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The influence capacity of think tanks

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Universiteit Leiden

The influence capacity of think tanks

MSc Public Administration, Public Management and Leadership

Capstone: Expert Influence

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Abstract

Think tanks are actors within the political sphere that play a key role in the development and decision-making of public policy formulation processes. Their expertise allows them to have a relevant role, to the point that they can become influential actors.

One of the most important issues being discussed today, since it could have consequences at a global level, and is already having them at the European level and related countries, is the war between Russia and Ukraine, which marked a turning point on the 24th February 2022. Since then, it has been a very important topic in the political sphere, as it requires the expertise of specialized experts and think tanks to make the correct decisions at the political level, and to proceed with extreme caution.

For this reason, this study raises the question of what strategies think tanks use so that their influence and recommendations end up being effective. The analysis is carried out through the study of the CIDOB Foundation, an academic think tank located in Barcelona, Spain; a mixed, quantitative and qualitative analysis method will be used, focusing on the issue of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

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1. Introduction

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine dates back to 2013. However, since February 24, 2022, attacks by Russia on Ukraine intensified exponentially, raising alarm bells among European countries, the European Union, and many other countries around the world, being a focus of media attention (Política Exterior, 2024). The consequences of this conflict have already had a negative impact on many Member States of the European Union as well as worldwide (Concilium Europa, 2024), creating the need to look for solutions and alternatives to deal with the lack of resources that has occurred in many European countries. The European Union, together with the collaboration of the Member States and countries around the world, have been seeking solutions to implement to alleviate the effects of this war, since a series of complex and multifaceted challenges that require well-informed and strategic responses have emerged. In that sense, governments need expert advice to make informed, effective and sustainable decisions, and it is in these situations where experts and think tanks gain prominence.

It is important to take into account the importance of these actors, experts and think tanks, since expert endorsement increases the credibility and legitimacy of government decisions, strengthening public support as well (Françoise et al., 2022). They play a crucial role providing expert knowledge to society as a whole, including both citizens and actors in the political sphere, allowing society to be informed of important political, economic or social events that may occur. Think tanks offer geopolitical and strategic analysis, providing recommendations on foreign policies, economic sanctions, military support, and humanitarian assistance (Rich, 2004). In a globalized world, think tanks advise on international cooperation, promoting coordinated responses; they also evaluate the impact of policies, providing feedback for continuous improvements (Acop, 2021), ensuring that policies are dynamic and adaptive, and facilitate international coordination, promoting an unified response. These groups of experts also help develop communication strategies (Esparcia et al., 2017) to inform citizens and combat misinformation, and most important, they prepare governments for possible developments in the conflict, such as escalations, peaceful resolutions or changes in leadership.

The main purpose of this study is to identify how think tanks establish influence within a political process regarding the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This is because the knowledge gap between think tanks and the influence they can exert on public policy decisions is a complex issue that involves several factors (Weidenbaum, 2010). Starting with accessing the

information published by think tanks, as it may not always be completely readable for the entire public if excessive use of technicalities is made. Another problem that may arise is the applicability of the recommendations, that is, how possible is it to apply and put into practice what is said in the reports that think tanks publish? On the one hand, the reports may be theoretically useful, but lack clear practical or applicable recommendations in the specific political and social context, preventing them from being truly useful in practice (Françoise et al., 2022). On the other hand, it is important to take into account how possible and realistic it is to carry out a recommendation proposed by an expert or think tank, since the context in which the situation to deal with is found plays a key role, determining whether certain recommendations will be able or not to be put into practice.

To guide this study I propose the following research question: *through what practices does the CIDOB Center influence the formulation of public policies regarding the War in Ukraine?* In that sense, I have proceeded to investigate the activity carried out by the CIDOB Center, a think tank located in Barcelona, the most important city of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia, in Spain. Tchubykalo et al. (2019) mention that with the detailed analysis of the activities a think tank carries out on digital platforms, behavioral patterns, such as the formation of strategic alliances or participation in key discussions, can be identified thus being able to consider conclusions about their influence capacity. Studying this think tank, will enable me specify the research question even more, and it has been chosen because it is one of the most relevant think tanks in Spain that focuses on international relations and politics at the suprastate level. Furthermore, the goal of the CIDOB Foundation is to try to analyze the growing impact that international affairs have on the lives of citizens and the impact on all its areas of action (CIDOB, 2024); this makes centers like this more relevant than ever, due to the growing impact of geopolitics on our lives and the need for the public sector, private companies, or society as a whole to understand these phenomena and equip themselves with better analysis tools (Barcelona Global, 2023).

The CIDOB Center is an excellent option as a think tank to address the conflict between Ukraine and Russia since it is an institution recognized and respected internationally (and we can see this in more detail in the analysis of the data section) for its interdisciplinary approach and its ability to provide deep and well-researched analysis on global issues. Also, CIDOB has a team of highly qualified experts in international relations, foreign policy and security. Many of these specialists are responsible for publishing reports on the conflict situation and have deep knowledge of the Eastern Europe and Eurasia region, which allows them to offer detailed, contextually informed and quality analyzes on the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. The center combines different disciplines to provide a comprehensive

understanding of global issues; this will also be seen in Chapter 4 of the study, where I witness the great variety of guests, with different backgrounds, that they bring to their activities. This interdisciplinary perspective is crucial to address a conflict as complex as the one between Ukraine and Russia, which involves historical, political, economic and cultural aspects. Following this thread, CIDOB also maintains an extensive collaboration network with other institutions, think tanks and universities worldwide. This allows the Foundation to access a wide range of sources and perspectives, enriching its analyzes and allowing for a more complete and nuanced view of the conflict.

Academic and Social relevance

The importance of experts and think tanks when making political decisions is clear. They are key actors in managing this crisis and war, since experts provide specialized knowledge, conduct rigorous research and offer innovative solutions, as well as objective perspectives; experts are able to identify potential risks, plan strategically, and anticipate future trends, an essential aspect to avoid unintended consequences in this concrete situation (Cairney, 2016). Experts and think tanks are essential for policymakers to address the Russia-Ukraine conflict in an informed and strategic manner.

Regarding the academic relevance of this research study, and taking into account the knowledge gap, this study provides a concrete example of how a think tank dedicated to international affairs carries out its activity, the CIDOB Center, and with which its activity regarding the War in Ukraine will be traced to see how far its influence reaches with respect to the decisions made by the Government of Spain. By studying in detail the activity carried out by CIDOB, it could be clearer which strategies are most used or preferred by think tanks to exert influence, and which one are less relevant to them. In addition, it will also provide knowledge about the importance of networking and having contact with relevant actors in the political sphere. This study will also provide a specific example to add to the academic literature regarding the activity and influence of think tanks, and that could be used for more in-depth study and development on the topic. It could also serve other authors and academics to develop new theories or reinforce existing ones about the activity of influence carried out by think tanks, and it could also be an example or a starting point to carry out studies in other think tanks, or to further develop the activity carried out by the CIDOB Center.

Socially, this research work contributes to raising awareness of the importance and relevance of this conflict on a global scale, since its consequences affect the whole of

Europe, as well as various countries worldwide. Apart from that, it is important that society is aware of the reasons why this conflict is taking place, since many countries are being affected by it, forcing governments to take certain measures regarding the creation or modification of public policies, having direct consequences on the population, this could be attributed to the fact that, new actors may be involved in the political process, which in the end may also affect society as a whole. This study can provide new ideas and encourage comparative studies; It can also provide an incentive to debate the influence and activities carried out by experts and think tanks, in addition to encouraging public deliberation on important issues, promoting a culture of dialogue and critical analysis, as well as enriching the body of knowledge available for students, academics and professionals.

To conclude, here I present the roadmap of this study, which consists of five chapters. The first is this, the introduction. In the second chapter, it can be observed in more detail what other authors and experts say about the topic of think tanks, the knowledge of experts, and strategies that can be used by think tanks or other actors to influence decision-making processes or public policies. In chapter 3 I proceed to make the design to carry out a more practical study. In it, I detail where I am going to get the information from to be able to answer the research question, what type of information I need and will be useful for the study, and I define how it will be organized. This chapter also considers the limits or obstacles that may arise when collecting and studying information. Chapter 4 is a description and analysis of the data and information obtained after doing the search. It also discusses the results and a comparison is made with the literature compiled in chapter 2. Finally, Chapter 5 is a conclusion of the study carried out where everything carried out is reviewed. This final chapter also makes an assessment of the limits or obstacles that have arisen during the research work, and ends with recommendations for future research.

2. Literature Review

This chapter discusses some key aspects to address the research question. It begins by introducing the general topic, which is expert knowledge and its implications. This aspect is discussed since it is the basis for later developing the activity carried out by think tanks, since the latter are a subgroup made up of experts or specialists in a specific area or topic. Next, I proceed to define the concept of think tank and which is its purpose. In the next section, once the main concept of this study is known, I proceed to analyze four mechanisms or strategies think tanks use to achieve their objectives and exert influence, be it political, media or otherwise. The first strategy addresses the importance given to the press and the media, as they are the means of transmitting many of the ideas that think tanks produce; the second strategy highlights the benefits offered by networking; in this sense, the actors involved benefit mutually by sharing information and interacting with other experts. The third strategy I mention is the role that think tanks can adopt as mediators, in this case, as mediators between scientific or expert knowledge and actors from other areas. The last strategy highlights the usefulness of staying in contact or close to actors within the government or the political sphere.

Expert knowledge

The academic literature on the topic of expert knowledge in policymaking has remained fragmented, with different subdisciplines of political science and sociology addressing the topic independently (Dunlop, 2013). Added to this is the fact that expert knowledge faces challenges when shaping policy in the post-truth era: they are crucial in providing information and guidance based on expertise and evidence, nevertheless this experts knowledge is now being questioned as what is called “truth” is being questioned as well (Ahmadzai, 2022). In this sense, it is important to highlight what the use of expert knowledge brings to politics. Cairney (2016) affirms the positive effects of formulating policies with a scientific background, since a scientific or expert approach helps reduce the influence of ideological biases. Furthermore, the use of scientific evidence seeks to increase legitimacy (Françoise et al., 2022) and trust in government policies, positively contributing to accountability.

In democratic political system there are multiple political processes that are part of it, and concretely, I focus on the spaces where the decisions that guide a political community are made. These decisions are made by the politicians who are in power, however, behind them there is a long process of study and dissemination of knowledge to support those decisions, as well as recommendations of various actors who act in the political sphere. Among these

actors there are experts, which means that they have some kind of “academic or professional knowledge” (Christensen, 2021: 3). These experts are capable of giving advice based on evidence, which is usually oriented towards problem-solving (Christensen, 2021). Following this idea, we could assume that experts in the political area can act as mediators between expert knowledge and politics, as think tanks are recognized with authority and legitimacy due to their academic and professional focus on policy analysis. These organizations often have experts and academics who lend credibility to their research and recommendations in their role as mediators, so their authority is reinforced by their ability to produce detailed reports and specialized analyses (Brans et al., 2017).

Experts produce knowledge, but the production of this scientific or expert knowledge depends on what are called “knowledge regimes”, which refer to the structures and dynamics that determine how knowledge is produced, distributed and used in a society; they include factors such as educational policies, research systems, funding, key actors (e.g. universities, think tanks, companies), and the dominant knowledge culture (Cairney, 2016). In this sense, a knowledge regime can cause trends or affect the way knowledge is produced. Each regime is influenced by the political and economic institutions of its environment, which determines its specific functioning and organization.

There is a typology of knowledge regimes proposed by Campbell et al. (2008) where political economies play a key role. These regimes are classified by whether they are market-oriented, consensus-oriented, policy-moderated, or statist-technocratic. There is another proposal from Campbell et al. (2008) as well, where they propose three other levels of classification for knowledge regimes: the highly competitive, the statist, and the coordinated one. With them, it could be possible to classify different methods of production and dissemination of ideas that influence the formulation of public policies. Taking this into account can help us determine the way a think tank or organization, that is dedicated to the production of knowledge and ideas, is organized and acts.

In the case of Spain (where the CIDOB Foundation is established), its political-economic context has tendencies towards knowledge regimes moderated by politics, and we can see this with the inheritance of a centralized state bureaucracy despite having autonomous communities, and a tradition of seeing politicians as all-powerful beings who do not accept the mistakes they make (Terrasa, 2015). If we take into account the first classification proposed by Campbell et al. (2008), Spain would correspond to a knowledge regime moderated by politics, giving instead a competitive and possibly partisan knowledge production process. On the one hand, the political nature of the Spanish knowledge regime

significantly influences the way in which think tanks can exert their influence on public policy decisions. This political character is determined by the structure and dynamics of the Spanish political system, power relations, political culture and the role of non-governmental actors in policy formulation. For example, Spanish political plurality and fragmentation are key elements, since we have multiple political parties and coalitions. This implies that experts must navigate an environment with diverse interests and political priorities. On the other hand, another determining aspect in Spain is personal networks and social capital, since personal relationships and networks of trust play a crucial role in politics. Experts must develop and maintain these networks to be influential, and to do so they must establish connections with policy makers.

The phenomenon of think tanks is closely linked to expert knowledge, since after all, they are organizations made up of experts on specific topics to be able to carry out analyzes and studies that are as detailed, concrete and objective as possible. Think tanks act as policy knowledge mediators, research centers and sources of new ideas, and that is why they facilitate the exchange of information between academics, policy makers and civil society (Halpin, 2017). These experts, as researchers, are able to convert theories and data from various disciplines into ideas and recommendations tailored to the needs of decision makers; As innovators, they expand perspectives and opportunities in the policy field (CIPE, 2020).

The action carried out by think tanks has repercussions at the political level and, consequently, at the social level, since when it comes to making decisions, politicians, who govern and represent us, provide themselves with groups of experts and actors specialized in certain areas of work and research, which provide specialized advice that seeks the result which can have the best impact, and benefit society as a whole. It is for this reason that think tanks are a crucial actor in the political process when it comes to making informed decisions on certain issues, and for this reason, they are the type of actor on which we are going to focus to carry out this study.

The Concept of Think Tank and Their Purpose

In this subsection, it is analyzed what makes up a think tank, the challenges and obstacles they may face and key elements.

“Think tanks are research, analysis, and engagement institutions that generate policy advice on domestic and international issues enabling both, policymakers and the public at large, to

make informed decisions” (Rich, 2011: 8). Halpin (2017) offers a similar idea as he defines think tanks as independent, non-profit organizations that conduct and disseminate research, ideas, and knowledge, basing recommendations and opinions on them to gain support and influence in the policy-making process. They play a crucial role in society by providing specialized research and analysis that informs and enriches the political decision-making process. Its work contributes to transparency and rationality in policy formulation by offering objective data and recommendations based on expert evidence. Furthermore, they also play a role as intermediaries between government, society, and experts, facilitating communication and collaboration to address complex challenges. Finally, it can also be said that think tanks promote the development of society at a political and economic level by proposing innovative solutions or effective strategies for solving problems, in addition to encouraging informed debate, thus promoting social awareness (Rich, 2004).

Think tanks are organizations that conduct research on public policies and seek to influence the formation of these policies by promoting their ideas (Hauck, 2017). Nevertheless, there are some challenges that could be faced when measuring the impact of think tanks on public policy formulation. This is due to various factors, such as an extensive and complex policy formulation process, which in turn, involves various actors along with it; this makes that, in the end, attributing specific changes to one actor or a group is not an easy task (Weidenbaum, 2010). Rich (2004) mentions that think tanks depend largely on what they produce, that is, on the experience and knowledge they can provide as advisors or consultants in the formulation of public policies, and on the ideas they can contribute, in this sense, McNutt and Marchildon (2009) mention that it is important to consider a series of aspects that can affect think tanks' influence, as these two elements are related to the quality and objectivity of their research, which must have relevance concerning the needs and challenges of the context in which society finds itself. The importance on this is attributed to the intensification of competition, making essential to be able to ensure the scientific rigor of their research.

In addition to these challenges when it comes to verifying the influence capacity of think tanks, these groups of experts can face several obstacles that can arise when carrying out their activity. If we remember the knowledge gap between think tanks and their influence on public policy decisions, which has been mentioned in the introduction of this study, it is complex and multifaceted. Here I highlight four key aspects that could be an obstacle when it comes to influencing decision-making. First, access to information can be restricted by subscriptions to think tank publications, which hinders the dissemination of knowledge and harms both policymakers that support their decisions with the knowledge published by think

tanks, and think tanks themselves since they do not reach their maximum audience capacity due to the obstacles that they themselves put up. Second the applicability and realism of the recommendations are crucial, since reports that are theoretically sound but impractical in specific contexts are not useful (Françoise et al., 2022). Third, credibility and recognition of a think tank also play a vital role; well-established think tanks have an advantage over new ones because of their prior relationships and trust with policymakers. Special interests, such as interest group pressure or electoral considerations, can interfere with the implementation of evidence-based recommendations (Acop, 2021). Last, the communication and persuasive skills of think tanks are essential to capture the attention of decision makers and achieve effective influence (Esparcia et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, and added to the above, it is also important to know that the activity and influence of think tanks can have some limitations or be uneven, as many depend on their ability to align with the various political agendas of the moment (Menegazzi, 2018). It is believed that think tanks act within the system of an informal political advisory process (Pautz, 2011). These process may vary due to the changing environment in which the contemporary world finds itself, causing think tanks to be actors capable of adapting to the changes that occur in society. Therefore, think tanks face another limitation when pursuing influence, which is a constant changing environment. In that sence, think tanks can serve as advisors in a way that they carry out their work strategically, identifying trends in society and ways of approaching emerging problems, anticipating future problems, and providing different ways to address them, as well as offering advice based on scientific evidence, ensuring the quality of their recommendations and contributing to debate and policy formulation in the public sphere (Halpin, 2017). This means that think tanks must adapt to a complex and competitive political environment, maintaining the integrity and credibility of their activity (Hauck, 2017).

The importance ideas have when actors, such as think tanks, want to influence a policy or implement a political change must be highlighted. These ideas are mainly born within expertise or epistemic communities (Christensen, 2021) and if they fit within the political goals of the political principals or the interests of society, then they start to circulate among other actors in the political sphere, gaining relevance and even having the capability to influence political decisions. However, without coordination of actors that allow their correct dissemination, ideas may not reach the target audience and may not achieve all the importance and relevance they deserve. So, following this line, and to conclude this subsection, I highlight as a key element to take into account as well, the coordination of various actors, like stakeholders, political principals, political parties, think tanks, public

institutions, and organizations, in all political processes, such as the definition and implementation of a new public policy (Haelg et al., 2019). These actors can pursue opposing or related interests, forming coalitions and creating debates in the public sphere, thus disseminating their ideas and delimiting conceptual frameworks (Rich, 2004).

Strategies Think Tanks use to pursue their goals

If the three basic elements of influence are taken into account, which are the actor, the actor's preferences, and the political decision to influence (Bakken et al., 2024), we can now deep further into what strategies could think tanks use in order to exert some kind of influence in a political process. In this subsection, I am going to discuss four different types of strategies that think tanks may use in order to exert influence on a political process, perspectives on certain topics or problems, or decision-making, to name a few examples. Think tanks use these strategies because they are actors that are in constant competition with each other, so that they must focus on the promotion of ideas to attract relevant political actors and gain visibility. To gain visibility, think tanks seek to convey their ideas to the political actors of a government (Rich, 2004), whether through the media, meetings, events, or training seminars (Barberà & Moreno, 2011), and advocate for changes in public policies (Campbell et al., 2015). In that sense, firstly I am going to talk about the importance the media have as a way to exert influence, secondly I discuss the phenomenon of networking, thirdly I explain the role of think tanks as mediators, finally I talk about think tanks being close to government actors.

Think Tanks and the Media

Think tanks, like other agents in the political and communications field, have occupied their space on the web. On the other hand, the media have done the same, so that traditional media (press, radio, television) make these communications always available to their users on a global scale (Vallès & Martí I Puig, 2015). The possibility of having any news at our fingertips in a single click means that think tanks want and must have very close contact with the media, since in a way, they are their bridge to the target audience. Some think tanks seek to relate and establish communication channels with the media (Halpin, 2017) because many of them have gained political and communicative relevance by actively participating in leading newspapers, organizing events, and presenting specialized studies and analyses. Their presence in the media gives them a platform to influence public opinion, becoming key actors in public debates by establishing themselves as sources of knowledge and expertise in specific areas, and managing to position themselves as references in the generation of ideas and proposals (Esparcia et al., 2017).

When credibility and reputation are achieved, a think tank should be able to stand out and communicate its findings to political communities and society in general, promoting its work and recommendations through various channels (whether with publications on digital platforms, communicating with the media, or in events). The ability of think tanks to promote ideas and persuade decision-makers can lead to the adoption of certain policies over others; especially when they manage to establish themselves as reliable sources of information and advice. Nevertheless, Hauck (2017) and Halpin (2017) also mention that this influence can pose a possible lack of neutrality in its policy recommendations due to the need to adapt to the political agenda.

Apart from what was mentioned above, think tanks can use three specific strategies with the media: the creation of a discursive barrier, and the framing of problems, which lead to a homogenization of what is discussed in political debates. The strategy of framing ideas and the use of a “discursive barrier”, which as Pautz (2020) presents, implies the establishment of an argumentation framework that supports the ideals or political agenda that is defended. With this resource, certain ideas can be legitimized, thus influencing the perception that may be had of them. This strategy also allows to highlight what is interesting about an idea or political agenda, leaving out of the “discursive barrier” those ideas that do not want to be presented or that do not follow the established discursive line. Øvald et al. (2024) also present a similar idea under the idea of the “framing theory”, which consists of framing a problem that is presented in a specific way, thus ensuring that its interpretation is as the person wishes using this strategy, communicating ideas persuasively.

The idea that is presented by Sirvent and Monzó (2021), called “strategies for diversification and amplification of messages in various media” is a great way to analyze the phenomenon of think tanks with the media further. The main idea is that there is a common quest to create certain homogeneity in the debates that are created on information platforms. The key to this strategy is the dissemination of a specific type of message, so that the recipients assimilate the idea, since it is what they hear in the news, and do not question it, since the media have relationships with think tanks considering them reliable sources of information, due to their expertise and specialization in specific topics, which supports the legitimacy of the media (Sirvent & Monzó, 2021).

*This idea leads us to **Hypothesis 1**: The CIDOB Foundation achieves influence through active media action.*

Think Tanks and the importance of networking

The importance of networking is highlighted by many authors. According to Bakken (2024), due to the connections an organization has with other actors, its analyzes and recommendations are frequently used by public policy makers, since having contacts with different institutions can legitimize the institution and transmits security in the content produced. Furthermore, to understand and measure the impact of think tanks on political decision-making, it is crucial to analyze their interactions on social networks, where information is often shared and connections are established (Tchubykalo et al., 2019). By maintaining an extensive collaboration network with other institutions, think tanks and universities worldwide are allowed to access a wide range of sources and perspectives, enriching its analyzes and allowing for a more complete and nuanced view of the topic they study (Weible et al., 2011); it also allows think tanks to establish advisory ties with governments, or organizations that deal with topics in which think tanks are specialized. In this sense, the work carried out by think tanks would not only be limited to intellectual production, but rather also seek to promote political entrepreneurship in the market of ideas (Hauck, 2017).

Lerner (2018) also mentions the importance of being connected since the benefits it brings are considerable, including sharing information, the possibility of collaborating in research, sharing or accessing resources when carrying out a study or research that individually they could not have access to, discuss the development of their ideas, and even also sharing risks (Chen et al., 2020), an aspect that may condition some actors to decide or not to take action. With all the networking that has been done by think tanks, as it is stated in the paragraphs above, many think tanks can end up claiming their legitimacy, as most of them have a great capacity to promote transparency and accountability since the product they offer is objective and neutral information, based on scientific and expert knowledge, and they claim to analyze the data in an impartial manner (Pautz, 2020). Through social networks, the diversity of opinions and the quality of the information they disseminate can be evaluated, thus determining its credibility and relevance in the public debate.

As I mentioned before, think tanks are organizations that must adapt to changes in the environment to survive. This adaptation entails interaction, allowing the different actors to know the preferences of the population. Interaction will help them create coalitions with groups of like-minded political actors, creating a “speech coalition” (Pautz, 2011), which, the more relevance it gains, the likelihood of influencing the political agenda will increase. This strategy is about coalition-building, as the different actors that participate in a policy process

can lead to coalition formation or coordinations, which are created to gain more power and influence during the policy-making process, ending up shaping the interactions between them and the roles they may assume in the decision-making process (Bakken, 2024). Think tank networks coordinate their actions at a global level, establishing joint action, thus acting as an anchor for the rest (Sirvent & Monzó, 2021). This coordination is based on the establishment of solid relationships between the different think tanks, and it also facilitates a homogeneous discourse between the various interest groups, leading to greater media dissemination, thus also contributing to public debate and the development of opinions.

Escribano et al. (2009) also mention the advantages of establishing collaboration networks with other actors and organizations, since it can be a gateway to access a wide range of knowledge and learning to manage the flow of external and relevant information in their research and analysis through collaboration and active participation in academic events. In that sense, collaboration in research is also called by Tikanmäki and Ruoslahti (2023) “knowledge co-creation”, which consists of the active collaboration of multiple interested parties in the generation of new knowledge or innovative solutions. In addition, it allows think tanks to present their ideas, and it, which can be considered an influence strategy as well. Finally, for this co-creation of knowledge to be successful, it takes time and effort on the part of all the parts; in this regard, Chen et al. (2020) introduce the topic of cognitive, institutional, and social proximity between organizations. The first refers to the similarity in the knowledge base that the organizations have; the second is the rules and values that each organization has, which can be shared with other entities with which they collaborate. The third proximity refers to mutual trust, and the ease of cooperating, so that relationships emerge fluidly.

*The paragraphs above leads us to **Hypothesis 2**: The CIDOB Foundation achieves influence through the interaction with many different actors.*

Think Tanks as mediators

Policy experts, including think tanks, focus on translating academic research into concrete recommendations and actions for policy decision-making (Santana-Acuña & Coller, 2013). Think tanks act as intermediaries between academia, government, and civil society by providing objective, evidence-based information to improve decision-making, offering unbiased analysis and diverse perspectives on issues of public interest (Campbell et al., 2015). Its goal is to influence public policies and the political agenda through the generation of applicable and relevant knowledge for decision-makers; due to this goal, Santana-Acuña

and Coller (2013) state that policy experts are more action-oriented and the implementation of practical solutions to social or political problems.

In addition to this, think tanks, in their role as mediators, must have the “absorption capacity”, that is the ability to identify, assimilate, and effectively use external knowledge (Escribano et al., 2009). So the more capable a think tank is of absorbing and managing the knowledge that comes to it from outside the organization, the more effective its recommendations and reports will be. Another advantage that can be deduced from this theory is the think tank's ability to adapt to the environment and assimilate the new information that comes to it in order to manage it effectively.

This role as mediators arises from a necessity, since the formulation of public policies based on expert knowledge can lead to confusion in the understanding of the ideas, as they can be too technical (Françoise et al., 2022). Conflicts could also arise when discussing the perspectives to address a problem, making it difficult to reach consensus and move forward with a proposal (Head, 2015). This is why think tanks can be of great help by promoting the use of scientific knowledge in policy formulation, providing a solid and understandable knowledge base that, consequently, can increase the legitimacy of the decisions made by political actors.

Nevertheless, there is a problem that can arise when think tanks act as mediators, which is maintaining objectivity and leaving aside the possible ideological influence of the political parties with which they work. This can be an obstacle that is sometimes difficult to overcome because most of these academic units depend on public funding and some of them are linked to political parties (Acop, 2021), so they may feel pressure to focus their recommendations based on the objectives of certain political agendas.

*This idea leads us to **Hypothesis 3**: The CIDOB Foundation achieves influence when it has a role as a “mediator”.*

The importance of think tanks being close to the government

The relationships between think tanks and the government are complex and multifaceted (Tchubykalo et al., 2019). Think tanks act as providers of research and advice, offering specialized analysis and recommendations to address political, economic, and social challenges (Rich, 2011). This is because, governments often turn to think tanks to obtain objective and neutral expert information to support informed decision-making, in addition to

playing an important role in the evaluation of government programs and policy formulation, acting as external evaluators and constructive critics (Rich, 2011). With this, think tanks can influence government decisions through writing policy reports, publishing opinion articles in the media (Halpin, 2017).

Lerner (2018) also mentions the importance of think tanks being close to political actors in the government, since direct interaction with them, especially in government institutional buildings, gives them the opportunity to present their ideas, studies, and research, as well as the proposal of ideas and recommendations regarding policies that are being discussed that day. Furthermore, this direct interaction increases the likelihood that what was discussed during the conversation will be taken into account (Lerner, 2018). However, there is a negative aspect to consider when think tanks work closely with the political elite, and it is that, in certain circumstances, think tanks can end up being the ones influenced, biasing their reports ideologically, which can raise questions about the objectivity of its analyzes and general recommendations (Brans et al., 2017, Hauck, 2017).

In Spain, the influence activity carried out by think tanks is mainly carried out “face to face”, that is, the most prominent members of a think tank meet in person with the main politicians who are interested in influencing, formally or informally (Barberà & Moreno, 2011); during these talks, the main goal is to be able to frame the ideas that both actors or groups of actors have within the same framework so that agreements that benefit both parties can be reached.

*This idea leads us to **Hypothesis 4**: The CIDOB Foundation achieves influence through close contact with members of the government.*

3. Research Design

The research design constitutes an essential part of this study since it establishes the methodological framework through which the data necessary to answer the proposed research questions will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted. The purpose of this section is to provide a detailed description of the methods and strategies that will be used to ensure the validity and reliability of the results obtained.

The research question that this thesis addresses is: *through what practices does the CIDOB Center influence the formulation of public policies regarding the War in Ukraine?* To carry out the study, I will be focusing on the activity that the think tank CIDOB Center has carried on regarding the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Specifically, I will focus on the events that took place from February 2022 to the present, since it is since then that the evolution of the war has appeared in the media more frequently, and more importance is given to the conflict at the media level.

The analysis will be divided into two parts, since the research design will be a mixed method. The first part is going to be a quantitative analysis, in which I will focus on mapping what activity the CIDOB Foundation has carried out in relation to the war in Ukraine, as well as present the actors or organizations with which it has collaborated. The second part of the analysis will be a qualitative study. This qualitative part will consist of an interview with a senior research associate from the CIDOB Center, an analysis of two events carried out by the CIDOB Foundation, both of which deal with the second year of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and a subsequent comparison referring to publications issued by the think tank..

This study will adopt a deductive and explanatory approach. The deductive approach will allow us to start from previously established general theories and concepts to analyze and understand specific phenomena within the area of study. At the same time, an explanatory method will be used in order to unravel the underlying causes and relationships between the variables examined. This combined approach will allow to provide a deeper and detailed understanding of the mechanisms the CIDOB Center may use in order to exert influence.

Case selection

The CIDOB Foundation presents itself as: “an international affairs research center that, through excellence and relevance, seeks to analyze the global issues that affect political, social, and governance dynamics, from the international to the local” (CIDOB, 2024). It is a

Spanish think tank recognized for its specialization in international relations and foreign policy. The Foundation stands out for its active participation in the generation of content and analysis in the media, positioning itself as a reference in international issues. Its presence in leading Spanish newspapers demonstrates its relevance and recognition in the field of international relations (Esparcia et al., 2017). Therefore, this think tank has managed to establish itself as a key actor in the public debate by providing expertise and analysis on global issues, as well as contributing to opinion formation and the understanding of international issues relevant to Spanish society.

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine began at the end of 2013, but resumed its action significantly on February 24, 2022, alarming the European Union and other countries. The Russian invasion has created complex challenges that require strategic and well-informed responses. To achieve this, many governments turn to expert advice to make effective and sustainable decisions, who provide specialized knowledge, rigorous research, offer innovative solutions and objective perspectives, identify potential risks and anticipate future trends (centreforpublicimpact, 2024). It is for all this that this conflict is an appropriate topic to study the role of think tanks and the influence they can exert on political processes of decision-making. In this sense, this study will be carried out focusing on key years of 2022, 2023, and 2024 to determine the frequency with which the CIDOB Foundation carries out any activity, or publishes information or reports, on the specific topic of the war conflict between Ukraine and Russia.

As indicated before, the analysis is composed of a quantitative part and a qualitative part. For the quantitative part, a first search will be carried out using the search engine incorporated into the website. The keyword "Ucraïna" (Ukraine) in Catalan will be entered into this search engine; then a series of entrances will appear with which the results obtained will be classified in a table by categories. In this case, the table will consist of five columns, which are the section of the website in which the entry is located, the subsection or the main topic that the entry deals with, and the total number of entries in that subsection, depending on the year of its publication on the website, which could be the year 2022, 2023 or 2024, will be specified. In addition to this, the table will also consist of twenty rows; in the last row, the total number of entries that have been included in the table for each year will be found. After the table, I will add a graph to make the interpretation of the results easier and more visual; and differentiated by year, I will add the specific press with which CIDOB had contact that year.

In this search, there could be the case where the relationship of the published article or entry to the conflict in Ukraine is not clear because nothing related to the conflict is read in the headline or the first paragraphs; for that, the Windows command "ctrl + F" will be used, and the keyword "Ucraina" will be searched again. If no results appear, the entry will be ignored. If a result appears, the paragraph containing the keyword will be specifically read; if the information is relevant and develops the topic of study, it will be included in the analysis; if it only mentions conflict as a factor of the current global situation, will not be included in the analysis.

On the other hand, and also in this first quantitative part of the study, a classification will be made of the types of actors that participate in the activities and publications carried out by the think tank; I will also include in this section the Institutes with which the CIDOB has done any collaboration or research together. This information will be extracted from the analysis of the activities carried out by CIDOB regarding the war in Ukraine. In these activities, the list of actors included will be analysed and noted down to later make the table. In this case, the table will be organized in three columns. In the first column, the actor's sector will be specified, which could be a political, academic, economic or social institution, the media or a research center, and it will be organized in rows. In the second column, I will specify the type of actor. In the third column, the institution or the center that the actor represents will be concreted. After the table, I will add a graph to make the interpretation of the results easier and more visual. And finally, the research institutes with which the think tank has collaborated to carry out a project will be added.

The second part of the analysis will be a qualitative study. For this part, a more detailed analysis will be made of two activities that have been carried out in February of this year 2024, on the occasion of the second year of war in Ukraine. Both events can be analysed because they were recorded and broadcast live on the CIDOB YouTube channel, so they are available for viewing by the general public. One of the two events is "Cycle "What's happening in the world?" Year II, Ukraine continues fighting", where two Ukrainian guests participate in it and discuss the current situation after two years of war in Ukraine due to the Russian invasion. The event was mediated by Carmen Claudín, a senior associate researcher at CIDOB and an expert on the topic. The other activity is a "Dialogue with Minister José Manuel Albares, "Two years of war in Ukraine and the future of Europe""; in this case, the guest is the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, and he gives the conference together with the director of CIDOB, Pol Morillas. Both activities deal with the same topic, but have different guests.

In order to make the analysis and comparison more complete, I will also select and read three articles published by CIDOB from the International Notes section and look for correlations between what the guests at the events mention and the content of the publications. The three articles are "War in Ukraine: peace-talking versus peace-making" by Mikola Riabchuk, "What role should southern Europe play after the pandemic and the war in Ukraine?" by Pol Morillas, and "The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the day after the war: a view from southern Europe" by Héctor Sánchez. These articles will only be mentioned in the analysis and will not be analyzed separately or in more detail, since the purpose of using them in this research study is to find out if the guests of CIDOB refer to what the think tank produces in their speeches.

In addition to the analysis of the two activities, I am going to carry out an online interview with Carmen Claudín, a senior research associate at CIDOB. She is a member of the Advisory Board of the Regional Office for Cooperation and Peace in Europe (ROCPE) and her main areas of interest are the domestic and foreign policy of Russia and Ukraine, conflicts in the post-Soviet space and reform processes in post-Soviet societies (CIDOB, 2024). In the interview I will ask how CIDOB is organized when working, what its priorities are as a think tank, and what preferences does the think tank have regarding the strategies mentioned in the literature review.

Operationalization

When measuring the scope of the concepts used in this study, several aspects must be taken into account. For the purpose of this study, the CIDOB Center will be considered relevant and important in its field if it collaborates with, works with or is related to other think tanks, research centres or institutes both in Spain and around Europe, as well as if it carries out activities or collaborates with politicians from Spain and other politicians around Europe. This will confirm its legitimacy as a think tank in the field, and it could also be an aspect to take into account when referring to strategy 2 of Chapter 2, which highlights the importance of networking.

Regarding the concept of influence, it must be noted that it is an extremely difficult concept to measure in the political sphere as it requires to take into account many aspects, such as the pressure of particular interests, communication and persuasive skills, the ability to design and execute effective influence strategies that manage to capture the attention of decision makers, the relevance and scope of the think tank, the importance of being able to communicate their findings and recommendations in a way that is clear, persuasive, and

accessible to policymakers (Esparcia et al., 2017), the influence other actors in the political sphere can exert, and the constant competition between knowledge production centres, to mention some examples. This aspects can determine the influence of think tanks in policy formulation processes, as well as the fact that political interests may not align with the evidence-based recommendations of think tanks, fact that could not allow the influence to take place (Acop, 2021).

In this research, conclusions could be drawn about CIDOB's capabilities as a think tank by analysing, on the one hand, the tables and graphics from the quantitative part, which will allow to analyse which actors and media it interacts with, as well as the frequency with which they carry out some type of activity, whether it be publications, seminars, conferences, or press conferences, among others. On the other hand, in the qualitative part of the analysis, the preferences of the think tank when having to choose strategies, and its influence could be analysed by looking at what is mentioned during the interview with Carmen Caludín, and as well as looking for similarities between what the guests mention during the event, and CIDOB's publications on the specific subject of this study. Now I am going to mention more specifically the operationalization of the study in parts.

Starting with the analysis of the tables in the quantitative section, the dimensions that will be analysed are, firstly, and referring to the first table, the number of entries and publications regarding the war in Ukraine; with this it could be deduced which section CIDOB gives more importance to when dealing with conflicts on an international scale and whether it is related to any strategy mentioned in the literature review, such as acting as mediators when working with expert knowledge, a strategy mentioned in Chapter 2. On the one hand, by comparing the three years, it will be possible to see whether the course of the war during these years has maintained the same attention or whether it has decreased or increased over time.

In the analysis of the second table, it will be analysed which type of actor CIDOB tends to relate to more and which less. This analysis could reveal whether this think tank prefers to interact with other institutions dedicated to the production of knowledge (this refers to the strategy of networking mentioned in Chapter 2) or whether it prefers to interact directly with government actors (referring to strategy 4, mentioned in Chapter 2, that is being close to government actors). In addition, it will also be possible to observe the importance that the think tank gives to interacting with the press, first strategy mentioned. Thus, with this second table, information could also be extracted about the strategies that CIDOB uses as a think tank to exert influence.

On the other side, an attempt will also be made to establish a relationship of influence through the qualitative analysis of a detailed and thoroughly studied content of the two videos dealing with the second year of war in Ukraine. First, the two videos will be watched separately, noting important points that are mentioned; this should allow me to analyse the role that the think tank adopts when dealing with actors external to the center and whether the role or influence of the CIDOB Center is explicitly mentioned by the guests. On the other hand, I will also try to establish whether there is any connection between what the guests of both events say and what the CIDOB publications say regarding the war in Ukraine. To do so, after analysing the videos, I will read three CIDOB articles from the International Notes section that deal with the subject of Ukraine and that deal with specific topics similar to those discussed at the events, so that if there are similarities, it will be easier to detect them.

Once the videos have been analyzed, a comparison will be made of what is obtained from the analysis of the two videos and the points of view that they share, as well as those with which they differ the most, will be sought. This will allow to see if there was any influence, or at least, similarities in their speech, since, as mentioned before, the guests in the first video are two Ukrainians, and the second video, which was a few days after the first conference, is attended by the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs. Continuing with the analysis of the videos, and as mentioned before, I will look for any references made to the publications from the section "International Notes" by CIDOB regarding the war in Ukraine, since this section is dedicated to making general recommendations on political approaches.

Finally, in the case of the interview, the main idea is to extract additional information about how CIDOB works, what its priorities are as a think tank, what are its preferred methodologies when it comes to interacting with external actors or wanting to exert influence and with whom you aspire to interact more. The main purpose of the interview is to help to get a better sense of the processes the think tank follows, in addition to having first-hand information and corroborating what is said on the web about the think tank.

Discussion of threats to reliability and validity

Before doing the research, I must highlight the complexity of this study due to the difficulty of measuring and examining the concept of influence, as it can be measured and classified to different degrees. The requirements that I have proposed above to measure influence are my proposal, subsequently deduced through extensive reading on the subject. However, there is much more literature and theory that could be taken into account but it has not been included in this research, nor has it been possible to study it due to the time limitations when

carrying out this research. That is why in this study I will only consider the literature mentioned in the second chapter and nothing beyond, and for this same reason, the results may not be completely supported if other sources of information and knowledge were taken into account.

Another limitation to bear in mind is that only one think tank is analysed, so it would not be advisable to make generalisations of think tanks activity or influence from the conclusions drawn from this work. However, it could be used as a specific case or example to carry out more extensive and complex analyses or to make comparative analyses. Furthermore, one should not generalise about the activity of CIDOB itself, as it is a think tank that is dedicated to a wide variety of topics, from the local to the international level. The topic of war in Ukraine is a very specific one within the diversity of research and work carried out by CIDOB.

Regarding the topic of influence and expertise, it is important to mention that is a very broad one, with a lot of literature being developed in different sub-areas and with professionals who deal with the topic from their perspective. This limitation can be applied when referring to the interview with Carmen Claudín; interviewing only one person assumes their point of view, which is not known if it is biased or not. In the same way, this limitation applies to the people invited to the conference sessions in the videos analyzed. It must be clear that the opinions and perspectives of the people analyzed in this research study may be biased due to their environment or their job, so assuming something as true would not be advisable without first doing a detailed comparison and contrast with more information from other sources..

Finally, mention that it is also very important to take into account the possibility that think tanks can end up becoming the influenced actors during a policy formulation or political process, as they may end up adapting their recommendations to what governments want to hear in order to achieve legitimacy and relevance in their professional sphere.

4. Empirical Analysis

This chapter presents the empirical analysis with the main objective of examining the influence activity carried out by the CIDOB Foundation, using a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, as described in the previous chapter. This empirical analysis will provide a deeper and more informed understanding of the activity that the CIDOB Foundation carries on, contributing to academic discussion about think tanks and influence, and will offer possible ideas and recommendations for future studies.

First, the data and information sources used in this chapter have been selected following the selection criteria described in Chapter 3; with a first quantitative part, and a second qualitative part. Subsequently, the results obtained are presented and discussed, highlighting the main trends, relationships and patterns identified. Finally, interpretations of the findings are offered in the context of the theoretical framework and the research question proposed, considering the practical and theoretical implications.

The CIDOB Foundation

The CIDOB Foundation is an independent institution rooted in civil society, founded in 1973 by Josep Rivera i Pinyol in Barcelona (CIDOB, 2024). The Foundation is committed to maintaining high standards of excellence and rigor in its analyses, publications, and projects. Its primary goal is to serve as a valuable resource for society, ensuring open access to knowledge and fostering the examination of global issues impacting individuals' daily lives. Research innovation is a priority, involving the exploration of new avenues to stay abreast of ongoing social transformations (CIDOB, 2024). The Foundation explores the interplay between international and local dynamics, examining how the international shapes the local and vice versa. Its publications and activities are organized by thematic relevance, focusing on aspects of the international agenda that generate significant interest in Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain, and Europe. It also actively seeks to engage diverse social actors, expand its audience, and establish connections with public institutions and civil society.

The overarching objective is to maintain its position as a leading European and international center for the study of global politics, serving as both, a focal point, and a global window. In order to achieve its purpose, the CIDOB uses strategies such as active participation in the media, where it shares analysis and opinions as an expert in international relations and foreign policy. In addition, it organizes events, conferences, and research presentations to interact directly with key decision-making actors, allowing it to influence the political agenda and policy formulation (Esparcia et al., 2017). By establishing itself as a reliable source of

information and expertise on international issues, CIDOB gains legitimacy and credibility, which facilitates its impact on public opinion and government decision-making processes.

The CIDOB Foundation has an excellent capacity for communication and dissemination of its work through various media, including conferences, seminars, and digital platforms. This capability ensures that its analyses reach a broad and diverse audience, fostering greater understanding and discussion of the conflict. Its function is not only limited to the analysis of conflicts, but also focuses on the search for solutions and peace policies (UB, 2017). This approach is particularly relevant in the context of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, where the search for diplomatic and peaceful solutions is essential. This think tank also organizes and participates in numerous events that encourage dialogue and debate on crucial issues on the global agenda (CIDOB, 2024). These initiatives are vital to promote a deeper understanding and collaborative solutions to the conflict it is explored in this study. It must also be added that the CIDOB Foundation is located in Barcelona, a city where the Parliament of Catalonia is also established, and therefore, where important political decisions are made that concern this autonomous community from Spain.

If we focus on the previous definitions of a think tank, in Chapter 2, the CIDOB Foundation similarly defines itself as a research center in international relations, whose main objective is “the analysis of global issues that affect political and social dynamics, and governance” (CIDOB, 2024). With this objective and through its web platform, and collaboration with other actors, this think tank ensures that said research and knowledge are brought closer to the entire public, highlighting the importance of having an informed society. The ultimate purpose of the research and studies they carry out is to issue objective and informed recommendations, supported by expert evidence, to the public and political institutions, thus managing to influence, with these recommendations, the decision-making of political principals in the area of public policies (CIDOB, 2024). The Foundation explores the interplay between international and local dynamics, examining how they can affect each other politically, socially and economically. Their website is organized in a way that its publications and activities are organized by topics, focusing on aspects of the international agenda that generate significant interest.

CIDOB also has some institutional members, which meet twice a year. These institutional members are the Generalitat de Catalunya (Government of Catalonia), the Barcelona City Council, the Barcelona Provincial Council, the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, the Inter-University Council of Catalonia, and the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation; it also has some individual members, which between some of them, there are

directors or presidents of enterprises, university professors and commissioners (CIDOB, 2024). Finally, another crucial element of the Foundation are the “CIDOB’s Consulting Committees”. These committees allow direct or very close dealings with external experts in the area of study of interest (CIDOB, 2024), thus allowing the obtaining of scientific and expert information, which is key to later making coherent reports, giving the most appropriate recommendations appropriate to the situation, and establish themselves as a reliable source of information.

Part I - Quantitative analysis

In this section, the tables that classify the information collected, after reviewing the entries when searching for the topic of Ukraine on the CIDOB website, are presented. First, there is the table in which I organize the type of information from each entry according to the section and subsection found on the website. Second, there is the table in which the external actors to CIDOB, that participate in its activities, are organized. Additionally, after each table there is a graphic to help better understand the tables, and then, there is a discussion in which I develop and explain the results found.

Using the CIDOB web search engine (located on the main page of their website), one can filter a search by keywords and by year; in my case I first tried searching for "Ucraina" in the year 2021, and in that case, I got a total of 31 documents to analyze. On the other hand, doing the same search, but filtering it so that I get the results that concern the year 2022, I got a total of 271 entries (analysed in Table 1). This first comparison was to make sure that the CIDOB really investigated the invasion in Ukraine. In 2023, 155 documents were available to consult. In the current year, 2024, with these 5 months (as this search part is being carried out during the month of May 2024) that we have been in, there is a total of 49 documents to analyze. In Table 1 I present and classify the results found.

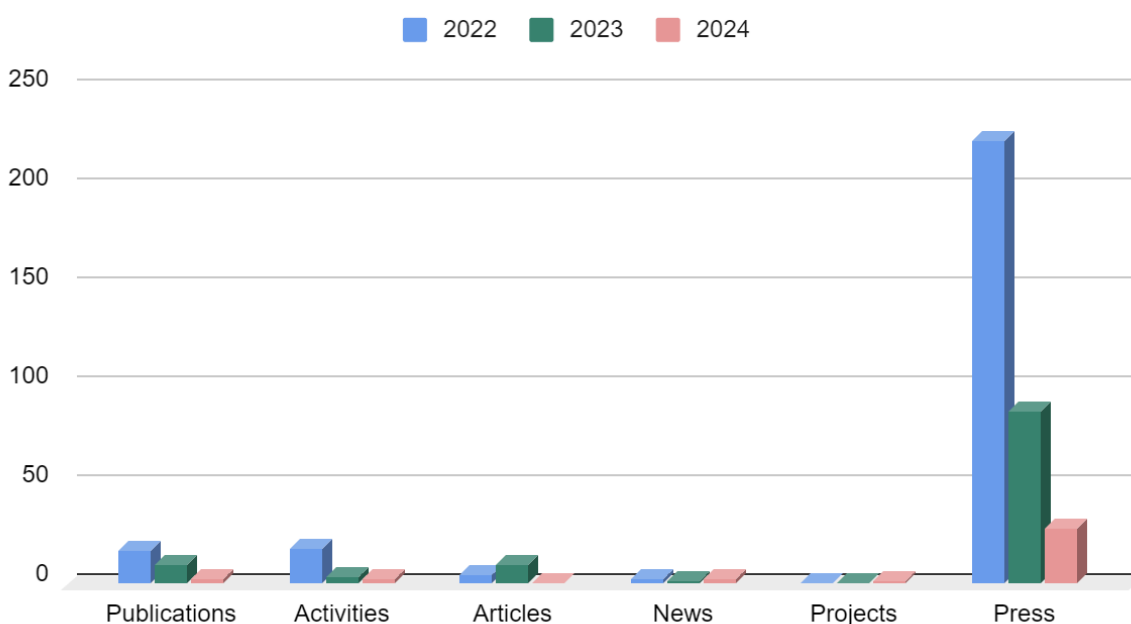
Table 1.

Web Section	Subsection	Number of publications 2022	Number of publications 2023	Number of publications 2024
Publications	CIDOB Opinion	13	4	1
	Monographs	1	0	0
	CIDOB	1	1	0

	International Yearbook			
	CIDOB briefing	1	1	1
	International Notes	1	3	0
	Project Papers	0	1	0
Activities	Europe	6	2	2
	Global Geopolitics and Security	5	2	0
	Asia-Pacific and Sub-Saharan Africa	2	0	0
	Latin America and the Atlantic Space	1	0	0
	Migrations	1	0	0
	CIDOB International Yearbook	3	0	0
Articles	CIDOB International Yearbook	3	10	0
	Monographs	2	0	0
News	CIDOB	1	0	0
	Migrations	1	0	0
	Europe	0	1	2
Projects		0	0	1
Press		224	87	28
Total valid entries		266	112	35

Graphic 1.

Number of entries depending on the section



Press data 2022:

Press data: Kyiv Post, El País, Cadena SER, Ara, Radio Euskadi, La 2, TV3, Catalunya Ràdio, RAC1, 324, El Punt Avui, Ràdio 4, Nació Digital, RTVE Catalunya, El Periódico, La República, La Sexta, Expansión, Berria, Europa Press, elDiario.es, 24h, RNE, Expreso, Antena 3, Huffington Post, Catalunya Informació, LLYC, El Tiempo, 20 minutos, RTVE.es, Cuatro, L'Avenç, La 1, El Mundo, El Independiente, Política Exterior, Revista 5W, Onda Cero, BBC Mundo, Negocios TV, Newtral, NIUS, La Vanguardia, TVG, Canal Sur, Levante, Historia en Primera Persona, ABC, Learn to check and À Punt.

Press data 2023:

Pres data: Nació Digital, ARA, RAC1, Diari de Barcelona, TV3, Onda Cero, À Punt, La 2, El Periódico, El Punt Avui, elMón, Nació Digital, 324, La Xarxa de TV Locals, La Vanguardia, Ràdio 4, Sàpiens, Barcelona Metropolis, Huffpost, ABC, El Independiente, elDiario.es, Cadena SER, Newtral, RTVE, La 1, El Nacional.cat, El Temps, Exterior, El País, Catalunya Ràdio, Esglobal, and elDiario.es.

Press data 2024:

Pres data: El Punt Avui, Ara, La Vanguardia, 324, RAC1, Política&Prosa, Nació Digital, Diari de Barcelona, TV3, Catalunya Informació, Catalunya Ràdio, El Periódico, Newtral, RTVE, La

República, La Ser, and El independiente.

If I focus first on the figures in Table 1, the following should be mentioned. After having reviewed the entries one by one, there is a total of 5 entries from the year 2022 that do not deal with the topic of the war in Ukraine, but rather only mention said war to give examples of the current situation in the world; in 2023 the same happens, as of the 155 entries that appear, there are actually 112 that really address the problem; once again, in 2024, not all entries on the list refer to Ukraine's conflict with Russia, as from 49 entries, just 35 dealt with the topic. Furthermore, with the resurgence of the war between Israel and Palestine, many articles make references to other conflicts worldwide without going into detail; all these entries are not included in Table 1.

First of all, if we look at the totals for each year, we can see how the focus on the conflict has been decreasing over time; this can be attributed to the fact that, first of all, in 2022 it was the most important event that would affect the world after the COVID-19 pandemic had passed, since citizens would experience price inflation in various important sectors, such as gas, or food. But as time went by, the war seemed to have no end, it was stagnating, and on the other hand, other conflicts arose in other parts of the world, such as the war between Israel and Palestine, changing the focus of attention.

However, just by looking at the figures, it is clear that CIDOB has dedicated its work to do research and develop the topic, especially in 2022. A part of that, if we look at Graphic 1 alone, we clearly see the importance that CIDOB places on working together with the press (the first strategy mentioned in Chapter 2) as the difference in values compared to the other sections of CIDOB is clear. If we make the comparison based on the values in Table 1, we see that the section with the most entries after the press (which has 224 in 2022) is, within the publications section, CIDOB Opinion, with 13 publications; that is a difference of 211 points, so the relevance of these figures should be clear when drawing conclusions.

Quantitative overview of the types of actors featured in the CIDOB events

In the following table (Table 2), I classify the actors with whom the Foundation has carried out some activity. This classification describes, first of all, the sector from which each actor comes from, then the type of actor with whom it is dealt is specified, and finally the organization, institution or company for which it works is detailed. This table and the

following graph (Graphic 2) will be key tool when knowing the relevance and preference of the sector within the actors with whom the CIDOB Foundation has dealt.

Table 2.

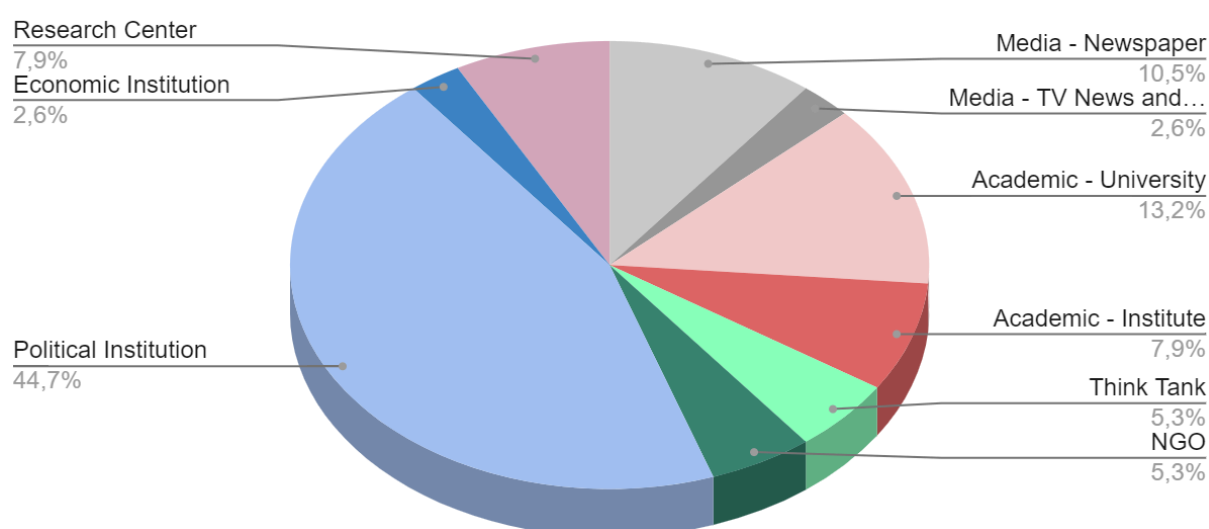
Sector	Type of Actor	Details
Media - Newspaper	International News Reporter	La Vanguardia
	Acting Director	Ukrainian Newspaper
	Journalist and Former Asia Correspondent	La Vanguardia
	News Reporter	La Vanguardia
Media - TV News and Radio	TV News Russia Correspondent	TV3 and Catalunya Ràdio
Academic - University	University Professor	Washington, DC
	University Professor	Autonomous University of Barcelona
	University Professor	University of Granada
	University Professor	University of Barcelona
	University Professor	CEU San Pablo University
Academic - Institute	Institute Director	GIGA Institute for Middle East Studies
	Institute Rector	Theology, Philosophy, and History Institute
	Senior Analyst	European Union Institute for Security Studies
Think Tank	Think Tank Member	Cercle d'Economia
	Institution Co-Founder	International Center for Ukrainian Victory
NGO	President Foundation	FundiPau
	Board Member	Anti-Corruption Action Center
Political Institution	European Commission Vice President	European Union Institute for Security Studies

	Observatory Director	China Policy Observatory
	Institution Director	Casa Asia
	Executive Director	Oxfam Brazil
	Executive Director	Oxfam Colombia
	President of Foreign Affairs Committee	European Parliament
	Representatives of Political Parties	European Parliament
	Vice President European Commission	European Union Institute for Security Studies
	Head of the Strategic Service of ICA	Metropolitan Area of Barcelona
	Director of Strategy and Foresight Unit	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, Spain
	Vice President of International Relations and Cooperation	Metropolitan Area of Barcelona
	Responsible for Big Data Analysis	BBVA Research Service
	Director of the International Area and Digital Metropolis	Metropolitan Area of Barcelona
	Director of the General Directorate of Trade	European Commission
	Head of the Deputi Unit for Mexico	General Directorate "International Alliances" of the European Commission
	International Business Developer	Chamber of Commerce of Barcelona
	Minister	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, Spain

Economic Institution	Director of International Economy and EMU	Bank of Spain
Research Center	Senior Economist	CIPE
	Senior Researcher	EsadeGeo
	Senior Economist	CaixaBank Research

Graphic 2.

Percentages of actors involved in some activity from CIDOB



Institutes that CIDOB collaborated with in projects: the French Institute of International Relations (Ifri), the Austrian Institute for International Affairs (OIIP), the Brandenburg Institute for Society and Security (BIGS), Egmont Institute in Belgium, the Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA), the Institute for European Politics (IEP), the Kolegium Europy Wschodniej (KEW) in Poland, and the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (SFPA).

In the case of this second classification, as can be seen when viewing the table, the section of the sector where the actors belonging to a political institution are located, outnumbers the rest of the sectors. They are followed, although in much smaller numbers, by the university academic sector, and in third place by the media (which used to be press conferences). It is important to clarify that information from the media and information from the press are different data. What is found in the classification in Table 1 is the number of times that

CIDOB has participated in a radio or television programme or has published one of its publications in a newspaper; on the other hand, in Table 2, what is analysed is whether someone from a media outlet has participated in an activity carried out by CIDOB.

The results of this table may help us to draw conclusions about CIDOB's preferences as a think tank when it comes to choosing which actors and sectors it prefers to engage with or have closer contact with. Despite this, two clear strategies mentioned in Chapter 2 can be seen: the importance of relating to other organizations and staying close to political actors.

Part II - Qualitative analysis

This section presents the qualitative analysis carried out to understand more in depth the relevance and influence that the CIDOB Foundation is able to exert. This approach complements the quantitative analysis and provides a more complete and detailed view of the overall study.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, first, I will analyse the information obtained in the interview with Ms. Carmen Claudín, senior associate researcher at CIDOB. The main purpose of the interview is to find out more about how CIDOB works and what its preferences are regarding working with actors outside the think tank or disseminating its ideas. After that, I am going to analyse two events that took place at the end of February 2024 carried out by the CIDOB Center. The analysis of the videos, "Cycle "What's happening in the world?" Year II, Ukraine continues fighting" and "Dialogue with Minister José Manuel Albares, "Two years of war in Ukraine and the future of Europe"", will consist of a brief summary of what they discuss, and a reference from the three articles in the International Notes section that are most closely related to the topics discussed at the events.

The articles selected for the comparison were: "War in Ukraine: peace-talking versus peace-making" by Mykola Riabchuk, "What role should Southern Europe play after the pandemic and the war in Ukraine? Towards a shared agenda for EU reform" by Pol Morillas, and "The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the day after the war: a view from Southern Europe" by Héctor Sánchez Margalef. This is because the topics that stood out the most at the events were the possibility of signing a peace treaty and how this war will end, secondly, the position that Europe has taken and how it is preparing for the future, and thirdly the different perspectives that the global population has on the conflict.

Analysis of the Interview with Carmen Claudín

Before starting the interview, I sent Ms. Claudín a brief document explaining my work, the purpose of the interview, and a script where I briefly explained what I would like to discuss in the interview. The interview took place on June 20, 2024; in it we discussed five main points: the working methodology that CIDOB most recommends, the audience to whom its publications and activities are directed, their preferred channel for disseminating their ideas, the type of publications that are the most highlighted to find recommendations directly from CIDOB, and last, the complexity of measuring influence. I present them below.

Firstly, the working methodology; a key point that can determine the success or failure of an organization. According to Carmen Claudín, CIDOB always encourages its researchers to get to know the field thoroughly, that is, not to just settle for what is available at the click of a button or in a book; researchers are encouraged to go into the field they are studying and find out first-hand what is really going on, and are also encouraged to meet directly with stakeholders. With this working methodology, researchers also establish contact with other actors and institutions, promoting and expanding the network of the researcher as a professional, as well as that of the center, benefiting both. Carrying out field research also allows the researcher to enrich his or her knowledge, allowing him or her to compare what is on paper with what happens in reality, and to contrast and verify information. In this case, Carmen gives the example of European Projects; these are important and useful because they require to have more than one partner from different countries. This allows networking at the European level and feeds off itself.

When asked about the target audience, Ms. Claudín stressed that as a think tank, it has the vocation to influence political and social decision-makers; however, CIDOB is also willing to be an open think tank, involved with society and the general public. This can be corroborated by seeing the activities, such as seminars, that are open to the public. Furthermore, in the activities organized by CIDOB, and open to the public in general, they try to have a mix of people from the political world. As a think tank that studies international affairs, their influence or activity is directed mainly to Spain, but not only, as the center tries to publish as much as possible in English with the purpose of to make known abroad the opinion that comes from a Spanish think tank, but this is achieved especially through their participation in international seminars.

The preferred channel for disseminating CIDOB's ideas are the press and their website. Preference between these two cannot be given, it has to be both because an institution like

CIDOB has to have its own publications that can be more or less varied. But then they have to use the press as well because those who read the written press do not always consult the CIDOB. Therefore, the written press has a much greater diffusion than the CIDOB can have. Furthermore, within the press, they have to work with each other and with various channels, as it would not contribute too much to work with only one newspaper, or a single group of readers. On the other hand, CIDOB is favourable to publish as much as possible, publishing, organizing all kinds of meetings, talking to audiovisual media, intervening in media, and meeting politicians as a mechanism of dissemination.

As for its publications and sections, the one that is most focused on issuing recommendations is "International Notes" which is primarily a series that publishes expert analysis in a journalistic style, which usually deals with current world events. Its objective is to provide ideas, reflections and recommendations, although the latter are not explicit, that help to better understand international issues of special interest and complexity. The "CIDOB Opinion" series of publications are short articles written by a CIDOB researcher or an external collaborator who is an expert on a topic of international relevance. As their name indicates, these articles represent an informed opinion on the topic addressed, and are useful to find out the opinion of the researchers who make up CIDOB as a think tank.

Finally, when we talked about the concept of influence, Ms. Claudin highlighted the difficulty of trying to measure such a concept. However, she was able to tell me the priorities of CIDOB as a think tank, where influence is clearly a factor to be taken into account. In terms of influence and levels, the priority to make their ideas known is Spain, and within Spain, the political decision-makers. It has to be highlighted that the people who have influence do not have to be politicians, as some of them are in between politics, business, and the media. So the organization tries establish contact and influence on these people, the media, and the general public, those who consume what the CIDOB produces. According to Carmen, it is very rare, in Spain, to have a direct relationship of influence within a think tank and a political actor. However, there are times where there are important international issues and political actors may want to establish contact with an expert, invite them to discussions, debates... this is mainly because they know the institution or think tank. Through this contacts and events, influence could be achieved, but it is a very difficult phenomenon to measure.

Analysis “Cycle “What's happening in the world?” Year II, Ukraine continues fighting”

The event took place on February 22, 2024, and was attended by two Ukrainian experts, Olena Halushka, co-founder of the International Center for Ukrainian Victory and board member of the Ukrainian NGO Anticorruption Action Center, and Anna Korbut, an expert on Ukrainian politics and the media sector. They both analysed the current situation in Ukraine as well as future prospects. The session was moderated by Carmen Claudín, senior research associate at CIDOB.

Firstly, the event highlights many aspects of the war and about Ukraine, between them, the desire and effort that Ukrainians are making to not give up and to continue fighting for their country, which is being attacked without any justification. The efforts that Ukraine is making once the integration processes to the European Union has begun, to continue improving as a democratic state, are also highlighted. These efforts are already beginning to show results because Ukraine has improved its Corruption Perceptions Index by 3 points after receiving EU candidacy status, even in the situation of war they are currently living. The experts state that a democratic Ukraine is a threat to Russia, because it proves that another Russia could be possible; this is one of the reasons they attribute for the ongoing war. In this regard, it is worth noting that what the experts emphasize throughout the conference is the need for Ukraine to win this war.

With what is mentioned in the previous paragraph, the question of the possibility of signing a peace agreement was raised, and the guests had a clear position. Russia will stop when they are stopped, but not with a peace agreement, since Russia does not conceive of peace, but rather victory against Ukraine. According to the guests, the only sustainable peace that can be achieved is first a Russian defeat. In this sense, this idea can be related to a very similar one published by CIDOB in its International Notes section, in a publication titled “War in Ukraine: peace-talking versus peace-making” which explicitly mentions that “The only way to make peace in Ukraine is to help Ukraine win” (Riabchuk, 2023:5).

Ukraine receives support from Europe and other Western countries such as the United States, but there is a widespread attitude in the West that Ukraine cannot win this war. The fatigue of the constant aid sent by the West to Ukraine is felt, and the support for Ukraine appears to be on the decline. In this case, citizens are called upon to remain united, to continue fighting and remain firm in the face of pressure from Russia. What is mentioned here, can similarly be found in another CIDOB publication, also within International Notes; in

this case the article is titled “What role should southern Europe play after the pandemic and the war in Ukraine? Towards a shared agenda for EU reform”. In that sense, the article highlights the importance of cooperation between European citizens as there is a convergence of interests regarding this war, such as the need to help Ukraine, and that together we are stronger (Morillas et al., 2022).

Finally, when the guests mentioned the future, the consequences of this war must be brought into focus. Ukraine's defeat would have consequences that would affect many countries; the defeat is possible but preventable. In this sense, Western countries feel very distant from the war, but if Russia is not stopped, the war could spread to EU countries, and all its member states would be seriously affected. According to the guests, Europe should be more prepared as Russia knows that Europe is vulnerable and could be attacked. This topic can also be related to the article published in the CIDOB International Notes, entitled "The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the day after the war: a view from southern Europe". This article mentions the need for Europe to seriously organize itself and create a plan for states to be militarily, economically and energetically prepared, putting the focus on the vulnerabilities of the EU (Sánchez Margalef et al., 2023).

Analysis “Dialogue with Minister José Manuel Albares, “Two years of war in Ukraine and the future of Europe””

The event took place on February 26, 2024. The guest was José Manuel Albares, Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation of the Government of Spain. During the event, the future prospects were analyzed two years after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as well as the country's relations with the European Union. The event was opened by Antoni Segura i Mas, president of CIDOB, followed by a speech by the minister and a subsequent dialogue with the director of CIDOB, Pol Morillas.

The Minister starts by stating that this is not just a war against Ukraine, Russia is challenging international law and the UN Charter, which prohibits the threat and use of force in relations between states, and highlights that those responsible for these war crimes must answer for their actions. The Minister states that this war is based on the radical denial of the sovereignty and very existence of Ukraine, and the denial of territorial integrity; what he mentions here can be related again to Riabchuk's article (2023) “War in Ukraine: peace-talking versus peace-making” which also mentions what this war implies in an attack towards the Ukrainian identity. What is at stake is not only freedom in Ukraine and security in

Europe, but also the very survival of our model of international coexistence. As in the first event, the guest here also mentions that Russia does not forgive that Ukraine aspires to be a democratic member of the EU.

The reception of Ukrainians represents solidarity, and that is considered an opportunity for the population to stay united and work together to achieve good results. The Minister also states that the best weapon against Vladimir Putin is the unity of Europeans, and that what cannot happen is that there is fatigue on the part of the EU, towards Ukraine. In this regard, I refer again to the article published by CIDOB in the International Notes section "What role should southern Europe play after the pandemic and the war in Ukraine? Towards a shared agenda for EU reform", that mentions the importance of groups of member states coming together to join forces, as well as the importance and need for Europe to continue to stay together and to seriously create a plan for the European states, putting the focus on the vulnerabilities of the EU, and complementing the strengths and weaknesses of each country (Morillas et al., 2022).

The consequences of this war affect the world, and although the war seems to be very far from Spain, its consequences are not. Nevertheless, the Minister mentions that there are countries that have opinions that differ from the European position; he gives the example of countries in the global south, which are very distant from this war, apart from the fact that they have other needs that also require the attention of the international community, highlighting the importance of taking them into account as well. What the Minister mentions can also be related to a CIDOB publication of International Notes, also mentioned in the commentary of the previous video: "The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the day after the war: a view from southern Europe"; in this case, reference is made to another fragment of the article, which mentions the importance of listening to and taking into account the perspectives and visions that the countries of the global south have regarding this war, since they are countries that have other needs, and as they play a role as well in the international system, their demands and points of view should not be ignored (Sánchez Margalef et al., 2023).

Finally, and once again, the question of the possibility of signing a peace agreement is raised, and the Minister has a clear answer; first of all, he agrees that only one talks about peace, Zelensky. But when the Minister talks about peace, he states that in cannot be any peace, the peace that should be achieved is a peace within the UN Charter, where the sovereignty of Ukraine, and territorial integrity are respected; where Ukraine is a free state to decide the alliances it wants to create and the spaces to which it wants to belong. In this

case, it differs from the idea of the guests of the event that took place a few days before. However, the Minister repeatedly mentioned during the event the importance of supporting Ukraine to the end, until it wins, and he also highlighted the harmful consequences that a Russian victory could have, which must be avoided at all costs.

Discussion of results

In this chapter, the results obtained from the investigation on the activity of the CIDOB Foundation regarding its strategies to achieve influence are presented and discussed. The purpose of this chapter is to interpret the findings of the study relating them to the theoretical framework, and evaluate their meaning in the context of the field of study. Furthermore, the theoretical and practical implications of the results will be discussed. The analysis of the data revealed several important findings; in this sense, the structure of this discussion follows the order of the data collected in this chapter, so that first the quantitative analysis will be discussed, with the results in tables 1 and 2, and their respective graphs. Next, the qualitative part will be analyzed, where I will first comment on the interview, and secondly on the videos, linking everything to the strategies mentioned in chapter 2 of this research work.

I begin this discussion with the comparison made at the beginning of the first part of the work, in which I searched for the results that appeared on the CIDOB website when searching for the keyword "Ucraina" for the year 2021, and then for the year 2022. The results clearly show how activity increased in the year the invasion began. If we talk about numbers, in 2021, there were 31 entries available, and in 2022, 271 entries; in percentages, if the year 2022 represents 100%, the number of entries for the year 2021 would represent only 11.4%, a little more than a tenth.

I now proceed to comment on the tables. Starting with Table 1, looking directly at the totals and the figures immediately in the previous row, which correspond to the press, we can clearly see the strong role that the press plays in assessing CIDOB's activity. If we analyse the table by year, we can see that after the press, the publications section is in second place, preceded by the activities section. The press section accounts for the 84.2% of the total of entries from 2022; the CIDOB Opinion subsection, which is where CIDOB issues informed opinions from its experts on current issues, accounts for 4.8%, and finally, the activities, taken as a whole, account for 6.8% of the total.

In 2023, the total number of entries has noticeably decreased; even so, the press is still at the top of the list with the highest number of entries; in this case, it accounts for 77.7% of the

total entries for that year. The specific articles in the CIDOB Opinion subsection account for only 3.6%; and the activities, counted the subsections together, also account for 3.6%. On the other hand, it should be noted that in that year several entries were made regarding the CIDOB International Yearbook, which accounts for 8.9% of the total entries for that year.

For the year 2024, the figures as a whole are much lower; this can be attributed to two factors: on the one hand, it would be logical to attribute it to the phenomenon of wear and tear on the subject, as seen in the drop in 2023; on the other hand, it can be attributed to the few months that have passed since 2024 when carrying out this study. In any case, the patterns are repeated: the press leads the list with the most entries, representing 80% of the total; in second place are the activities, which represent 7.1% of the total entries available for this year; finally, the CIDOB Opinion accounts for only 2.9% of the total. In this case, the higher number of activities could be attributed to the fact that two years have passed since the war, although we do not have information that can confirm this.

After analysing Table 1, three strategies used by think tanks in order to achieve influence can be found, out of the four mentioned in Chapter 2 of this study. Firstly, and referring to the figures for the press, the importance that CIDOB gives to relations with the media and the press can be highlighted, since the percentages are very high compared to the other types of activities or publications that the think tank carries out. If we recall hypothesis 1 (The CIDOB Foundation achieves influence through active media action) and take into account only these results, we could reach positive conclusions about this reflection; however, it is still too early to confirm or deny anything.

Secondly, and taking into account the sections of CIDOB's opinion articles, another strategy from Chapter 2 can be highlighted, which refers to the mediating role of the think tank. If we recall the hypothesis of this third strategy (The CIDOB Foundation achieves influence when it has a role as a "mediator"), and think about the purpose of this section of publications, which is to inform citizens with an expert and informed opinion on a topic of current interest, both elements could be related.

Finally, when mentioning the topic of the activities carried out by CIDOB, it is directly related to the fact that the think tank has networked when dealing with actors external to the Center in order to carry out said activities. This case can be related to strategy 2 of Chapter 2, which mentions the importance of networking, knowing and collaborating with actors external to the think tank itself in order to enrich and benefit mutually. On the one hand, the fact that actors and experts external to CIDOB come legitimizes the Center as a think tank, and on the other

hand, the guest can make his work and ideas known to a wider audience. In this sense, I must recall the second hypothesis, which was “*The CIDOB Foundation achieves influence through the interaction with many different actors*”.

I will now proceed to analyse Chart 1. This graphic shows in a more visual way the decrease in the frequency of CIDOB's activity over the years. On the other hand, it is also possible to distinguish which CIDOB web section has had the most activity and which has had the least activity, so it is possible to assume which sections are more important when dealing with an international issue such as the Ukraine conflict. Furthermore, it is immediately apparent how important the press is when dealing with the subject of Ukraine, since in the three years of the analysis, it represents a figure close to 80%.

Now I discuss Table 2. This table shows the wide variety of actors with whom CIDOB has collaborated throughout the events and activities it has organised, since, as mentioned earlier in the paper, this list of actors has been extracted through an entry-by-entry analysis of the activities carried out by CIDOB on the occasion of the war in Ukraine. The actors, as can be seen in the classification, have a very diverse background, which allows enriching ideas, offering a variety of opinions and perspectives on the subject. This part of the analysis is another example that can be attributed to the networking strategy.

When looking at Chart 2, we can see that CIDOB seems to have a preference for relating to actors from political institutions, since it is the largest area of the chart, being the only one that comes close to 50% of the chart, making up 44.7% of the total. This preference of CIDOB can be related to the fourth strategy mentioned in Chapter 2, which refers to the importance of staying close to government or political actors if one wants to exert influence on ideas. If we recall the hypothesis of this strategy (The CIDOB Foundation achieves influence through close contact with members of the government) and with the information provided in graph 2, a favourable assessment could be made regarding the veracity of the hypothesis; however, let us continue analysing the results.

This figure is followed, in second place, by the preference for relating to actors from the academic sector, which both together make up 21.1% of the total in the chart. This preference can be related to two of the four strategies mentioned in this work, which are relating to other organizations, which allows for collaboration in the work being carried out; and on the other hand, the possibility of acting as mediators, since the constant relationship with other experts means that the think tank has to "translate" the acquired knowledge in a way that is understandable to a wider audience.

Finally, and to conclude the discussion of this quantitative part, I would like to mention the section where I mention the institutes with which CIDOB collaborated. This case can also be related to strategy number two, since what was there, in addition to the clear networking, is a collaboration between all these research centres to share knowledge and ideas, and to develop even more topics on which there may be doubts, so that there may be help between experts, and on the other hand, there may also have been the contribution of new knowledge and ideas to topics already developed.

Next, I proceed to discuss the second part of the empirical analysis. I begin by analyzing the interview I conducted with Carmen Claudín. Firstly, we talked about the work methodology promoted at CIDOB. In this case, Carmen's response was the importance of obtaining information first-hand, knowing the field being investigated, if possible in person, and above all, importance is given to speaking with other actors who are involved in the research that the CIDOB expert is carrying out. In this sense, this is related to the second strategy mentioned in this study, since great importance is given to working and relating with other actors, due to the mutual benefit that this relationship implies, in the short and long term.

Secondly, when I asked about the target audience, the answer was clear and concise: decision-makers in Spain, as well as the general public. In this case, this objective can be directly related to the role that think tanks can assume as mediators. This is because the expert information that CIDOB as a think tank has to process must be done in a way that allows the ideas to be disseminated in an understandable way. To do this, CIDOB and its experts have to work with the knowledge they have in a specific way, so that it can be transmitted clearly and effectively to the target audience, without creating confusion or ambiguity in their understanding.

Thirdly, in the interview we talked about the way CIDOB prefers to disseminate its ideas and knowledge. In this case, the answer was the press, apart from its publications on the CIDOB website. Carmen highlighted the important role that the press plays in disseminating ideas, since not all the public consults the CIDOB website; however, the press and the media have a much greater reach, so it is convenient, if not necessary, to collaborate with them. In addition, she also highlighted the importance of engaging with various media channels. This is related to the first strategy mentioned in chapter two, which highlights the importance of engaging with the media, apart from the possibilities that they offer, such as the framing of ideas.

Fourthly, in the interview we talked about publications and the different sections and subsections that the CIDOB website has to classify its publications. When asked which sections are preferred or which can offer the most relevant information to the reader about CIDOB recommendations, and the points of view and ideas of its experts, who, after all, represent CIDOB and its values, the International Notes and the CIDOB Opinion were mentioned. This fragment can also be related, as has been done previously, to the third strategy mentioned in the work, since the experts assume a role as mediators of knowledge, trying to spread their ideas in a way that is understandable to a wider audience.

Finally, when I asked Carmen directly about her position on influence and her recommendations for achieving it, she stressed the importance of staying close to political or governmental actors, fourth strategy mentioned in this study. Despite this, she mentioned the complexity of measuring influence, since it is very difficult to know when influence has really been exerted. With this, she highlighted the importance of networking and of experts or think tanks making themselves known, since standing out as an expert or think tank fosters trust and increases the possibilities of approaching these actors.

I now turn to the discussion of the video section. In general, there is a correlation in most of the points discussed by the guests at the two events, as well as with the three articles mentioned and analysed from the International Notes section. Taking these two events into account, a role or strategy could be attributed to CIDOB, as a think tank seeking to exert influence. Firstly, I would highlight its role as mediator, as it deals with experts on the subject of the war in Ukraine. On the other hand, this same role as mediator could also be attributed to it, as it can be seen that there are common points mentioned at both events, with the three publications analysed issued by CIDOB, which predate the events.

On the other hand, I could also highlight strategy number four of this work, which mentions the importance of staying close to government actors if one wants to exert influence. In this case, CIDOB brought the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation as its main guest to the second event. Although, as mentioned at the beginning of the empirical analysis, CIDOB has some institutional members, and among these is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, the fact that the Minister himself attends an event is a fact that legitimizes CIDOB as a think tank, since bringing actors of this caliber as guests improves the status of the think tank. On the other hand, it benefits CIDOB in the sense that it allows the institution direct contact with this actor, so that the transfer of ideas is direct, and therefore, could also be more effective, since as mentioned in the literature, face-to-face interactions are always more effective.

I conclude this section making a comment for each hypothesis proposed. Starting with **Hypothesis 1: *The CIDOB Foundation achieves influence through active media action.*** This hypothesis could be supported by several parts of the work, starting with the figures for the press in Table 1, which are later visually shown in Chart 1. The high percentages, which in all three cases are around 80%, support the hypothesis, since it can be seen that collaboration with the press and the media is really one of CIDOB's favourite methods for disseminating its ideas. Furthermore, the strategy can also be seen again when dealing with the interview with Carmen Claudín, specifically when it is mentioned that the preferred channel for disseminating ideas is the press and the media. However, and as the study is about a very specific topic within the wide variety of topics covered by CIDOB, it is not advisable to make generalizations about the confirmation or denial of the hypotheses.

The **Hypothesis 2: *The CIDOB Foundation achieves influence through the interaction with many different actors.*** This hypothesis could also be supported by several parts of the work. Firstly, although not entirely, the figures in the activities section of Table 1 could be interpreted as an indication of this strategy. However, it is not clear and specific information, so with this example alone, the hypothesis could not be confirmed. On the other hand, in the interview, Carmen also mentions the importance that CIDOB gives to networking with external actors, but this statement does not confirm that this strategy actually occurs. However, when we look at Table 2, we can see a wide variety of actors with whom the think tank has had contact. With this example, the hypothesis could be supported for this concrete case study. In addition, with the section where the institutes with which CIDOB has collaborated on projects are mentioned, there is another incentive that could support the hypothesis.

In the third place, **Hypothesis 3: *The CIDOB Foundation achieves influence when it has a role as a “mediator”.*** The strategy related to this hypothesis is mentioned several times in the discussion of the results. For example when I analyze Chart 2, when I refer to the role of mediator that CIDOB can assume when dealing with actors from the academic and political sectors when events are held. There is also the possibility of using this strategy when the interview talks about the target audience, which, due to the category in which it is located, is likely to sometimes need a mediating think tank to collaborate in making it more understandable; this can be achieved through its publications. This is a strategy that I also mention when commenting on the videos, since on the one hand, activities are carried out with experts, and on the other hand, it also counts on the support of their publications from International Notes, related to the topics that are discussed at their events.

Finally, **Hypothesis 4**: *The CIDOB Foundation achieves influence through close contact with members of the government.* The fourth strategy is the one that is least mentioned in the work. The first time it is mentioned in the empirical analysis is when I discuss Chart 2. In it, we can see CIDOB's preference for establishing contact and holding events with actors who come from political institutions; despite this evidence, it may not be enough evidence to support this hypothesis. Secondly, in the interview, Carmen also mentions the importance and benefits of relating to actors in the political sphere to influence ideas, but there is also no example mentioned in which the evidence is clear. However, at the end there is a clear example of CIDOB relating to government actors, since in the second video I analyze, the guest is the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs; this one is a good example to put on this strategy, and taking into account the preference for actors from political institutions, mentioned in Table 2, hypothesis number 4 could be partially supported, as again, a generalization would not be recommended due to the specificity of this study.

5. Conclusion

With this conclusion I proceed to give a final review of the entire study and summarize what was obtained.

The purpose of this paper was to analyse strategies that think tanks can use when seeking to influence political processes. To make the study more concrete and specific, I have focused on analysing the activity carried out by the Spanish think tank CIDOB in relation to the topic of the war in Ukraine, which began in February 2022. To do so, a mixed methods methodology was used, which has allowed me to carry out a quantitative and a qualitative study, thus allowing me to have a broader vision and idea of the activity carried out by CIDOB regarding this specific topic.

Firstly, if we review what has been mentioned in the literature review, it is worth highlighting the important role played by experts and think tanks when advising government actors or actors in the political sphere, since thanks to what they can contribute as experts, decision-makers can make informed decisions supported by relevant information. Furthermore, in the literature review we can find four different strategies that think tanks can use if they want to exert influence on a political process, which, if we recall them, are, firstly, the importance of working together with the press and media; secondly, the benefits of networking; thirdly, we find the role they can adopt as mediators of expert knowledge; and fourthly, the importance of staying close to political actors or the government.

If one looks for a relationship between the strategies presented in the literature review, each accompanied by a hypothesis, and the empirical data collected in Chapter 4, evidence can be found. Hypothesis 1, which refers to the strategy of working with the media, can be supported in several parts of the work, for example by looking at Table 1 or Chart 1, which clearly show the high percentages, which are around 80%, and with which it can be observed that collaboration with the press and the media is really one of CIDOB's favourite methods for disseminating its ideas. Despite this, and as mentioned in the limitations, as it is such a specific study, it should not be generalised to the rest of the activities carried out by CIDOB, so it could be said that hypothesis 1 is partially supported.

The second strategy mentions the importance of working with other organisations, networking; in this case, Hypothesis 2 is also supported in several parts of the work. For example when we look at Table 2, where we can see a great variety of actors with whom the

think tank has had contact. With this example, the hypothesis is reinforced. Furthermore, the section where the institutes with which CIDOB has collaborated on projects are mentioned is another incentive that supports the hypothesis.

Thirdly, the third strategy is related to the role that think tanks assume as mediators of expert knowledge, making it more intelligible for actors who are not experts in the subject they deal with. The hypothesis and this strategy are mentioned several times in the discussion of the results. For example, when commenting on the videos of the qualitative analysis, since activities are carried out with experts who can count on the support of their publications, related to the topics discussed at their events. In this case, although there is evidence that can support the hypothesis, the topic studied is very specific to make generalizations.

Lastly, Hypothesis 4: The CIDOB Foundation achieves influence through close contact with members of the government. The fourth strategy is mentioned in the empirical analysis, in Table 2. In it, we can see CIDOB's preference for establishing contact and holding events with actors from political institutions; in addition, at the end of the qualitative analysis there is a clear example of CIDOB relating to government actors, since having the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs as a guest at the event is a good example to mention this strategy. With these two examples, strategy and hypothesis 4 could be supported in the study of this specific case that I have carried out.

However, the research has certain limitations. For example, the fact that only one very specific topic is studied, within the wide variety of topics and themes that are investigated at CIDOB, makes it highly inadvisable to generalize even the results obtained to the activity carried out by CIDOB in general as a think tank. Another limitation to take into account in this study is that of the actors and events analyzed in the qualitative part of the study, since the visions and points of view that they share may be biased or adapted to the event that took place, so it would not be advisable to assume that what they mention is completely true or that it is not biased, since it is impossible to know. For example, the fact that they mention, although not explicitly, fragments of the *Notas Internacionales* publications, may be a coincidence, it may be that the actors have been influenced, or they may have adapted their position to the event.

To address these limitations, future research could investigate other lines of research by CIDOB itself to check whether there is a common work pattern, or other think tanks could be analysed to check whether the four strategies I mention in the literature review are used by more think tanks. On the other hand, more events carried out by CIDOB could be

investigated to see whether the guests also follow a pattern, such as mentioning publications from a section of CIDOB.

As far as I am concerned, this work has provided me with a great deal of new knowledge on a topic as broad as the role of experts, the influence they can exert on political processes, the multiple tasks carried out by think tanks, as well as the great importance that these actors have when it comes to helping our politicians make informed decisions supported by reliable data. On the other hand, and above all thanks to the interview with Mrs. Claudín, this research has helped me to see the importance of obtaining first-hand information, as I have been able to verify its usefulness when it comes to corroborating and contrasting information. I have also been able to verify the importance and usefulness of networking, since it is a strategy that is mentioned in various parts of this study and seems to have really beneficial results in various aspects, both for an individual and for the institution that the actor represents.

In conclusion, this study provides a deeper understanding of expert influence, and specifically, the strategies that think tanks can use to exert influence. This research highlights the importance and contribution of experts to policy formulation, as well as the benefits that each strategy mentioned can bring to expanding expert knowledge. The findings obtained not only contribute to the theoretical knowledge of the topic, but also have significant practical implications for think tanks looking for strategies to implement in their field.

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