radio and lower literacy rates in rural areas, two executive directors reported using community radio to engage citizens more widely in their communications efforts.

Several respondents cited that the media and NGOs are important partners in their communications decisions; however, many directors also stated that how key

Table 6.15: Context Factors Influencing Communications Audiences and Channels		
Factor Category	**Frequency**	**Specific Factors**
Political and Economic Context	6	Government priorities
		Government transparency
		Government attitude/openness
		Government structures
Civil Society Environment	7	Media reputation
		NGO reputation
		Citizen characteristics

government audiences perceive media and NGOs (what we call "reputation") plays a role in their decision regarding partnering with these organizations. Media reputation and NGO reputation entered into decisions regarding communications channels as they provide valuable information to think tanks about the potential of these stakeholders as partners in communication. In Indonesia, the continued improvement in the reputation of NGOs has led to at least one executive director explicitly seeking out partnerships with NGOs to improve the effectiveness and reach of communications efforts.

The reputation of the media led to more mixed strategies. Of the three organizations that cited media as potential partners in their work, two expressed the need to be cautious with their engagement with media, as some outlets may harm the think tanks' relationships with government. The third organization took a different approach: when high quality media outlets reported on stories that are related to their work, the think tank leveraged these opportunities to gain coverage for their own work. For example, stories about bank collapses in Indonesia provided a strong platform for an organization focused on fiscal transparency to communicate their work widely.

Endogenous Capacities

While the exogenous factors highlighted above played an important role in communications decisions according to executive directors, social capital (specifically relations with government), an endogenous capacity, is the most cited factor influencing the success of communications. While very related to many of the exogenous government and political factors, directors were clear in their responses that what is most important is the relationships they have been able to build with key government officials or champions. Think tanks use these relationships in a variety of ways, including previewing research results with government champions before going public with them, conducting informal meetings to share findings, and finding a champion to lead the communication of research to results to their colleagues in government.

While at least eight directors highlighted the importance of government relations to the success of the communications efforts, many also expressed the tradeoff between building relationships and maintaining actual and perceived independence. One executive director expressed that he needed to ensure that the organization's positive relationships with government did not make them look biased or lead to citizens questioning their independence. In another example, a respondent explained that having government champions sometimes limited the possible alternative strategies for communications, as they needed to be cautious not to anger their champions by going to certain media outlets, for example.

Take Aways — Communications Audiences and Channels

- **Think tanks engage with diverse audiences.** Despite a common goal to influence policy in some way (to be discussed more in the next section), think tanks actually seek to communicate their results to a very diverse set of audiences. While government officials and policymakers top this list, unsurprisingly, a large fraction of the think tanks that we interviewed also considered citizens themselves as a primary direct audience for their work. It is worth noting that many of those organizations that reported having the public or citizens as an audience still reported sharing findings with government first before making their work public.

- **In the longer term communications is very focused on building social capital.** While many exogenous factors enter into communications decisions, many of the think tank directors pointed to building the endogenous capacity of social capital as a primary focus, allowing the think tank to build the relationships it needs to have successful engagement in the longer term.

- **The priorities and reputation of some audiences require some caution.** One frequent message that came from many executive directors addressed the mixed blessings of working with audiences and partners such as government and the media. Organizations felt the need to be careful in dealing with the government to maintain their independence, as well as the perception by other audiences of their independence. In the case of media, some organizations felt that a sometimes contentious relationship between government and the media could put them at danger of losing their positive relationship with certain officials.

- **The role of context is dynamic.** Executive directors suggested that they respond to changing contexts by gradually changing their strategies in many cases. While it is unsurprising that context and resulting strategies are dynamic, executive directors only stated this explicitly during the discussion about communications audiences and strategies. Representative examples include university-based think tanks moving to a less academia-focused communications strategy and think tanks in Indonesia changing their focus audiences in light of improved civil society reputation.

- **Think tanks respond to changes in context in innovative ways.** The changing nature of many context factors can be a challenge for think tanks. However, many of those who we interviewed had clever ways to assess the changing nature of context and whether their strategies related to context are successful. One think tank in particular explained its process of going to communities themselves to hear from them on the contextual issues that they were facing to understand how citizens (the ultimate beneficiaries of government policies) were affected by changes in political factors.

The think tank then incorporated these responses into their communications decisions. This same think tank returned to government audiences two years after sharing research results and recommendations with them to understand whether and how things had changed.

Influencing Policy and the Role of Context

The previous sections have all focused on outputs of think tanks that are determined by executive directors, such as policy areas and topics and communications strategies. The final link of this chain focuses on the desired outcomes of think tanks. As executive directors cannot decide directly whether their work will have influence or not, context enters into this discussion somewhat differently.

Exogenous factors, such as political environment and civil society environment, may influence the decisions that think tanks' leaders make regarding the think tanks' policy influence objectives, i.e., where it positions itself on the cascade of influence as described in earlier parts of the paper. The cascade of influence identifies different outcomes that a think tank can achieve as steps toward an ultimate outcome of governments implementing policy based on think tank research. Some think tanks may focus on reaching a more intermediate outcome as they develop their reputation in a particular field. Further exogenous factors may directly affect the success of think tanks in achieving policy influence.

Mapping the Cascade of Influence

In earlier sections of this paper, we describe a set of potential policy influence outcomes that flow from each other. Starting with the lowest level, these include (1) policymaker knowledge of think tank existence, (2) policymaker knowledge of think tank products, (3) policymaker adoption of think tank recommendations, and (4) government implementation of policies based on think tank research. At different stages in the development of a think tank, as well as in different project cycles, think tanks may find themselves seeking to achieve different intermediate outcomes (i.e., tiers of this cascade).

In interviews with the executive directors, some respondents revealed where their intended outcomes fell along the cascade of influence. Two interesting trends emerged from our interviews. First, think tanks are widely dispersed across the cascade. While one very young organization in Rwanda expressed explicitly that it was focused on making itself known as an organization to policymakers (tier 1), organizations in both countries expressed that they defined their success explicitly by whether their work led to the implementation of new policies by the government. Further, at least one organization identified its current level of influence as well as its desired level of influence (tiers 2 and 3 respectively).

A second finding was that there may be additional tiers on either side of the cascade of influence that are worth exploring further. On the lower side of the cascade, four organizations (many young) discussed the need to create buy-in with partners and those outside of government before developing the reputation to become known by government. This tied directly to the perceived need to build up a stock of both credibility capital and social capital before launching into later tiers of the cascade.

On the other end of the cascade, many organizations spoke to ultimate outcomes that reached beyond the direct influence of policy. These included the improvement of the well being of people in the country, as well as uptake of policy recommendations even in other locations. While it is not clear that these fit specifically into the cascade, it is worth noting that many organizations expressed even higher aspirations and in some cases achievements than influencing policy through their work.

How does Context Influence Placement on the Cascade of Influence?

While we did not ask questions to directly assess whether context factors played a role in where think tanks placed themselves in terms of these goals, one clear trend emerged in the discussion of influence. Six organizations cited the role that donors' priorities play in both measuring influence and the type of influence they seek to attain. The influence of donors was seen as positive by some respondents who shared that the increased pressure to assess and attribute impact had made them more serious about their think tank's monitoring and evaluation of their own work.

However, many think tanks also felt that donor priorities have become increasingly focused on the top tiers of the cascade of influence, specifically, the adoption of think tanks' recommendations and adaptation into policy improvements. This preference suggests that think tanks might feel pressure to seek only the higher levels of influence, even when the more appropriate objective is at a lower tier given their stage in development. Think tanks also felt increasing pressure to attribute a specific policy change to their work, even while acknowledging that policy changes can rarely be attributed to a single organization or research study.

Context and the Upper Tiers of the Cascade of Influence

Perhaps in part due to this perceived pressure to focus on policy influence, the majority of respondents quickly focused on the role of context in achieving the upper tiers of policy influence. With only one exception, executive directors cited two major factors as influencing their ability to successfully influence policy: government priorities and social capital (endogenous capacity). There was no case in which an executive director could point to the uptake of an evidence-

based policy recommendation that was not already a priority of government, although in one case the think tank did not know at the time that the issue was a priority. Think tanks also expressed the converse: a few cited strong research that they produced that did not go anywhere, presumably because the topic was not a priority to government.

Even more than government priorities, many think tanks specifically stated that their success depended on relationships with government champions. While not an exogenous factor, this response suggested that executive directors perceive value in building up social capital to utilize in pushing forward recommendations when they rise on the government priority list.

Take Aways — Policy Influence

- **Think tanks seek to influence policy in different stages, from building buy in for the organization at its origin to improving the well being of citizens even outside of the country.** These interviews largely affirmed the tiers of the cascade of influence and that think tanks may seek to achieve different outcomes along the cascade of influence. Further, the interviews highlighted that think tanks consider policy influence through a wider set of objectives than we originally developed.

- **Donor and government characteristics are both important for different reasons.** Donors have played a role in how think tanks think about policy influence as well as the objectives that they seek to achieve. However, executive directors in both countries believe that the actual success of their work is most highly dependent on government priorities and social ties.

Conclusions from Interviews and FGDs

While we designed the focus group discussions and executive director interviews to identify important context factors for two different sets of activities in an organization, many of the factors were cited by both executive directors and project staff.

For project and organization strategies alike, think tank representatives perceived political and economic factors as the most prominent and frequently cited context factors that played a role in their work. These factors were prominent in all stages of work, including setting the policy agenda, defining research, developing policy engagement and communications approaches, and influencing policy.

In defining the policy agenda, we saw trends across respondents within countries. In Indonesia, factors like changing government structures, specifically decentralization, led think tank leaders and project teams

alike to significantly change their decisions about areas of work. Further, aligning with government priorities was a major strategy at the organization and the project level in both countries, although it was more pronounced in Rwanda.

The research agenda is the decision making step that appeared to be least dependent on context; however, some common factors did come up. In both think tank and project research decisions, government transparency and specifically access to information played an important role.

Much of the policy engagement and communications decisions at the organizational and project level were directly related to the audiences that think tanks sought to influence, especially government and policymakers. In particular, project teams and executive directors both reported the value of utilizing direct contact with policymakers, especially in the context of government audiences who are open to and interested in building evidence into their policymaking.

Finally, in policy influence, both exogenous and endogenous factors played a significant role for those directors and project teams that sought to push for changes in policy based on their research. In focus group discussions and executive director interviews alike, government priorities and social capital were cited as significant factors. It is worth noting that social capital – an endogenous capacity for directors – might in fact be seen as an exogenous factor for project teams that seek to build influence based on the ties and relationships forged by the organization leader.

While many of the important factors aligned across project teams and executive directors, equally important were the cases for which the respondents' responses differed. First, executive directors in Rwanda cited civil society feedback and priorities as an important factor in designing policy topics, while this was not cited as an important factor by project teams. One potential explanation is that executive directors had a larger view of indirect audiences for their work (ultimately, citizens) whereas project teams focused on those they directly seek to influence (generally policymakers). A second surprising difference also comes from Rwanda: project teams cited the legal environment as an important factor, whereas only a small number of executive directors highlighted this as influencing their decisions or effectiveness.

Finally, the strategies highlighted by executive directors and project teams to address both harmful and helpful context factors shared several commonalities, including identifying government audiences with priorities that align with the think tanks. These strategies are worth examining further for potential lessons for organizations operating in similar contexts.

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Appendix 1: Literature Review

Table A.1.1: Literature Review Findings Summary			
Political and Economic Context			
Key Factors	**Positive/ Negative /Mixed**	**Outcomes**	**Evidence**
Open political systems, democratic rule; political, civil and media freedoms; economic freedoms	Positive	Think tank spread and proliferation, Presence of think tank culture	McGann and Johnson (2005a); Court and Young (2003); Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal (2010); Ohemeng (2005); Young (2005)
	Mixed	Influence policy change, but think tank is one of many policy actors	Court and Young (2003a); Executive Director, Armenia (2013)
Parties/Factions, level of political competition	Positive	Demand for policy alternatives, New varied ideas	McGann and Johnson (2005a); Hird (2005); Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal (2010)
Concentration of power	Negative	Think tank independence and debate; Topic independence	Kimenyi and Datta (2011a); Nachiappan, Mendizabal, and Datta (2010)
	Positive	Minimizes the number of policy entities to be influenced	Braun et al. (2010a)
Political transitions and regime change; political volatility	Mixed	Presents opportunities for think tanks to act, however type of transition may determine pos or neg result	Court and Young (2003); Struyk (1999); Braun (2010a); Kimenyi et al. (2011a)
	Positive	Think tank proliferation (after regime change)	Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal (2010); Bentham (2006);
Demand for policy analysis	Positive	Think tanks to produce research relevant to current debates	Abelson (2010); Pautz (2011a)
	Positive	Influence policy	Braun et al. (2010a); Court and Young (2003a)

Donors			
Key Factors	**Positive/ Negative /Mixed**	**Outcomes**	**Evidence**
Donor funding	Positive	Think tank spread and proliferation, presence of think tank culture	McGann and Johnson (2005a);Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal (2010)
	Mixed	Research agenda / changes in topic choices, provides viable external funding	Young (2005b); Jones et al. (2009); Srivastava (2011); Kimenyi and Datta (2011a);
Democracy funding	Mixed	Civil society perceptions and policy formulation, this can be positive or negative	Hearn (2000); Carapico (2002)
Presence of Western Experts	Mixed	Crowd out of domestic capacity, productive collaboration or skills transfer	Kimenyi and Datta (2011a); Struyk, Kohagen, and Miller (2007)

Intellectual Climate

Key Factors	Positive/ Negative /Mixed	Outcomes	Evidence
Research capacity	Positive	Quality of policy research	McGann (2006a); Young (2005c)
Number of universities & their government support	Positive	Think tank culture, independent analysis	McGann (2006a)
Cultural respect for education	Positive	Think tank proliferation in academic institutions	Nachiappan, Mendizabal, and Datta (2010)
Brain drain	Negative	Quality of staff	Young (2005a)

Civil Society

Key Factors	Positive/ Negative /Mixed	Outcomes	Evidence
Credibility with citizens, businesses, and governments	Positive	Think tank effectiveness / policy change	McGann (2006); Struyk and Haddaway (2011); Bentham (2006); Court and Young (2003)
Receptivity to policy input	Positive	Policy influence	Braun et al. (2010a); Struyk and Haddaway (2011)
Credibility with specific audiences	Mixed	Policy change, depending on which audience with which credibility is est.	Moat and Abelson (2011)
Media attention	Mixed	Think tank credibility and reputation, depends on whether positive or negative	Bentham (2006); Alcázar et al. (2012)
Civil legal environment	Mixed	May enable think tanks to flourish, or may restrict their independent analysis	McGann (2006a, 82)
Political/Historical context at time founded	Mixed	Issues think tanks address; who is allowed to participate in knowledge production; specifics of the research agenda	Mendizabal, E. and Sample, K. (2009); Kimenyi and Datta (2011a); Nachiappan, Mendizabal, and Datta (2010); Court and Young (2003a); Young (2005c)

Credibility Capital

Key Factors	Positive/ Negative /Mixed	Outcomes	Evidence
Quality of research staff	Positive	Credibility of research	Ohemeng (2005) ; Xufeng (2005); Jones et al. (2009); Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal (2010); Bentham (2006); Hird (2005a); Xufeng (2005); Braun et al. (2010a); Xufeng (2005)
High internal research capacity	Positive	Influence on political parties	Pautz (2011b)
Credible policy research	Positive	Organizational credibility/ policy influence	Court and Young (2003); Braun et al. (2010a)
Quality controls	Positive	Credibility of research	Struyk (2006); Court and Young (2003); Braun et al. (2010a)
Creativity	Positive	Think tank credibility or independence/policy change	Hird (2005); Bentham (2006); Datta and Young (2011); Court and Young (2003)

Credibility Capital (continued)			
Type of evidence produced and methods	Mixed	Policy impact	Court and Young (2003); Struyk (2006); Young (2005b); Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal (2010); Hird (2005); Alcázar et al. (2012)
Short v. long term research agenda	Mixed	Trade off between relevance/ responsiveness and long term impact	Braun et al. (2010a); Court and Young (2003); MacDonald and Levine (2008)
Party affiliation	Mixed	Think Tank credibility and independence	Hird (2005a); Baier and Bakvis (2010); Kimenyi and Datta (2011a); Pautz (2011b) Baier and Bakvis (2010); D. E. Abelson and Carberry (1998)

Communication Capital			
Key Factors	Positive/ Negative /Mixed	Outcomes	Evidence
Communication capacity	Positive	Policy impact	Young (2005b); Braun et al. (2010)
Clear strategy and design	Positive	Communication success	Court and Young (2003); Struyk (2006)
Media access	Positive	Shaping opinions of policymakers and the public	Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal (2010); Ohemeng (2005)
Media exposure	Mixed	Policy outcomes, depending on quality of exposure	Abelson (2010); Alcazar et al. (2012)

Social Capital			
Key Factors	Positive/ Negative /Mixed	Outcomes	Evidence
Think tank founder	Mixed	Organizational credibility, depending on affiliation and audience	Braun et al. (2010a); Bentham (2006)
Academic links	Positive	Credibility	Datta et al. (2010); Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal (2010); Jones et al. (2009)
Policymaker links	Positive	Capacity to disseminate findings and proposals, gain consensus	Braun et al. (2010a); Court and Young (2003); Xufeng (2005, 341)
Policy networks	Positive	Think tank effectiveness, Broadening audiences	Jones et al. (2009); Datta and Young (2011); Braun et al. (2010a); Court and Young (2003); Struyk (2006)

Resource Capital			
Key Factors	Positive/ Negative /Mixed	Outcomes	Evidence
Diversified and flexible funding	Positive	Organizational credibility, independence	Braun et al. (2010a); Ohemeng (2005)
Budget size	Positive	Quality of what gets produced	Court and Young (2003)

Table A.1.2: Literature Review Exogenous Subfactor Definitions			
Group	**Definition**	**Subfactors**	**Subfactor Definitions**
Political and Economic Context	Country-level factors related to the ability to govern, the characteristics of government, political history, and the attitudes and attributes of policymakers; Country-level of economic development, policies, growth and trends affecting economic wellbeing	Governance	Factors related to political culture, openness of political systems, and level of political/civil freedoms
		Government capacity	Ability of the government to implement policy
		Political parties and competition	Number and strength of political parties or factions and level of competition between them
		Concentration of power	Extent to which power is held by a small elite or dispersed across an array of societal actors
		Political transition	Stability or volatility of political regimes based on shifting political systems and political history
		Policy relevance and windows of opportunity	Policymaker demand for research and opportunities for policy analysis based on political, economic, or societal changes/crises
		Policymakers	Attributes of policymakers including demographics, attitudes, beliefs, and values and frequency of policymaker turnover
		Economic development and liberalization	Level of economic growth, stagnation or depression and extent of economic freedom
Donors	Multinational organizations, bilateral and multilateral agencies, foundations, and international non-governmental organizations that have financed think tanks and civil society organizations in developing countries.	Donor funding	Availability of financial support that supports the development of civil society in middle- and low-income countries
		Donor influence on research agenda	Extent to which an organization's research agenda is subject to the influence of foreign donors
		Democracy assistance	Political aid targeted at strengthening government institutions and civil society organizations for the purpose of supporting the spread of liberal democracy
Intellectual Climate	Factors refer to the quantity and quality of human capital inputs to think tanks, the accessibility and financial support for tertiary education, and whether the country environment is permissive of independent analysis and policy contribution.	Cultural respect for education and research	Number of universities and extent of country-level investment in higher education
		Brain drain	Exodus of educated citizens that diminishes local capacity to generate and use research-based evidence
		Intellectual competition among think tanks	Demand for specialized policy advice resulting in the creation of intellectual niches
Civil Society	The atmosphere in which civil society is able to engage, as well as the network of private and public individuals and associations that engage in public discourse and service provision meant to act as counterweights to the state.	NGO effectiveness	Size, scope, effectiveness, capacity and sustainability of civil society, including the number of associations falling outside private and public spheres, non-governmental organizations, and think tanks themselves
		Openness to civil society	Policy environment that is receptive to civil society input and engagement in the policy process
		Political, historical, and economic origins	Ability of think tanks to adapt and be responsive to key issues of the day
		Public interest	Think tank credibility and visibility with citizens, businesses, governments, and media

A.1.3: Literature Review Endogenous Subfactor Definitions			
Group	**Definition**	**Subfactors**	**Subfactor Definitions**
Credibility Capital	Factors that contribute to the institutional reputation of a think tank.	Research quality	Ability of think tanks to produce high quality research and evidence and to attract and retain high quality staff capable of producing research
		Type of evidence produced	Think tank ability to put forward innovative, new policy ideas in digestible and succinct formats
		Research agenda	Balance of short- and long-term research agenda, knowledge of the policy agenda setting process, and ability to assess demand for research and focus on relevant issues
		Political party affiliation	Strategy to seek influence through maintaining political independence or affiliating with a political party
Communication Capital	Factors that contribute to the organization's ability to produce and present high-quality, policy relevant research using a broad array of channels.	Communications capacity	Organizational capacity to produce and present high-quality, policy relevant research using a range of channels
		Media	Think tank access to and exposure within various media channels
Social Capital	Factors that help think tanks to build a stock of trust over time.	Institutional origins	Founder's academic affiliation and leadership, intellectual reputation and strategic identity
		Institutional ties	Personal or professional relationships of think tank staff to government, policy networks, academics and other key stakeholders
		Network affiliations	Think tank involvement in national and international networks of policy stakeholders
Resource Capital	Factors related to the funding strategy taken by a think tank that enables it to hire and pay staff, manage the organization, and undertake, communications, and operations tasks.	Funding and finances	Availability of financial resources to manage, attract and retain research staff and perform operational tasks

Table A.1.4: Elite Interviews for Literature Review		
	Think Tank Executive Directors or Staff	**Think Tank Donors**
Argentina	2	-
Guatemala	1	-
Mexico	1	-
India	1	-
Ghana	1	-
Nigeria	1	-
Armenia	2	-
Czech Republic	-	1
United States	-	1
Mexico	-	2
Total	9	4

Appendix 2: Case Studies

Table A.2.1: Interviews for Case Studies		
	Number of Interviews with Think Tank Representatives	**Number of non-Think Tank Interviews**
Bangladesh	10	4
Peru	12	4
Vietnam	7	2
Zimbabwe	11	13
Total	40	23

Appendix 3: Survey

Table A.3.1: Number of Think Tanks Responding by Country		
Country	**Obs**	**Percent**
Albania	2	2.13
Andorra	1	1.06
Argentina	6	6.38
Azerbaijan	4	4.26
Bangladesh	2	2.13
Belgium	2	2.13
Bolivia	2	2.13
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	1.06
Bulgaria	2	2.13
Cambodia	1	1.06
Cameroon	1	1.06
Canada	1	1.06
Chile	1	1.06
Croatia	2	2.13
Eritrea	1	1.06
Estonia	1	1.06
Ethiopia	4	4.26
Georgia	4	4.26
Germany	1	1.06
Ghana	3	3.19
Guatemala	4	4.26
Honduras	1	1.06
Hungary	3	3.19
India	3	3.19
Kenya	4	4.26
Kosovo	2	2.13
Lebanon	1	1.06
Lithuania	1	1.06
Macedonia	2	2.13
Mexico	1	1.06
Nepal	1	1.06
Nigeria	2	2.13
Pakistan	2	2.13
Paraguay	1	1.06
Peru	3	3.19
Philippines	1	1.06
Romania	2	2.13
Rwanda	1	1.06
Senegal	2	2.13
Slovenia	2	2.13
South Africa	2	2.13
Sri Lanka	1	1.06
Tanzania	1	1.06
Turkey	1	1.06
Uganda	1	1.06
Ukraine	4	4.26
Vietnam	1	1.06
Zimbabwe	2	2.13
Total	94	100

Table A.3.2: Endogenous capacities mapped to indicators developed using the survey data			
Endogenous Capacities	Definition/Construct	How we will operationalize the endogenous capacities of think tanks using data collected in the survey	Indicators
Credibility capital	Factors that contribute to the organization's credibility include the quality and integrity of evidence produced, the research agenda, capacity for innovation, and political independence.	Q30: Rank of factors most important for maintaining organizational credibility Q3: Share of staff with PhD Q31: Review process for data analysis Q32: Review process for reports Q13: Share of board/Staff serving in government Q17/Q18: share of projects in core funding and self-defined	1. credibility factor ranking (discrete) 2. share of staff with a PhD (continuous) 3. indicator of data review (binary) 4. indicator of report review (binary) 5. share of board/staff in gov (continuous) 6. share of projects in core funding and self-defined
Communication capital	Factors contributing to the organization's ability to produce and present high-quality, policy relevant research using a broad array of channels include communications staff capacity and use of the media.	Q3: Share of comms staff Q5: Audience define (most impt for TT's work) Q20-28: number of comms channels and tools used and tracked, and audience size, or number of items produced (e.g. newsletters) Q52: how does TT garner attention?	1. share of comms staff (continuous) 2. audience rank (discrete) 3. diversity of comms channels (continuous) 4. audience size (continuous) 5. rank of media attention sources (discrete)
Social capital	Factors helping think tanks to build a stock of trust over time include development of formal and informal institutional linkages and the relationships belonging to individual think tank staff and researchers.	Q9: Recruiting ties Q11: Govt/staff ties Q13: Gov't/BOD ties Q46: MOU ties Q56/57: policy makers ties Q58: org partnerships	1. diversity of recruiting ties (number of sources, discrete) 2. number of staff ties to gov (discrete) 3. number of BOD/gov ties (discrete) 4. MOU ties diversity (discrete) 5. number of policy maker ties (discrete) 6. diversity of org partnerships (rank)
Resource capital	Funding, fundraising, income and expenditure all combine to enable the think tank to hire and pay staff, manage the organization and undertake, communications, and operations tasks.	Q3: staff size, share that are researchers Q6: annual budget size Q15: number of orgs from which received funding Q16: funding amount received Q17: funding type (project-based) Q18: Share of core funding	1. Number of full time staff, share of full time research staff 2. Annual budget size 3. Number of donors from which funding was received 4. Funding amount received 5. Funding type (project-based) 6. Share of core funding

Exogenous & Mixed Exogenous	Definition/Construct	Country-level indicators of context	What it measures	Data sources
Political and Economic Context	Country-level factors related to the ability to govern, the characteristics of government, political history, and the attitudes and attributes of policymakers. The key sub-factors examined in this group include: Governance and government capacity; Political parties and competition; Concentration of power; Political transition; Policy relevance and windows of opportunity; Policymakers; Economic development and liberalization	1. Political/Party competition 2. Government effectiveness 3. Level of economic development	1. The Competitiveness of Participation: extent to which alternative preferences for policy and leadership can be pursued in the political arena. 2. Perceptions of public service quality, civil service quality independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies. 3. GDP per capita	1. Polity IV: Parcomp 2. World governance indicators 3. World Development Indicators
Donors	Multinational organizations, bilateral and multilateral agencies, foundations, and international non-governmental organizations that have financed think tanks and civil society organizations in developing countries. The key subfactors examined in this group include: Donor funding; Donor influence on research agenda; and Democracy assistance.	1. NET ODA	1. Disbursements of loans made on concessional terms (net of repayments of principal) and grants by official agencies of the members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), by multilateral institutions, and by non-DAC countries to promote economic development and welfare in countries and territories in the DAC list of ODA recipients.	1. OECD/World Bank
Intellectual Climate	Factors refer to the quantity and quality of human capital inputs to think tanks, the accessibility and financial support for tertiary education, and whether the country environment is permissive of independent analysis and policy contribution. Key subfactors included in this analysis are: Cultural respect for education and research; Brain drain; Policy research capacity among local institutions.	1. Tertiary education Expenditure 2. Research and Development Expenditure 3. Emigration rate of tertiary educated	1. Expenditure per student, tertiary (% of GDP per capita) 2. RND_WDI, Research and development expenditure (% of GDP) 3. Emigration rate of tertiary educated (% of total tertiary educated population)	1. WDI, World Bank 2. WDI, World Bank 3. WDI, World Bank
Civil Society	The atmosphere in which civil society is able to engage, as well as the network of private and public individuals and associations that engage in public discourse and service provision meant to act as counterweights to the state. Key subfactors included in this analysis are: NGO effectiveness; Public interest; Media attention; Openness to civil society; and Political, Historical, and Economic Origins.	1. Voice and Accountability 2. Freedom House Civil Liberties (Freedom House) 3. Number of think tanks	1. World Governance Indicators 2. Freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, personal autonomy and individual rights 3. Number of think tanks	1. WGI, World Bank 2. Freedom House 3. McGann (2012)

A.3.4: Pairwise Correlation Table of Political and Economic Context Factors and Endogenous Indicators

	Parcomp	GovEffect	GDPPC_ WDI	toprnk_ cred	Phd_ share	RschStaff_share	review_meth2
parcomp	1.0000						
GovEffect	0.5604*	1.0000					
GDPPC_WDI	0.3818*	0.7739	* 1.0000				
toprnk_cred	0.2456	-0.0554	0.1885	1.0000			
Phd_share	0.1198	0.1386	0.1513	-0.0068	1.0000		
RschStaff_share	0.2230	0.0935	0.1087	0.1264	0.3384*	1.0000	
review_meth2	-0.1191	0.0549	-0.0480	0.0530	-0.6720*	-0.3761	1.0000
review_pubs2	-0.0186	0.2488	0.0332	0.0134	-0.4124*	-0.1627	0.6067*
unres_rsch	-0.3118	-0.3213	-0.4961*	-0.2526	0.0899	-0.2635	0.0264
topicdefine	0.2973	0.2368	0.2122	-0.0404	0.0364	0.1649	-0.1680
CommStaff_share	0.0750	-0.0805	-0.1283	0.1324	-0.1423	-0.1190	-0.7859*
toprnk_aud	-0.1103	-0.1125	-0.2475*	0.1434	0.2231	-0.0367	-0.1600
comtrak	-0.1043	-0.1017	-0.0607	0.1528	-0.2456	0.0112	0.4469*
att_methods	0.1862	0.0330	-0.0979	-0.0961	0.1533	-0.3569*	0.1029
rec_tiestot	0.0358	0.0565	-0.0189	-0.0296	-0.1616	0.0099	0.1952
ratiogovbrd	-0.0608	-0.2768	* -0.2589	-0.1152	-0.0515	0.1153	-0.3959*
frml_tiesum	-0.0827	0.0731	0.2511	-0.0400	-0.1128	-0.1454	-0.0684
divscore	-0.0409	-0.2542	-0.1109	0.3247	* -0.1925	-0.1315	0.1401
hitest	-0.1200	-0.1205	-0.1605	0.0074	0.0164	-0.0219	0.2193
himeet	0.2851	0.1496	0.1095	0.0579	-0.1192	0.0983	0.1793
Staff_Full	-0.1339	-0.1683	-0.2766*	-0.2760	-0.1351	-0.2850*	0.2008
RschStaff_share	0.2230	0.0935	0.1087	0.1264	0.3384*	1.0000*	-0.3761
budget	-0.2066	-0.0443	0.0680	-0.1274	-0.2075	-0.2743*	0.1626
funders_coded	0.1922	0.1702	-0.0663	0.1050	0.1586	0.0908	0.2653
unres_rsch	-0.3118	-0.3213	-0.4961*	-0.2526	0.0899	-0.2635	0.0264
topicdefine	0.2973	0.2368	0.2122	-0.0404	0.0364	0.1649	-0.1680

	review_pubs2	unres_rsch	topicdefine	CommStaff_share	toprnk_aud	comtrak	att_methods
review_pubs2	1.0000						
unres_rsch	0.0349	1.0000					
topicdefine	-0.1818	-0.0901	1.0000				
CommStaff_share	-0.2270	-0.1740	0.2058	1.0000			
toprnk_aud	0.0543	0.1355	-0.2469	-0.0693	1.0000		

comtrak	0.4361*	-0.1609	-0.1019	0.2861	0.0430	1.0000	
att_methods	0.2060	0.0994	0.2368	0.2376	-0.0217	0.2657	1.0000
rec_tiestot	0.3009	-0.0916	-0.1800	-0.0106	-0.0072	0.2818*	0.4093*
ratiogovbrd	-0.2818	0.2536	0.2362	-0.0818	-0.0298	-0.3223*	-0.0937
frml_tiesum	-0.0829	-0.3563	-0.5629*	0.0238	0.0972	0.1921	-0.0335
divscore	0.3108	0.1933	-0.0407	0.0276	0.0543	0.3812*	0.4455*
hitest	-0.0815	0.0668	-0.3822	-0.2443	0.2994	0.2036	0.0702
himeet	-0.0731	-0.1593	0.0350	0.0593	0.0944	-0.0066	0.0027
Staff_Full	0.2203	-0.0815	-0.2296	0.1035	0.1193	-0.0048	0.2168
RschStaff_share	-0.1627	-0.2635	0.1649	-0.1190	-0.0367	0.0112	-0.3569*
budget	0.2014	-0.2383	0.0871	0.0072	0.1365	0.1718	0.0710
funders_coded	-0.0561	-0.1978	0.1275	-0.1073	-0.3792*	0.3507*	0.1955
unres_rsch	0.0349	1.0000	* -0.0901	-0.1740	0.1355	-0.1609	0.0994
topicdefine	-0.1818	-0.0901	1.0000*	0.2058	-0.2469	-0.1019	0.2368

	rec_tiestot	ratiogovbrd	frml_tiesum	divscore	hitest	himeet	Staff_Full
rec_tiestot	1.0000						
ratiogovbrd	0.0078	1.0000					
frml_tiesum	0.3887*	-0.0320	1.0000				
divscore	0.3680*	0.0149	-0.1806	1.0000			
hitest	0.4245*	-0.0229	0.3804	0.3000	1.0000		
himeet	-0.0977	0.1130	-0.0479	0.0102	0.6076*	1.0000	
Staff_Full	0.3234*	0.1207	0.2138	0.1497	0.4880*	0.1610	1.0000
RschStaff_share	0.0099	0.1153	-0.1454	-0.1315	-0.0219	0.0983	-0.2850*
budget	-0.1804	0.0552	0.1671	0.2140	0.1474	-0.0575	0.3167*
funders_coded	0.1298	-0.2380	0.1163	-0.0342	-0.0479	-0.0156	-0.1210
unres_rsch	-0.0916	0.2536	-0.3563	0.1933	0.0668	-0.1593	-0.0815
topicdefine	-0.1800	0.2362	-0.5629*	-0.0407	-0.3822	0.0350	-0.2296

	RschStaff_share	budget	funders_coded	unres_rsch	topicdefine		
RschStaff_share	1.0000						
budget	-0.2743*	1.0000					
funders_coded	0.0908	0.0421	1.0000				
unres_rsch	-0.2635	-0.2383	-0.1978	1.0000			
topicdefine	0.1649	0.0871	0.1275	-0.0901	1.0000		

A.3.5: Pairwise Correlation Table of Donor Context Factors and Endogenous Indicators

	Net ODAid	toprnk_ cred	Phd_ share	RschStaff_ share	review_ meth2	review_ pubs2	unres_ rsch
NetODAid	1.0000						
toprnk_cred	0.0465	1.0000					
Phd_share	-0.1312	-0.0068	1.0000				
RschStaff_share	0.1446	0.1264	0.3384*	1.0000			
review_meth2	0.2065	0.0530	-0.6720*	-0.3761	1.0000		
review_pubs2	0.2292	0.0134	-0.4124*	-0.1627	0.6067*	1.0000	
unres_rsch	0.1858	-0.2526	0.0899	-0.2635	0.0264	0.0349	1.0000
topicdefine	0.0240	-0.0404	0.0364	0.1649	-0.1680	-0.1818	-0.0901
CommStaff_share	-0.2310	0.1324	-0.1423	-0.1190	-0.7859*	-0.2270	-0.1740
toprnk_aud	0.0992	0.1434	0.2231	-0.0367	-0.1600	0.0543	0.1355
comtrak	0.0216	0.1528	-0.2456	0.0112	0.4469*	0.4361*	-0.1609
att_methods	-0.0360	-0.0961	0.1533	-0.3569*	0.1029	0.2060	0.0994
rec_tiestot	0.0309	-0.0296	-0.1616	0.0099	0.1952	0.3009	-0.0916
ratiogovbrd	-0.0233	-0.1152	-0.0515	0.1153	-0.3959*	-0.2818	0.2536
frml_tiesum	-0.0493	-0.0400	-0.1128	-0.1454	-0.0684	-0.0829	-0.3563
divscore	-0.0761	0.3247	* -0.1925	-0.1315	0.1401	0.3108	0.1933
hitest	0.0423	0.0074	0.0164	-0.0219	0.2193	-0.0815	0.0668
himeet	0.1369	0.0579	-0.1192	0.0983	0.1793	-0.0731	-0.1593
Staff_Full	-0.2550	-0.2760	-0.1351	-0.2850*	0.2008	0.2203	-0.0815
RschStaff_~e	0.1446	0.1264	0.3384*	1.0000*	-0.3761	-0.1627	-0.2635
budget	-0.2549*	-0.1274	-0.2075	-0.2743*	0.1626	0.2014	-0.2383
funders_co~d	0.2546	0.1050	0.1586	0.0908	0.2653	-0.0561	-0.1978
unres_rsch	0.1858	-0.2526	0.0899	-0.2635	0.0264	0.0349	1.0000*
topicdefine	0.0240	-0.0404	0.0364	0.1649	-0.1680	-0.1818	-0.0901

	Topicdefine	CommStaff_ share	toprnk_aud	comtrak	att_methods	rec_tiestot	ratiogovbrd
topicdefine	1.0000						
CommStaff_share	0.2058	1.0000					
toprnk_aud	-0.2469	-0.0693	1.0000				
comtrak	-0.1019	0.2861	0.0430	1.0000			
att_methods	0.2368	0.2376	-0.0217	0.2657	1.0000		
rec_tiestot	-0.1800	-0.0106	-0.0072	0.2818*	0.4093*	1.0000	
ratiogovbrd	0.2362	-0.0818	-0.0298	-0.3223*	-0.0937	0.0078	1.0000
frml_tiesum	-0.5629*	0.0238	0.0972	0.1921	-0.0335	0.3887*	-0.0320

divscore	-0.0407	0.0276	0.0543	0.3812*	0.4455*	0.3680*	0.0149
hitest	-0.3822	-0.2443	0.2994	0.2036	0.0702	0.4245*	-0.0229
himeet	0.0350	0.0593	0.0944	-0.0066	0.0027	-0.0977	0.1130
Staff_Full	-0.2296	0.1035	0.1193	-0.0048	0.2168	0.3234*	0.1207
RschStaff_~e	0.1649	-0.1190	-0.0367	0.0112	-0.3569*	0.0099	0.1153
budget	0.0871	0.0072	0.1365	0.1718	0.0710	-0.1804	0.0552
funders_co~d	0.1275	-0.1073	-0.3792*	0.3507*	0.1955	0.1298	-0.2380
unres_rsch	-0.0901	-0.1740	0.1355	-0.1609	0.0994	-0.0916	0.2536
topicdefine	1.0000*	0.2058	-0.2469	-0.1019	0.2368	-0.1800	0.2362

	frml_tiesum	**divscore**	**hitest**	**himeet**	**Staff_Full**	**RschStaff_share**	**budget**
frml_tiesum	1.0000						
divscore	-0.1806	1.0000					
hitest	0.3804	0.3000	1.0000				
himeet	-0.0479	0.0102	0.6076*	1.0000			
Staff_Full	0.2138	0.1497	0.4880*	0.1610	1.0000		
RschStaff_share	-0.1454	-0.1315	-0.0219	0.0983	-0.2850*	1.0000	
budget	0.1671	0.2140	0.1474	-0.0575	0.3167*	-0.2743*	1.0000
funders_coded	0.1163	-0.0342	-0.0479	-0.0156	-0.1210	0.0908	0.0421
unres_rsch	-0.3563	0.1933	0.0668	-0.1593	-0.0815	-0.2635	-0.2383
topicdefine	-0.5629*	-0.0407	-0.3822	0.0350	-0.2296	0.1649	0.0871

	funders_coded	**unres_rsch**	**topicdefine**				
funders_coded	1.0000						
unres_rsch	-0.1978	1.0000					
topicdefine	0.1275	-0.0901	1.0000				

A.3.6: Pairwise Correlation Table of Civil Society Context Factors and Endogenous Indicators

	VoiceAcct	TTNumber	toprnk_ cred	Phd_ share	RschStaff_ share	review_ meth2	review_ pubs2
VoiceAcct	1.0000						
TTNumber	0.3515*	1.0000					
toprnk_cred	0.0114	-0.0596	1.0000				
Phd_share	0.0924	0.3072*	-0.0068	1.0000			
RschStaff_ share	0.2236	0.0511	0.1264	0.3384*	1.0000		
review_meth2	-0.0206	-0.2357	0.0530	-0.6720*	-0.3761	1.0000	
review_pubs2	0.1323	-0.0764	0.0134	-0.4124*	-0.1627	0.6067*	1.0000
unres_rsch	-0.5191*	-0.5290*	-0.2526	0.0899	-0.2635	0.0264	0.0349
topicdefine	0.3580*	0.0997	-0.0404	0.0364	0.1649	-0.1680	-0.1818
CommStaff_ share	0.0091	0.0204	0.1324	-0.1423	-0.1190	-0.7859*	-0.2270
toprnk_aud	-0.2196	-0.0584	0.1434	0.2231	-0.0367	-0.1600	0.0543
comtrak	-0.0606	-0.2130	0.1528	-0.2456	0.0112	0.4469*	0.4361*
att_methods	0.2087	0.1518	-0.0961	0.1533	-0.3569*	0.1029	0.2060
rec_tiestot	0.0412	-0.1586	-0.0296	-0.1616	0.0099	0.1952	0.3009
ratiogovbrd	-0.2281	-0.1407	-0.1152	-0.0515	0.1153	-0.3959*	-0.2818
frml_tiesum	-0.1525	-0.1809	-0.0400	-0.1128	-0.1454	-0.0684	-0.0829
divscore	-0.0526	-0.0609	0.3247	* -0.1925	-0.1315	0.1401	0.3108
hitest	-0.0491	-0.1013	0.0074	0.0164	-0.0219	0.2193	-0.0815
himeet	0.2851	0.0316	0.0579	-0.1192	0.0983	0.1793	-0.0731
Staff_Full	-0.1943	0.1679	-0.2760	-0.1351	-0.2850*	0.2008	0.2203
RschStaff_~e	0.2236	0.0511	0.1264	0.3384*	1.0000*	-0.3761	-0.1627
budget	0.0011	0.1093	-0.1274	-0.2075	-0.2743*	0.1626	0.2014
funders_co~d	0.1338	-0.1229	0.1050	0.1586	0.0908	0.2653	-0.0561
unres_rsch	-0.5191*	-0.5290*	-0.2526	0.0899	-0.2635	0.0264	0.0349
topicdefine	0.3580*	0.0997	-0.0404	0.0364	0.1649	-0.1680	-0.1818

	unres_ rsch	topic define	CommStaff_ share	toprnk_ aud	comtrak	att_ methods	rec_ tiestot
unres_rsch	1.0000						
topicdefine	-0.0901	1.0000					
CommStaff_ share	-0.1740	0.2058	1.0000				
toprnk_aud	0.1355	-0.2469	-0.0693	1.0000			
comtrak	-0.1609	-0.1019	0.2861	0.0430	1.0000		
att_methods	0.0994	0.2368	0.2376	-0.0217	0.2657	1.0000	
rec_tiestot	-0.0916	-0.1800	-0.0106	-0.0072	0.2818*	0.4093*	1.0000

ratiogovbrd	0.2536	0.2362	-0.0818	-0.0298	-0.3223*	-0.0937	0.0078
frml_tiesum	-0.3563	-0.5629*	0.0238	0.0972	0.1921	-0.0335	0.3887*
divscore	0.1933	-0.0407	0.0276	0.0543	0.3812*	0.4455*	0.3680*
hitest	0.0668	-0.3822	-0.2443	0.2994	0.2036	0.0702	0.4245*
himeet	-0.1593	0.0350	0.0593	0.0944	-0.0066	0.0027	-0.0977
Staff_Full	-0.0815	-0.2296	0.1035	0.1193	-0.0048	0.2168	0.3234*
RschStaff_~e	-0.2635	0.1649	-0.1190	-0.0367	0.0112	-0.3569*	0.0099
budget	-0.2383	0.0871	0.0072	0.1365	0.1718	0.0710	-0.1804
funders_co~d	-0.1978	0.1275	-0.1073	-0.3792*	0.3507*	0.1955	0.1298
unres_rsch	1.0000*	-0.0901	-0.1740	0.1355	-0.1609	0.0994	-0.0916
topicdefine	-0.0901	1.0000*	0.2058	-0.2469	-0.1019	0.2368	-0.1800

	ratiogov brd	frml_ tiesum	divscore	hitest	himeet	Staff_ Full	RschStaff_ share
ratiogovbrd	1.0000						
frml_tiesum	-0.0320	1.0000					
divscore	0.0149	-0.1806	1.0000				
hitest	-0.0229	0.3804	0.3000	1.0000			
himeet	0.1130	-0.0479	0.0102	0.6076*	1.0000		
Staff_Full	0.1207	0.2138	0.1497	0.4880*	0.1610	1.0000	
RschStaff_ share	0.1153	-0.1454	-0.1315	-0.0219	0.0983	-0.2850*	1.0000
budget	0.0552	0.1671	0.2140	0.1474	-0.0575	0.3167*	-0.2743*
funders_ coded	-0.2380	0.1163	-0.0342	-0.0479	-0.0156	-0.1210	0.0908
unres_rsch	0.2536	-0.3563	0.1933	0.0668	-0.1593	-0.0815	-0.2635
topicdefine	0.2362	-0.5629*	-0.0407	-0.3822	0.0350	-0.2296	0.1649

	budget	funders_ coded	unres_ rsch	topic define			
budget	1.0000						
funders_ coded	0.0421	1.0000					
unres_rsch	-0.2383	-0.1978	1.0000				
topicdefine	0.0871	0.1275	-0.0901	1.0000			

Appendix 4: Focus Group Discussions and Executive Director Interviews

	Table A.4.1: Participating Organizations and Number of Executive Director Interviews, and Focus Group Discussion Participants		
	Organizations represented in FGDs or ED Interviews	Executive Directors Interviewed	FGD Participants
Indonesia	9	9	12
Rwanda	7	8	7
Total	16	17	19

Focus Group Discussion Protocol

Format

- Focus group discussion with 6-10 think tank research and communication staff.

Materials

- Nametags
  - 30 stickers/pens for participants to write their names
- Focus group agenda
  - 30 copies of a focus group agenda to be handed out to participants
- Brainstorm Exercise
  - BRAIN STORM PPT slides: TOC, topline exogenous, and mixed exogenous context factors
  - 3 easels set up with TOC topics pre-written on two of them, the last for "other" category
  - 30 copies: Comprehensive Context (keep in back pocket, present if brainstorm is not working)
- Top 3 Context Factors Exercise
  - 4 large format paper flip charts (2' x 3')
  - Colored sticker dots (five colors, cut in strips of 3 dots each for voting)
- Tell Your Story Exercise
  - 30 copies of Tell Your Story Worksheet
  - pencils/pens for writing out the sheet
- Sign up sheet for staying in touch
  - to receive the final report
  - to receive occasional communications from R4D (any reporting on think tanks).

Set up

1. chairs set up in a small circle or u shape to facilitate conversation

2. 4 easels with large format paper flip charts and markers set up nearby the chairs, to enable easy access.

3. 3 easels should be set up for the first exercise, in part 3.

Focus Group Question Set, Moderator Script, and Focus Group Session Activities

1. (5-10 mins) Hello, Welcome and Study Background
   Goal: Introduce the research team, the research project, and what we're doing here

2. (15 mins) Introductions
   Goal: Here we want some easy, inclusive questions to help warm up to the discussion and ensure everyone has a chance to talk.

3. (15 mins) Topic Introduction and BRAINSTORM EXERCISE:
   *Goal:*Moderator introduces topic, which is about context and the effects it has on research and communications decisions. Here we want the group to be expansive and build some energy around a broad list of context factors they might consider at various stages of research or communications planning (this is designed to obtain the checklist). We will ask the group to consider the theory of change and tell us their thoughts on context factors that affect various stages of the research process. **At this point in the exercise, we want more context factors, but we're less concerned with linking them to the specific theory of change process that was presented in the ppt. There is a question of flow and whether we want to present the TOC now or later – TOC may be distracting – and participants may want to immediately link the TOC to specific decisions they make. Or they may be able to roll with it, just discussing the context factors, disconnected from the decision points.

4. (15 mins): TOP 3 CONTEXT FACTORS EXERCISE
   Goal: Next we want to get to the top Context factors of particular importance by taking that broad list and reducing it to the top 3 items that the participants say are important. (this is designed to identify which context factors are more or less important)

5. (50 mins) TELL YOUR STORY EXERCISE: Split up into Small groups

6. (10 mins) RECONVENE THE LARGE GROUP AND EXIT QUESTIONS
   Goal: Each think tank group is then asked to present to the main group – what was the most important context factor for the whole project? What decision did it effect?

Tell Your Story Exercise Worksheet

We have now reviewed a long list of context factors and determined which three are the most important for research and communication strategy. Now we'd like to see how these three factors affected your decision making on a recent research project.

Please think of a recent research project on which you had a significant role. (Note: colleagues from the same organization should work together on this task)

1. What is the project?

2. What was the project's size? (in local currency), or in FTE and duration (in years).

3. Who funded the project?

4. What was the goal or objective of the project?

In most projects, there are four important steps involved in undertaking the research and translating it into something of public value. These four steps are shown in the diagram, below.

We would like to know how context affected each of these critical decision points on the research project you're thinking of?

Q1. Policy Problem or Desired Improvement

    a. What policy problem did the research project address, and how did you make this choice?

    b. Which of the three context factors affected how you framed the policy problem, and why?

    c. What other context factors were at work -- or were even more important?

Q2. Research Problem, Methods, and Analysis

    a. What research methods did the project use, and how did you make this choice?

    b. Which of the three context factors affected your research methods decision, and why?

    c. What other context factors were at work -- or were even more important?

Q3. Results Communication and Audiences

    a. How was the research communicated? What channels did you use, and how did you choose these?

    b. Which of the three context factors most affected how you communicated results and to which audiences?

    c. What other factors were at work -- or were even more important?

Q4. Policy Influence

    a. What influence did the project seek to achieve? Was that influence achieved? How do you know?

    b. Which of the three context factors most affected your decisions about communicating results and the audiences you targeted?

    c. What other factors affected your ability to influence the policy outcome?