

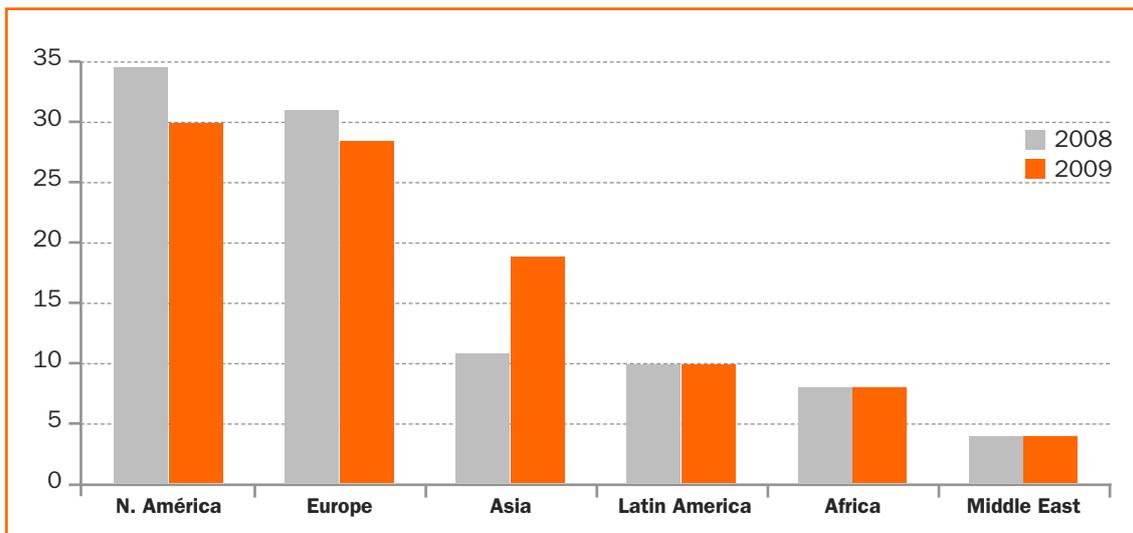


## NEW EXAMINATION OF THINK TANKS

**FAES climbs twelve positions in the ranking  
of the world's best think tanks**

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**DIAGRAM 1.**  
**Geographical distribution of think tanks**



*Think tanks continue to grow in number all over the world, and particularly dynamically in Asia. The United States and the United Kingdom, far ahead of other countries, host the best in the world. In the 2009 global ranking (excluding American think tanks), the Foundation for Social Studies and Analysis (FAES in its Spanish acronym) has climbed twelve positions to no. 32 in the world, and still ranks as the Spanish think tank with the greatest global impact, ahead of the Elcano Royal Institute, the only other Spanish institution listed, at no. 50.*

The global report on think tanks prepared annually by Professor James G. McGann and his team at the University of Pennsylvania, The Global “GoTo Think Tanks”, has reached its fourth edition<sup>1</sup>. The report’s classifications are considered to be the most authorized in the field. The study has confirmed the constant expansion of the think tanks as venues for discussion and the dissemination of ideas, as well as their growing importance in developing countries, as they contribute to the consolidation of democracy and actively participate in the management of government. However, bearing in mind this tendency towards a greater presence in public affairs, very marked in the nineteen eighties and nineties, the report also calls attention to the risk of “information overload” generated by the multiplication of think tanks and their research. In this sense, the study is a good guide for exploring the universe of think tanks.

The public acknowledgement this report generally receives in such titles as Foreign Policy or The Economist confirms its relevance and reliability. This year, the study was presented last January 21st at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

The geographical distribution of think tanks (graph 1) has not varied

greatly, with North America and Europe still the regions with the largest number, with 1,912 and 1,750 think tanks respectively, representing 30% and 28% of the total. These percentages are slightly down on last year, when the number of think tanks in North America was 34% and in Europe 31%. This decline has been entirely absorbed by Asia. In fact, the considerable increase in Asian think tanks is noteworthy. While 653 were recorded last year, 12% of the total, this year the figure has gone up to 1,183, representing 19% of the world’s think tanks.

The increase in Asian think tanks is concentrated in China, where the figure has gone from 47 think tanks last year to 428, and India, where the number has more than doubled from 121 to 261. The rest of the world’s regions maintain very similar figures. Latin America, with 645 think tanks, continues to represent 10% of the total; Africa, with 503, represents 8%, while the Middle East and North Africa, with 273, represent 4% of the worldwide total. Thus, in global figures, more than 6,300 think tanks have been detected in the world. It should also be highlighted that, despite the spectacular increase in Chinese think tanks, only two of them, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Shanghai Institute for International Studies, make it

<sup>1</sup> Latest edition of the report:

[http://www.sas.upenn.edu/irp/documents/2009GlobalGoToReportThinkTankIndex\\_1.31.2010.02.01.pdf](http://www.sas.upenn.edu/irp/documents/2009GlobalGoToReportThinkTankIndex_1.31.2010.02.01.pdf)

**“The quality of the think tanks making civil society more dynamic is a measure of the maturity, strength and plurality of a democracy”**

**TABLE 1.**  
**The world's fifty best think tanks (excluding those in the USA)**

2008 RANKING	2009 RANKING
 1. Chatham House (United Kingdom)	 <b>1. Chatham House</b> (United Kingdom)
 2. International Institute for Strategic Studies (United Kingdom)	 <b>2. Transparency International</b> (Alemania)
 3. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Sweden)	 <b>3. International Crisis Group</b> (Bélgica)
 4. Overseas Development Institute (United Kingdom)	 <b>4. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute</b> (Sweden)
 5. Center for European Policy Studies (Belgium)	 <b>5. Amnesty International</b> (United Kingdom)
 6. Transparency International (Germany)	 <b>6. International Institute for Strategic Studies</b> (United Kingdom)
 7. German Council on Foreign Relations (Germany)	 <b>7. Adam Smith Institute</b> (United Kingdom)
 8. German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Germany)	 <b>8. French Institute of International Relations</b> (France)
 9. French Institute of International Relations (France)	 <b>9. Center for European Policy Studies</b> (Belgium)
 10. Adam Smith Institute (United Kingdom)	 <b>10. German Institute for International and Security Affairs</b> (Germany)
 11. Fraser Institute (Canada)	 <b>11. Bertelsmann Foundation</b> (Germany)
 12. European Council on Foreign Relations (Various countries)	 <b>12. Fraser Institute</b> (Canada)
 13. Center for Policy Studies (United Kingdom)	 <b>13. European Council on Foreign Relations</b> (United Kingdom)
 14. Institute of Development Studies (United Kingdom)	 <b>14. Center for Economic Policy Research</b> (United Kingdom)
 15. Center for Economic Policy Research (United Kingdom)	 <b>15. Chinese Academy of Social Sciences</b> (China)
...	...
 <b>44. FOUNDATION FOR SOCIAL STUDIES AND ANALYSIS</b> (SPAIN)	 <b>32. FOUNDATION FOR SOCIAL STUDIES AND ANALYSIS</b> (SPAIN)
...	...
 50. Elcano Royal Institute (Spain)	 <b>50. Elcano Royal Institute</b> (Spain)

into the list of the 392 best think tanks in the world, whereas the previous edition included nine. In any case, the main think tanks, and still by a wide margin, continue to be North American and British, particularly the first.

The methodology used in the current edition has improved on that in previous years. This year, more experts have been included for the evaluation of think tanks: a total of 1,255 academics, researchers and technical experts from government administrations have taken part in the various stages of the study's preparation. Furthermore, the scope of the analysis has been extended even more, including think tanks from practically every country in the world. We shall not go into the scientific methods used on this occasion as these were discussed in FAES Papers number 91 from 2009 devoted to the previous year's report<sup>2</sup>. Suffice it to say here that this year's study is based on a preliminary analysis of over 6,300 think tanks detected, from which only 392 proceeded to the second phase of the survey.

In connection with the foregoing, from a Spanish perspective, it is to be regretted that the 2008 edition included nine Spanish think tanks among the list of the 392 main organizations, while the 2009 classification

only contains five. In alphabetical order, the only criterion used by the report in this initial screening, those which remain are the Centro de Investigación de Relaciones Internacionales y Desarrollo (International Relations and Development Research Centre, CIDOB), the Fundación para el Análisis y los Estudios Sociales (Foundation for Social Studies and Analysis, FAES), the Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (the International Relations and Foreign Dialogue Foundation, FRIDE), the Instituto Juan de Mariana (Juan de Mariana Institute) and the Real Instituto Elcano (Elcano Royal Institute). On the other hand, those that did not pass the report's first filter were the Fundación Alternativas (Alternatives Foundation), the Fundación Burke (Burke Foundation), the Institut Europeu de la Mediterrània (European Institute of the Mediterranean, IEMed) and the Instituto Futuro (Future Institute).

This decline among Spanish think tanks is to be regretted as, in point of fact, the quality of these organizations making civil society more dynamic is a measure of the maturity, strength and plurality of a democracy. Think tanks represent an exercise in responsibility and civic commitment because they channel a concern for the res publica that is far from the clamour of party-

<sup>2</sup> [http://documentos.fundacionfaes.org/record\\_file/filename/2330/papel\\_91.1.pdf.pdf](http://documentos.fundacionfaes.org/record_file/filename/2330/papel_91.1.pdf.pdf)

**“The criteria for evaluating the think tanks have been: relevance of their research, level of activity, the usual public addressed, financial resources available, contributions to political debate and impact on public policies”**

**“The FAES Foundation maintains privileged relations with its main liberal-conservative counterparts in America, such as the Heritage Foundation, the American Enterprise Institute or the Cato Institute”**

oriented battles. These institutions must not only provide practical guidance and ideological support for a country’s policies, they must also provide public opinion with ever greater and more plural information.

Based on this worldwide list of 392 think tanks, various panels of experts were charged with drawing up the different rankings included in the report, at the level of both regions and subject areas of specializations. The FAES document published last year and indicated above includes a more exhaustive and detailed analysis of the

selection criteria used by these experts. For now, let us recall that the main criteria for evaluating the think tanks were the rigour and relevance of their research and analyses, the institution’s level of activity, the usual public addressed by their activities, the financial resources available to the organization, the contribution of their investigations and analyses to political debate and the taking of decisions as well as the institution’s overall impact on the country’s policies.

In one of the main rankings, that of the world’s 50 best think tanks exclud-

**TABLE 2.**  
**The top ten US think tanks**

<b>2008 RANKING</b>	<b>2009 RANKING</b>
1. Brookings Institution	<b>1. Brookings Institution</b>
2. Council on Foreign Relations	<b>2. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace</b>
3. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace	<b>3. Council on Foreign Relations</b>
4. RAND Corporation	<b>4. RAND Corporation</b>
5. Heritage Foundation	<b>5. Heritage Foundation</b>
6. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars	<b>6. Center for Strategic and International Studies</b>
7. Center for Strategic and International Studies	<b>7. Cato Institute</b>
8. American Enterprise Institute	<b>8. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars</b>
9. Cato Institute	<b>9. American Enterprise Institute</b>
10. Hoover Institution	<b>10. Hoover Institution</b>

ing the United States (as their inclusion would distort the results), the Foundation for Social Studies and Analysis (FAES) has managed to climb twelve positions and is still situated as the Spanish think tank with the greatest global impact, at number 32 in the ranking, ahead of the Elcano Royal Institute, at position 50, the only other Spanish institution on the list (Table 1). The latest trend in the phenomenon of think tanks, very positively considered in the report as representing an effective mechanism for knowledge transfer, is the emergence of global networks and strategic alliances. Although this also entails challenges. In fact, the challenge posed by this globalization is summed up by Economics Nobel Prize-winner Joseph Stiglitz, when he advised those responsible for public policies to “scan globally, reinvent locally”. Thus, think tanks have to monitor the proposals drawn up in other countries, but at the same time remain aware that the best practices are not always suitable for generalization and have to be adapted to local circumstances. In this sense, mention should be made of the fact that the FAES Foundation maintains privileged collaborative relationships with its main liberal-conservative counterparts in America, such as the Heritage Foundation, the American Enterprise Institute or the Cato Institute. In addition, the FAES, together with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, leads the Euro-

pean Ideas Network, the most important network of think tanks in Europe.

In this ranking of the fifty best think tanks, it is worth highlighting the inclusion among the top fifteen positions of organizations that previously appeared much further down last year’s ranking, such as the International Crisis Group (Belgium), Amnesty International (United Kingdom), Bertelsmann Foundation (Germany) and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (China).

In the ranking of the top ten US think tanks (Table 2), the positions are more consolidated, although it is worth mentioning the decline of the Woodrow Wilson Center and the advance of the Cato Institute. The model of think tanks in the United States contrasts sharply with the Spanish model that, as in the case of Britain, is structured around a far lower budget, a permanently small staff and the greater or lesser network of external collaborators in the realms of academia, business and politics.

In the same way, the positions of the best think tanks in 2009 by regional areas (Table 3) also seem to be consolidated. These organizations were already classified last year among the main think tanks in their respective geography, except for the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut. This think tank, in barely four years of

**“The FAES, together with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, leads the European Ideas Network, the most important network of think tanks in Europe”**

**“Think tanks have to serve as a bridge between knowledge and the decision-making centres and the link between the civil society and political parties”**

**TABLE 3.**  
**The world’s best think tanks in 2009 by geographical area**

<b>THINK TANK</b>	<b>GEOGRAPHICAL AREA</b>
<b>Brookings Institution</b>	United States
<b>Fraser Institute</b>	Canada and Mexico
<b>Chatham House</b>	Western Europe
<b>Carnegie Moscow Center</b>	Central and Eastern Europe
<b>Getúlio Vargas Foundation</b>	Latin America
<b>Carnegie Middle East Center</b>	Middle East and North Africa
<b>South African Institute of International Affairs</b>	South Africa

activity, has managed to rank as the most important in the Middle East.

One of the ideas most stressed in the report is that think tanks have to serve as a bridge between, on the one hand, knowledge or information and, on the other, the public policies and the decision-making centres. Nonetheless, there is another equally interesting relationship, namely the link between the civil society and political parties. This is precisely something that European think tanks lack and one of the things the US media have recently highlighted.

After the Republican Party’s electoral failure in the 2008 presidential elections, it seemed headed for a depression that everybody thought would last for a long time. However, the US civil society, with the vigour that characterizes it, quickly started to organize

grass roots movements such as the Tea Party and to participate in town hall meetings that have coalesced the discontent that exists with regard to President Obama’s policies. Certain mass media are contributing to the movement by acting as a sounding board for what is happening on the streets.

Nowadays, spurred on by the recent surprise victories of Senator Scott Brown in Massachusetts and of the governors of New Jersey and Virginia, Chris Christie and Bob McDonnell respectively, Republicans are debating the proposals they have to offer the country for the mid-term legislative elections. And some have decided to take a step forward with the formation of the American Action Network. This organization, officially presented at the end of February, 2010, has been described by the people behind it as an

## **“The Foundation for Social Studies and Analysis manages to climb twelve positions to no. 32 in the world and is still the Spanish think tank with the greatest global impact”**

“action tank” or “think and do tank”. The driving force behind this initiative includes former Senator Norm Coleman, the ex-Governor of Florida, Jeb Bush, and the “architect” of George W. Bush’s presidential campaigns and former advisor, Karl Rove.

The idea is inspired by the strategy devised by John Podesta, the deputy Cabinet Director under President Clinton, who founded in 2003 the Center for American Progress (CAP). From its analyses, among others, emerged the idea for the strategic re-organization of the troops in Iraq, instead of their withdrawal, that so infuriated the Republicans. The CAP was also the organization that promoted the idea of investments in renewable energies as a way not only to obtain environmental

benefits, but also for job creation. But the CAP, right from its early days, had distanced itself from traditional think tanks and had become something else: a platform to promote candidates and their proposals by connecting directly to large segments of public opinion thanks to the use of new technologies.

The Republicans now expect to repeat that same success. The truth is that, whether through a new formation that welcomes citizens’ demands and takes them on board or else through consolidated think tanks, the challenge they all face will be to pay greater attention to the pulse of the citizenry and turn passing discontent into practical, workable proposals. Not for nothing are think tanks referred to as “governments in waiting”.