



GOVERN
ECONOMIC AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE CENTER

GOVERNANCE OF ARAB THINK TANKS FOR STAKEHOLDER IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

AUTHORED BY GOVERN CENTER

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About GOVERN Center

GOVERN - the Economic and Corporate Governance Center - is a niche advisory and research institute specializing in economic and corporate governance in emerging markets. We work alongside decision-makers to help create legal and regulatory policies, and construct institutions that promote business integrity, corporate governance and support the competitiveness of the region's capital markets and firms.

The institute provides specialist advice on capital market development and corporate governance to stock exchanges, securities regulators, central banks, ministries, sovereign actors and other regulators in the Middle East. The team is comprised of senior practitioners who are experienced in leading securities regulators, stock exchanges, banks, academic and international organizations.

GOVERN's complementary experience developing policies for regulators and implementing them for corporations gives us the flexibility to create teams of professionals with targeted regulatory, financial and economic experience. GOVERN's senior advisors have accumulated expertise in a range of financial markets and governance matters, as well as relevant experience in academic institutes and the private sector.

With a decade of advisory and research experience in the Middle East, GOVERN's experts have also spent decades working on corporate governance in other emerging markets, as well as in Europe and North America. GOVERN has published a range of reports and articles on governance in the MENA region, which can be accessed at <http://www.govern.center>.



PREFACE

Independent research is of crucial importance as Arab countries, their governments and citizens face important socioeconomic challenges, including youth employment, energy sustainability and political instability, among others. Historically, the Middle East has not been recognized for its capacity to produce independent research. Instead, research on the Middle East has been produced outside of the region.

Happily, in recent years, this trend has reversed and think tanks based in the region – whether affiliated with governments, the private sector or academic institutions – have meaningfully contributed to important policy debates critical to the future prosperity of the region. We believe that think tanks across the region are making a key contribution in a number of areas.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia assumed the G20 Presidency in 2020, and the issue of think tank sustainability is of critical importance to facilitating thought leadership and innovation in the region. It is for this reason that the Think 20 (T20), a G20 engagement group representing the think tank community, considers the governance of think tanks in the region to be of vital importance. The T20 is being led this year by the King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center (KAPSARC) and the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies (KFCRIS).

Governance as a discipline has become more important for the private and public sectors across the region, and its importance for the future of the region's economies is increasingly being recognized. However, the governance of think tanks has, to date, not been addressed adequately, resulting in extremely variable practices in the region. In some instances this variability may put the future sustainability of these entities at risk.

The region is now home to several large think tanks, but many face significant resource challenges and concerns about their independence, which fundamentally endangers their operating models and the relevance of their activities. An examination of the regulatory framework governing think tanks and a benchmark of practices is needed to identify positive examples and create a platform for sharing them.

To isolate best practices and existing weaknesses in the governance of Arab think tanks, the T20 Secretariat has commissioned GOVERN, a leading niche governance research and advisory center, to develop this report, "Governance of Arab Think Tanks for Stakeholder Impact and Sustainability Analysis and Recommendations." The report is based on a first-of-a-kind review of practices across the region, extensive primary and secondary research and unique data collection.

This report provides an overview of the development of the think tank sector and its governance and analyzes the sector's practices and its challenges. Ultimately, it provides a roadmap for implementing best practices and recommendations for addressing the sector's sustainability, notably from a governance perspective.

We hope that the findings of this report will add value to the future of the think tank community in the region, while being relevant to the broader stakeholder community, including policymakers, donors, and international organizations, to which some of the recommendations contained in this report are addressed.

Alissa Amico, Managing Director, GOVERN Center



INTRODUCTION

The Middle East has, for decades, been the subject of significant research by a range of international actors – academic, governmental and, more recently, private – due to its long-standing geopolitical and commercial interest. Historically, however, most of the research on the Arab world has originated from outside the region, including from leading universities such as Harvard, Oxford, the London School of Economics, and the School of Oriental and African Studies, among others, some of which have established dedicated research centers.

During the past three decades, the creation of domestic think tanks and research centers in the Middle East has changed this dynamic. According to our latest research, the region is now home to approximately 140 active think tanks and many more research initiatives housed by foundations, universities, corporations and government bodies. This explosion in the number of research bodies across the Middle East has been propelled by a range of forces.

Most recently, the growth of the region's think tank community has been facilitated by the development of private philanthropy supporting research on the Arab world. Corporate philanthropy, although a relatively new concept in the region, beyond the zakat requirements included in Shari'a law, has also supported the establishment of new think tanks and research centers.

The growth of domestic research institutions has been facilitated by other trends, notably large international universities establishing regional presences¹ as well as the expansion of the research agendas of local universities. With the need for countries in the region to further diversify their economies, research activities are now recognized as being of national priority as a way of fostering knowledge economies.

In the years following the political instability experienced by many countries in the region, international donors have also established new entities to promote independent thinking, or have decided to support the agendas of existing think tanks and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs). As we explore further in this report, their choice of whether to establish new institutes or support existing initiatives has had a fundamental impact on the regional think tank community.

These trends have resulted in the rapid growth of research centers and think tanks that are not only focused on the Arab world but are also based in the region. This has, in turn, created a richer research agenda, less dominated by the issues which have historically dominated academic discourse in the region, such as peace, security and international relations. As this report explores, the addition of new think tanks in the region has resulted in a broader thematic focus and broader geographic coverage.

The landscape of research organizations operating in the region is, as a result, richer and more complex. There are now more local think tanks contributing to the region's social and economic development priorities, and aiming to shape government policy and public opinion. As a result, we are also witnessing growing competition among them. The revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia that led some donors to establish additional independent initiatives have reinforced this competitiveness.

This competition extends beyond the think tank community: Many other actors conducting research on the region are NGOs (foundations, specialized sectoral bodies, etc.) and commercial entities (which produce research on the region directly or through philanthropic entities they have established for this purpose).² Some entities, such as business federations, also act or host think tanks that focus on business issues.³

New and innovative governance approaches are needed for research organizations in the region to effectively deliver on their mission and foster stakeholder confidence. While corporate governance in the region has been subject to significant attention since the turn of the century, the governance of think tanks and research institutions has not so far been addressed.

Over the past two decades, the region has seen significant developments and improvements in corporate sector governance, notably in listed companies, but less so in state-owned entities and family companies. Almost all countries in the region have introduced dedicated corporate governance codes, which have raised the bar notably for board composition and the quality of disclosure.

Some efforts have also been made to improve governance in the public sector and quasi-public institutions. Similarly, in recent years, the university sector has also demonstrated some interest in governance. However, these efforts have not been so evident in the think tank sector. As a result, governance approaches adopted by think tanks in the region display extreme heterogeneity and tend to be less formalized than in regional corporations.

These existing ad hoc approaches toward think tank governance are due to the fact that the think tank sector is not subject to specific governance regulations. The corporate sector, on the other hand, is increasingly regulated with a focus on governance. As this report discusses, NGO legislation in some countries broadly addresses governance requirements. However, these are significantly less specific than those defined in corporate or securities legislation.

NGOs and think tanks in the region have also been under the spotlight for a variety of reasons, notably due to the concern of some governments that they could be used for illicit purposes. Since the activities of NGOs in the region have been subject to further government scrutiny, think tanks organized as NGOs (but also others) have been concerned by the prospect of political capture. This lack of trust between government actors and think tanks is further explored in this report.

Discussions with think tanks in the region have highlighted a growing concern among senior executives and board members that governments may be adopting uneven and, in some instances, unproductive approaches to regulating NGOs and think tanks. This is reflected in the registration process, the receipt of funds, and the appointment of boards, which can impede the credibility of these organizations as sources of unbiased research.

Fostering donor trust is another critical theme explored in this report, with a focus on transparency and accountability. Transparency has been one of the most challenging governance areas in the region, including for the think-tank sector, as revealed by our review of annual reports published by Arab think tanks. This report addresses these and other governance challenges for the first time.



METHODOLOGY

Data and information on think tanks operating in the Arab world are scarce. Although efforts have been made to collect and compile systematic data and produce analysis on think tanks, most notably by the Global Go To Think Tank, is the first to comprehensively address Arab institutions. It is based on a first-of-a-kind data collection exercise, which sought to identify the various think tanks across the Arab region and gather information on their governance.

We first defined a comprehensive universe of think tanks, from North Africa to the Levant and the Arabian Gulf.⁴ We relied on existing compilations of publicly available information to develop a list of think tanks, complementing them with information published by regional bodies such as the

Euro-Mediterranean Study Commission (EuroMeSCo) and the Institute for Mediterranean Studies. The completeness of our think tank database has also been verified by various relevant regional experts.

That said, the process of identifying think tanks is an inherently subjective exercise. In the Arab world, this exercise is also complicated by the fact that many think tanks are registered as corporate entities due to various legal and political challenges that this report addresses. We have included these entities in the scope of the project for reasons we explore in further detail in the following section.

While we have included think tanks hosted by local universities in our analysis, not all university-based centers were considered as think tanks, given their activities and profile. Adding small centers of academic research based within academic structures that are not independent and have no sizeable research programs to our comprehensive list of entities would have resulted in a sample that would not have been meaningful.

The resulting comprehensive compilation of Arab think tanks, which currently numbers some 140 organizations across 17 countries, is given in Annex I. These think tanks vary significantly in size, independence and legal structure. The following section details their fundamental characteristics to give the context for further analysis of their governance.

From the 140 entities identified, we have targeted the 40 most active and largest think tanks operating across the region. We identified these 40 organizations using several criteria, including their impact, staffing and budget. We examine in detail their governance practices, covering a range of issues, including board composition, transparency, management structure, accountability and the relationship they have with their stakeholders. The list of these entities is also given in Annex I.

For these 40 think tanks, we conducted a detailed analysis of their governance using a proprietary methodology that we developed for this report and based on the information they disclose publicly. We also organized interviews with representatives from these organizations to gather a more nuanced understanding of their strategic challenges and opportunities, and gather their views on how their existing governance models support their strategic objectives.

Alongside conducting secondary research, we also disseminated a confidential 30-question online survey to think tank executives and board members in September 2019. The objective of this survey was to collect subjective information that could not be gathered through public channels.

The data collected through the online survey was compared to the data we collected through secondary research and, in some instances, merged to obtain a more representative sample. We identified and rectified inconsistencies between our assessment of think tanks' governance practices and their perception of their practices.

The figures and tables contained in this report draw on this data collection exercise for the entire think tank universe and for the large think tanks, with references to sample size made for further clarity. The large think tank sample contained 40 entities from our overall sample of 140 bodies. Twenty-four organizations responded to the online survey. There was some overlap between the sample of 40 and 24 think tanks.

n=140	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arab think tanks based in 17 countries • Review of websites for specific data points
n=40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected large think tanks based in 15 countries • Review of websites for specific data points
n=24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think tanks participating in the online survey • Representing large think tanks in the region



PART I. OVERVIEW OF THE SECTOR

The landscape of Arab think tanks

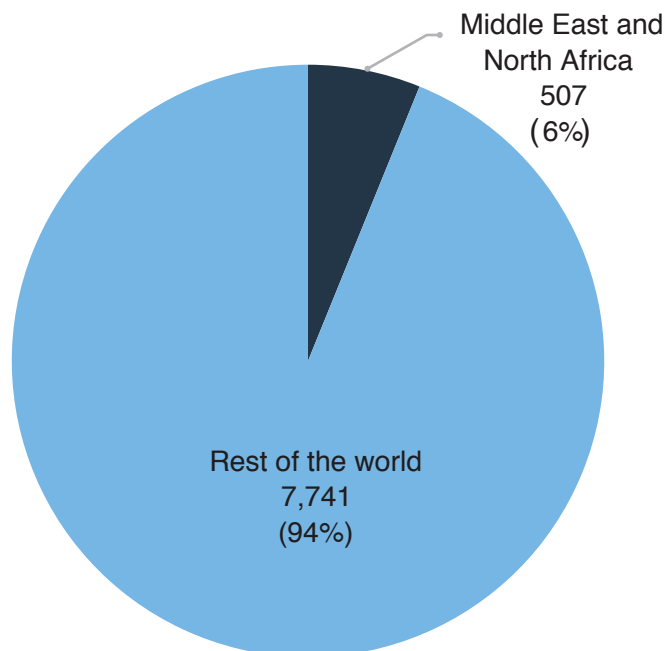
Think tanks in the Middle East still comprise a small fraction (6%) of the global think tank community (Figure 1). We estimate that there are 140 active think tanks spread across 17 jurisdictions, based on the methodology. Most of them are based in Egypt, Morocco and Jordan (Figure 2).

This reflects the region's economic and cultural heritage. Countries such as Egypt and Lebanon have historically been the most active in research and cultural production. More recently, many Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have started to position themselves as centers of knowledge creation. However, the most active think tanks in the

region are significantly less concentrated, as each country has at least one important think tank.

A list of the most active think tanks in the region is provided below. It includes a range of entities of varying mandates and sizes, both in terms of human and financial resources. Some of the largest think tanks in the region include the Center of Economic Applied Research (Centre de Recherche en Economie Appliquée pour le Développement, CREAD) in Algeria, the Economic Research Forum (ERF) in Egypt, and the King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center (KAPSARC) in Saudi Arabia. These entities have approximately 100 employees, whereas most other entities operate with less than a dozen employees.⁵

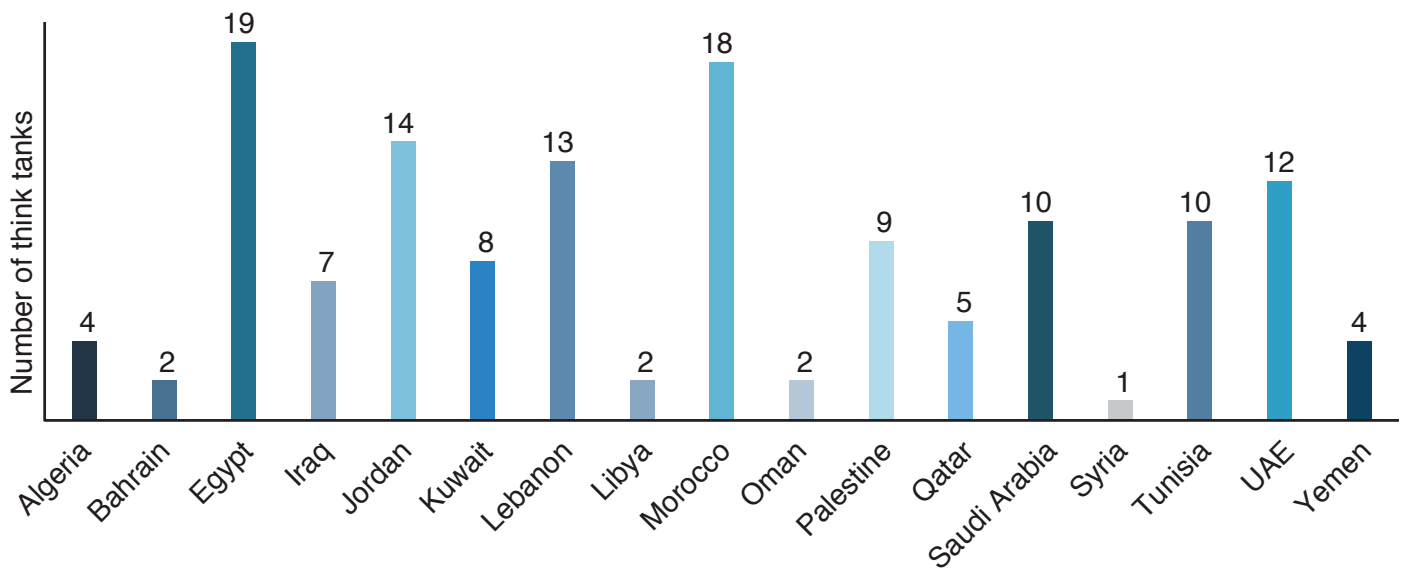
Figure 1. MENA think tanks in the global context.



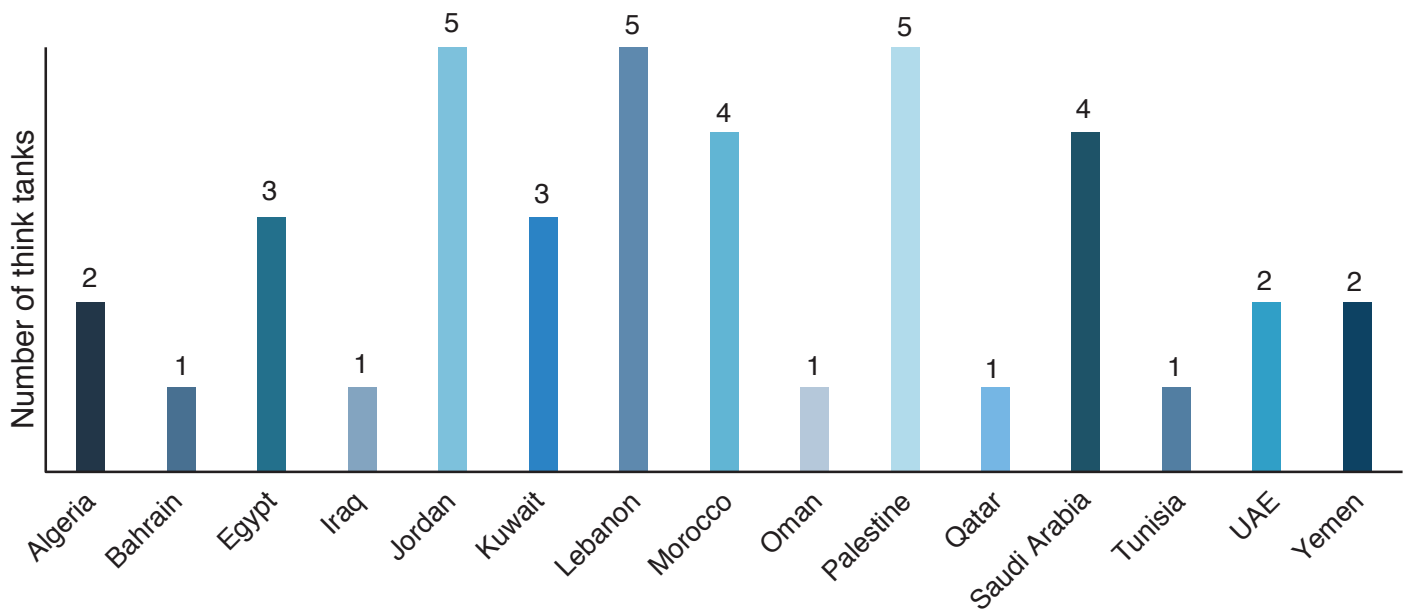
Source: GOVERN analysis based on the Global Go To Think Tank Report, 2018.

Note: For this graph, we have considered all think tanks in the region, whereas this report adopts a narrower geographical definition.

*"The idea of a think tank is still new in the Middle East."
Omar Shaban, CEO, Palthink, Palestine.*

Figure 2. Geographic distribution of think tanks (n=140).

Source: GOVERN Center, 2019.

Figure 3. Geographic distribution of select think tanks (n=40).

Source: GOVERN Center, 2019.

Table 1. Top 10 Arab think tanks (by number of employees).

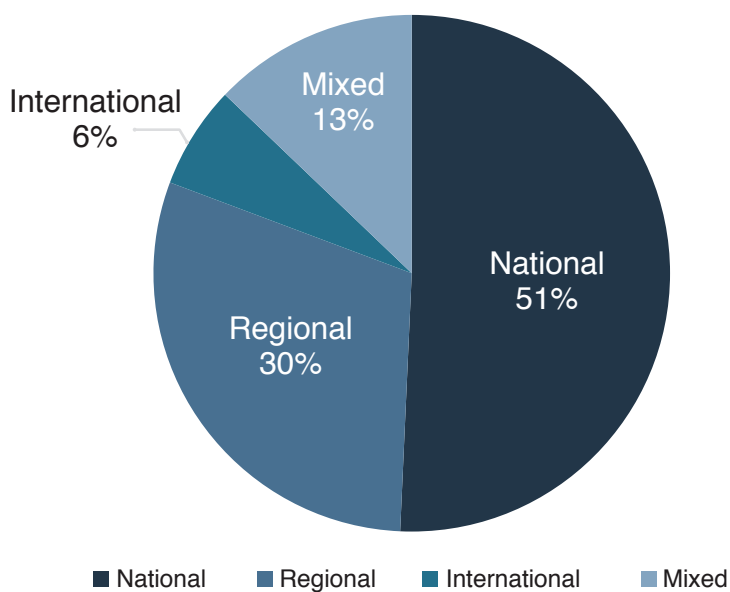
Think tank	Country	Think tank	Country
Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR)	Kuwait	Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI)	Lebanon
Centre National pour la Recherche Scientifique et Technique (CNRST)	Morocco	Policy Center for the new South (formerly: OCP Policy Center)	Morocco
Centre de Recherche en Economie Appliquée Pour le Développement (CREAD)	Algeria	International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA)	Lebanon
King Abdallah Petroleum Studies and Research Center (KAPSARC)	Saudi Arabia	Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS)	Kuwait
International Center for Biosaline Agriculture	UAE	Economic Research Forum (ERF)	Egypt

Source: GOVERN Center, review of websites, 2019.

As highlighted in Figure 4, most think tanks in the region are entirely focused on national priorities, although a few have regional and international focuses. Of the entire sample we examined,

only 30% had regional and 6% international focuses. This reflects the fact that they are mostly government- or private sector-funded entities with specific domestic mandates.

Figure 4. Geographic focus of activities (n=140).



Source: GOVERN Center, 2019.

A few think tanks in the region have international focuses. For example, the Emirates Diplomatic Academy's (EDA) mission is to support the development of the UAE's diplomatic corps; hence its research is oriented toward international developments. Others, such as the Gulf Research Center (GRC), has a regional orientation, in line with its mandate to conduct research into foreign and economic policy in the Gulf.

Finally, a few think tanks in the region have a broad mandate outside the immediate concerns of their location. Those who have both regional and international focuses include the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies in Jordan, the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas in Lebanon, KAPSARC in Saudi Arabia, and the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture in the UAE.

The common trend is for international think tanks to establish offices in the region. A few regional think tanks have succeeded in establishing presences beyond their home jurisdictions. The GRC, for example, has established three locations, two of which are outside the region (Cambridge and Geneva). It has established a collaborative research network with dozens of other entities. This has positive implications for its governance and also its ability to have a global impact.

"We are proud of the network of partners and peers we have been able to reach since the establishment of the think tank in Jeddah."

Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman, Gulf Research Center.

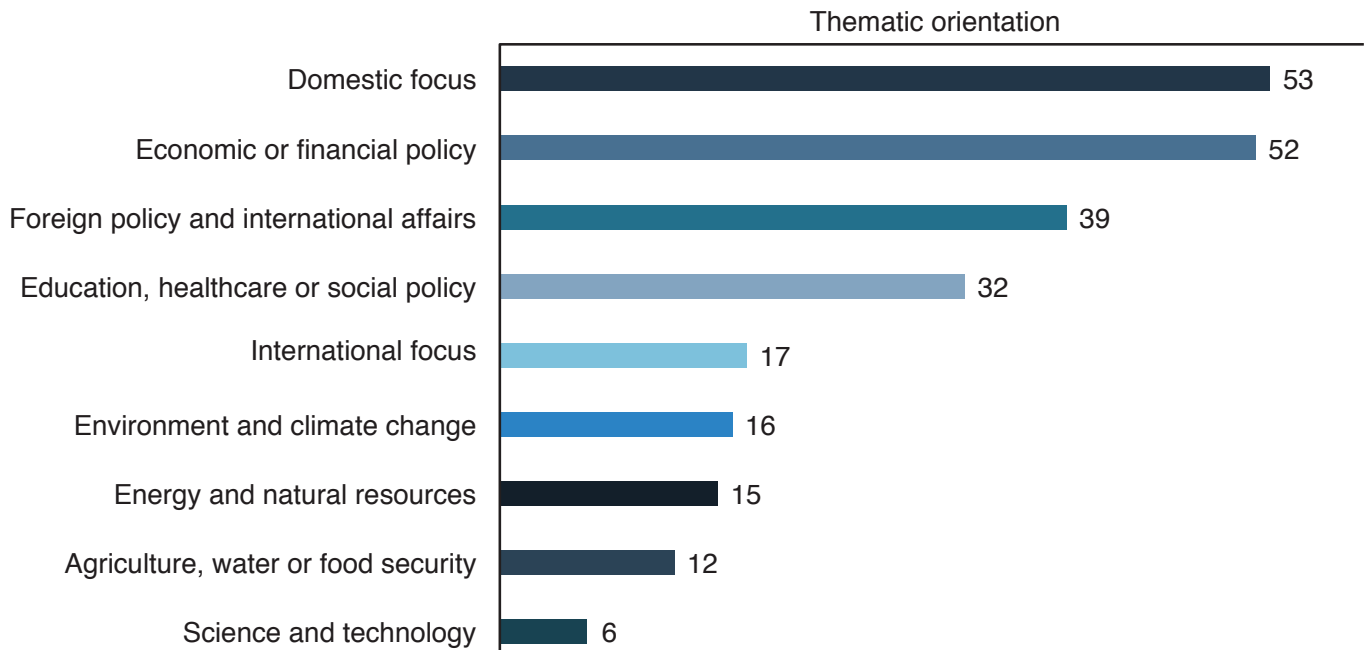
This collaborative approach has also been adopted by a few other think tanks in the region, such as the Arab Thought Forum (ATF) in Jordan⁶ and the Economic Research Forum (ERF) in Egypt.⁷ Incidentally, these represent the few membership-based organizations in the region that are required to have a more open approach to their governance. Other think tanks operate collaboratively because of their own limited human and financial resources.⁸

To some extent, the geographic focus of regional think tanks determines their thematic orientation. Our research demonstrates that, while the vast majority are multidisciplinary in nature, most are focused on economic and financial policy, foreign policy and international affairs, and domestic issues. As Figure 5, below, shows, few entities are focused on issues related to social issues, science and technology and the environment.

In most cases, the ability of think tanks to cover multiple thematic areas is constrained by their limited staffing, lack of expertise in specific areas, such as science and technology, and a historical preoccupation with security, foreign policy, international relations and natural resource issues. This is, in turn, driven by the limited financial resources of most Arab think tanks, below those of their European and North American peers.

Given the limited resources available to most think tanks in the region, their level of collaboration can be characterized as moderate. Entities such as the ERF and the GRC have established strong collaborations with regional and international peers.

Figure 5. Thematic orientation (n=140).



Source: GOVERN Center, 2019.

Note: The figures were compiled based on the number of subject areas covered by each of the think tanks. Where no specific subject could be identified, activities were categorized as being either domestic or international.

Stronger collaboration can assist think tanks in the region to leverage their limited resources to achieve their objectives.

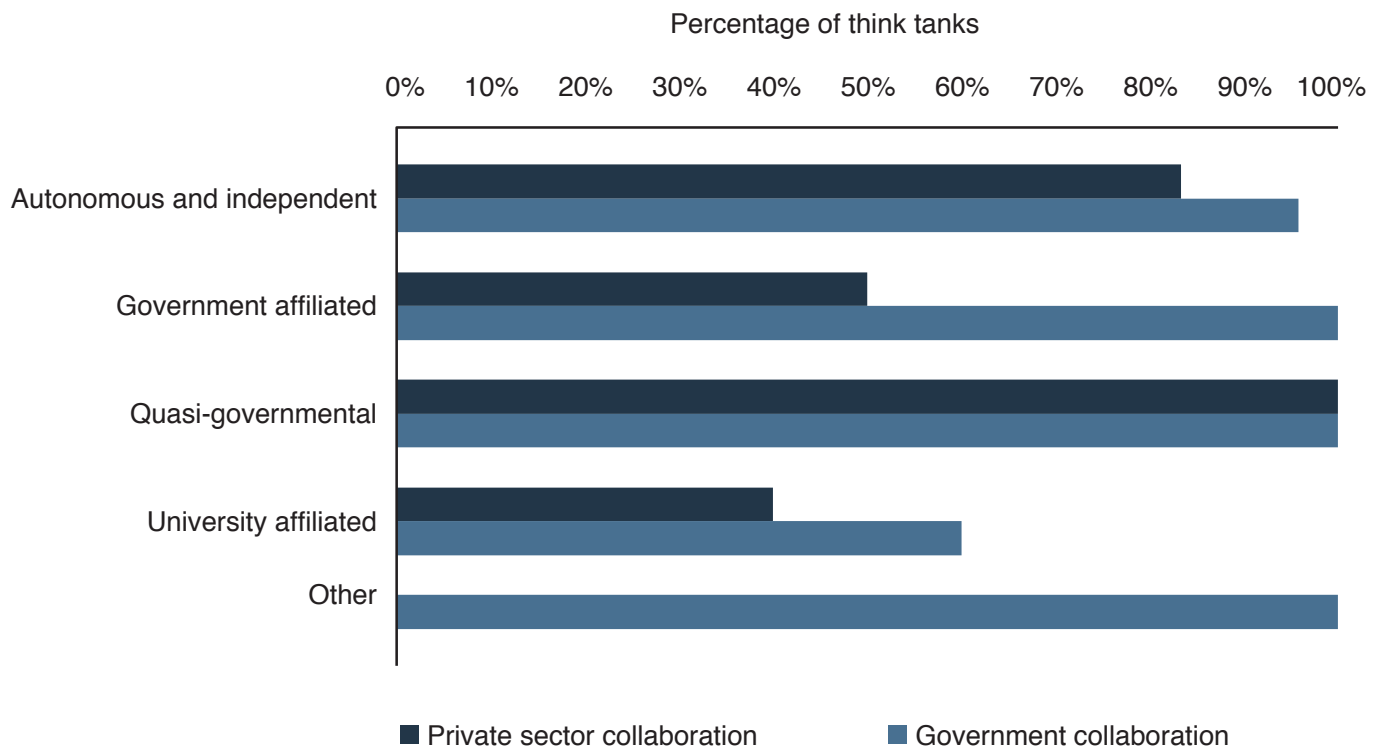
“PASSIA can join the federation of societies, or any academic, educational or cultural institutions. It can merge with a similar society whose goals are sound and clear.”

Deniz Altayli, Program Director, PASSIA, Palestine.

In particular, better collaboration with the private sector may be warranted at a time when private donors and large companies are establishing and funding their own research activities.⁹ Further

strengthening of the collaboration among Arab think tanks requires effective platforms for better cooperation, such as the Arab Foundations Forum for the foundations sector.

Currently, regional platforms such as EuroMeSCo or the European Institute for Mediterranean Studies (EIMS) facilitate cooperation between entities in the region. The governance of these bodies is of interest as a potential model for the region, as they tend to represent the interests of all the stakeholders. For instance, the EIMS has a board of governors, a board of trustees and an advisory board, with representation from across the region.

Figure 6. Collaborations among think tanks (n=40).

Source: GOVERN Center, review of websites, 2019.

Resources of Arab think tanks

Our research highlighted that almost all regional think tanks surveyed had financial and human resource constraints. Most think tanks in the region have what we considered to be constrained budgets, except for KAPSARC in Saudi Arabia, the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture and the GRC in the UAE, and the ERF in Egypt.

This can be explained by a number of factors, notably financial resource scarcity in the Levant and Maghreb subregions in particular. As highlighted in discussions with senior members of the Arab think tank community, funding scarcity is due to increasing competition for financing and the

fact that most think tanks are not membership-based organizations, relying instead on ad hoc donor funding, mostly from international donors and domestic government sources. This funding structure ultimately impacts both their governance and their independence.

Few think tanks in the region, apart from KAPSARC and the ERF, are funded through an endowment, which prevents them from taking long-term perspectives. The ERF, whose main budget is funded by an endowment, is also funded by several regional international organizations.¹⁰ Apart from these examples, few entities appear to have a sustainable, long-term budget structure based on an endowment or a similar multi-year funding model.¹¹

Other government-associated think tanks, such as the EDA in the UAE or the CREAD in Algeria, receive annual funding from the government. Though this is similar to being funded by an endowment, it renders government-funded think tanks potentially more vulnerable.

Budgetary independence is, for some think tanks not specifically affiliated with or funded by the public sector, also regulated by government policy. For a number of NGOs operating in countries such as Egypt and Jordan, receipt of funding is subject to a government approval process, which is reportedly rather time consuming. No more than 50% of funding for Palestinian think tanks (in East Jerusalem) can come from international institutions, and they are subject to an audit by the state audit body.¹²

The financial sustainability of think tanks in the region that are not funded by their respective governments is more precarious, as they not only compete for funding with each other but also increasingly with other entities, including private foundations, international universities and research centers. Some think tanks have commented that their independence would be reinforced if their funding models were based on endowments.¹³

“Endowment-based funding would allow the institute to create a more seamless approach to its projects, whereas the current funding model requires it to accept funding and then attempt to create a coherent research agenda.”
Mudar Kassis, CEO, Muwatin Center, Palestine.

Industry participants have highlighted that competition for financing in the region has become more intense in recent years, endangering the sustainability of think tanks forced to continuously

compete for funding. Few donors are now providing multi-year funding not linked to the delivery of specific outputs, which makes think tanks less agile in how they deploy their resources and less able to operate with long-term perspectives.

The fact that their funding is linked to specific research projects, which may or may not be funded beyond each financial year, endangers their sustainability. Senior representatives of think tanks do not perceive undue international donor interference in their activities. However, some believe that donors do influence their thematic orientations, as think tanks need to reply to requests for proposals issued by international organizations in order to remain financially viable.

“The sector is now characterized by higher competition since donors, and international organizations more generally have established presence in the region after the Arab Spring.”
Mohamed El Agati, Director, Arab Forum for Alternatives, Lebanon.

“This competition reflects a lack of boundaries and a lack of understanding of differences between an NGO and a think tank.”
Omar Shaban, CEO, Palthink.

Resource constraints have an impact on Arab think tanks' thematic orientation, their scope of work, and their ability to engage with their constituencies effectively. This is perhaps most markedly reflected in their ability to influence government policy. Overall, think tanks in the region commented that they are less active in advocacy and that their impact on public policy is limited compared to their international peers.

This is also a reflection of their belief that government actors do not typically seek to utilize their research in developing public policies. Our research has highlighted that research and other think tank products, whether government-funded or not, can be better leveraged to help inform public policy. Even government-funded think tanks believe that they rarely influence government policy; instead, they comment on it.

The legal framework

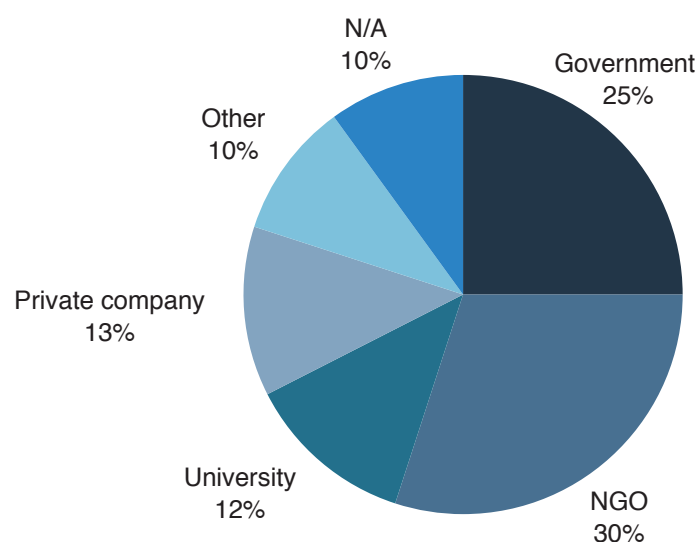
The funding and legal structure of think tanks are usually closely interrelated. Internationally, think tanks are commonly registered as not-for-profit, non-governmental (NGO) organizations to help preserve their intellectual and operational integrity and independence. However, this is not always the case

in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. In fact, think tanks in the region are extremely diverse in a number of ways, including their legal form.

The region's think tanks are registered in a variety of forms, including corporate entities (e.g., sole proprietorships, limited liability companies [LLCs]), companies of mixed nature, not-for-profit entities and NGOs. Several think tanks surveyed for this report revealed that they are registered in a corporate form in order to avoid the complexities associated with NGO registration. As highlighted in Figure 7, only 30% of the largest think tanks examined for this report are registered as NGOs, and a further 25% as government entities.¹⁴

In practice, the classification of think tanks in the region is significantly more complex. Those

Figure 7. Legal status of think tanks (n=40).



Source: GOVERN Center, 2019.

think tanks surveyed for this report registered as not-for-profit companies acknowledge this as a suboptimal solution. However, registering a think tank as an NGO can be complex and risky for their independence. In a number of jurisdictions, such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, registering an NGO is a lengthy and legally complex process.¹⁵

“One of the most significant challenges for think tanks is the difference between its legal framework and the actual governance needs of the entity.”
Mohamed El Agaati, Director, Arab Forum for Alternatives.

Registering think tanks as not-for-profit, non-governmental organizations is also plagued by other practical formalities related to their supervision and funding models. While NGOs are often registered with one entity (commonly ministries of social affairs, ministries of the interior, or equivalents), they are supervised by a range of ministries, including finance/economy ministries, among others.¹⁶ These entities are also involved in controlling the receipt of funding via various government approvals.

A further influential factor cited by some think tanks behind their reasoning not to establish themselves as NGOs is the lack of legal clarity. NGO law in Egypt, for example, has been subject to continuous amendments.¹⁷ In some cases, these amendments have relaxed the overall framework governing NGOs, while some recent amendments have had the opposite effect. Some representatives of the sector stated that governments might impose high and arbitrary penalties to exercise censorship or control over specific think tanks.

Indeed, the penalties inscribed in some NGO laws make it prohibitive for individuals to register and operate them across the MENA region. Egypt’s revised NGO law of July 2019, for example, removed the jail penalty for infringements of the law and

replaced it with fines of between US\$12,000 to US\$60,000. Opponents of this law suggest it can be used to silence those NGOs that challenge government policies.

The status of NGOs may be complicated by other formal and informal parameters. In Palestine, for example, legal pressure on NGOs can be exercised in informal ways, which has led to several Palestinian entities registering as companies. In Lebanon, it became more challenging in recent years to register a Syrian think tank or any NGO. The Emirati government has taken a more formal approach, limiting the term of the licenses.

“The term of the license of the non-governmental association shall be one-year, renewable for similar periods. At the request of the non-governmental association, and after obtaining the approval of the CDA and the concerned authority, the license term may be more than one year but not more than three years.”
Dubai NGO law, 2017.

Overall, registrations of NGOs are perceived to be associated with a number of risks, including the unpredictability of the registration process, possible governmental or political party interference and limitations on funding. These complications are reflected in the low figures of NGO registrations in the region. In 2009, there were 162 MENA NGOs. By 2018 this had increased to 260. However, they still only represented less than 5% of NGOs worldwide.

The decision by a think tank to register as a corporation or as an NGO ultimately has significant consequences for its governance. Corporate legislation in some countries in the region incorporates some governance provisions. For example, in Saudi Arabia, LLCs are required to establish a board, which must have an audit committee. On the other hand, most laws governing

the establishment of NGOs have minimal provisions on governance. They usually only mandate board sizes and the requirement for an annual audited report.

Table 2, below, summarises the key governance provisions of NGO laws in the MENA region.

They are reflected in the governance structures of those think tanks registered as NGOs. These provisions are important insofar as they address board-level governance and the transparency of Arab think tanks established as not-for-profit, non-governmental organizations. More detailed provisions are available in Annex III of this report.

Table 2. Governance elements of NGO laws, select countries.

Country	NGO law and regulations	Date of issue	Board composition	Transparency	Other provisions
Egypt	The NGO Law 149 of 2019	2019	All board members must be non-executive	The general assembly assigns auditors and their remuneration	Additional provisions on good governance, funding and associations of a special nature
	Oversight authority: Ministry of Social Solidarity		By-laws to further define roles	Entity to disclose minutes of meeting, decisions, amendments and final accounts	
			Board may not be remunerated	Entity to disclose its statutes, accounts, budget, sources of funding, the names of its members and its activities on its website	
Iraq	Law on Non-Governmental Organizations (Law 12 of 2010)	2010	No board composition provisions	Entity must keep records of members' register; decisions of the general assembly and the board; accounts, including the NGO's revenues and expenses, activities and projects	Additional membership, financial performance, audit, foreign NGOs. NGO networks provisions
	Oversight authority: The NGO department in the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers		Minimum number of founding members established	Financial documents must be kept for five years	

Country	NGO law and regulations	Date of issue	Board composition	Transparency	Other provisions
Jordan	Law of Societies (No. 51 of 2008) as amended by Law 22 of 2009)	2009	Board composition not regulated, as per the by-laws of the society	The relevant ministry shall be provided with records of the general assembly and board proceedings, including meetings, agendas, resolutions, annual reports, annual work plan, and annual budget	Additional provisions on funding, donations and associations of a special nature (unions, non-profit companies, religious entities)
	Oversight authority: Ministry of Social Development or the Council of Ministers				
Lebanon	Ministry of Interior and Municipalities Circular	2006	No board composition provisions	The ministry shall be provided with the statute of association, annual budget, list of the names of the general body members, accounts of the past year, and minutes of elections (of the administrative body)	Additional provisions on the establishment of new associations
	Oversight Authority: Ministry of Interior and Municipalities		Administrative body: at least two persons to be present at the main office		
Morocco	Decree on the Right to Establish Associations	1958	No board composition provisions	Public benefit associations must present holding accounts according to the conditions stated in the circular. Annual reports including all resources must be received within a year Public benefit associations must present their budget and accounts to the donating agency	Additional provisions on associations of a special nature (political parties, and associations of a political nature; public benefit associations; universities and federal associations; foreign associations; armed groups), and on the disposition and possession of funds/support
	Circular on the Conditions of Recognizing Public Benefit for Associations	(ammended 2002 and 2005)	Associations must develop “basic laws”/statute and a list of members assigned to manage the association		
Palestine	Law of Charitable Associations and Community Organizations	2000	Board composition addressed	Present an administrative report containing a full description of the activities of the association Present a financial report signed by the auditor, containing a detailed revenue and expenditure account of the association, in accordance with the accepted accounting principles	Additional provisions on financial affairs, records and foreign and charitable organizations
	Implementing Regulations for Law 1 of 2000, Council of Ministers Decision 9 of 2003	2003	All board members must be non-executive		

Country	NGO law and regulations	Date of issue	Board composition	Transparency	Other provisions	
Tunisia	Law No. 154 of 1959 on Associations	1959	No board composition provisions	Association must submit to the ministry its articles of association/by-laws and publish them on their website	Additional foreign associations; associations of national interests, financial and audits of registers of account provisions	
		1993				
	Basic Law No. 80 pertaining to the registration of NGOs in Tunisia	2011	Associations must keep a register of members, minutes of the board of directors meetings, register of financial or in-kind assistance	Associations receiving government subsidies must submit financial reports to the ministry		
				Decree Number 88 for the Year 2011 on Pertaining to the Regulation of Associations		Publish sources of funding, value and purpose, financial statements and auditor's financial report
Yemen	Law on Associations and Foundations (Law No. 1 of 2001)	2001	Board composition addressed	File with the ministry articles of association, activities and project reports and financial reports	Additional financial, membership, control committee and non-Yemeni associations provisions	
		2004	All board members must be non-executive			To be ratified by the general assembly
	Implementing Regulations for the Law on Associations and Foundations		Exceptions to be approved by the general assembly			

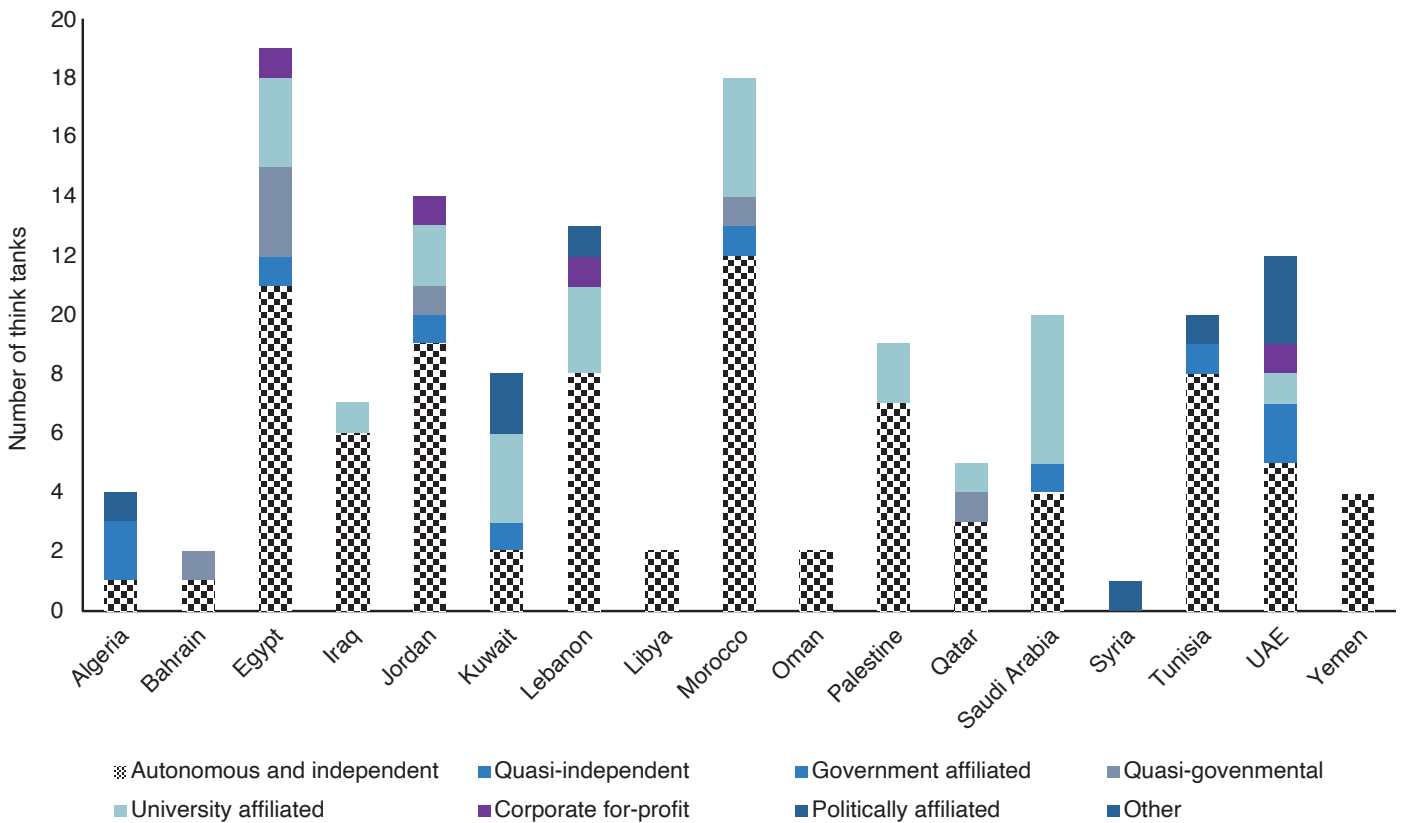
Source: GOVERN research, 2019.

Governance and research independence

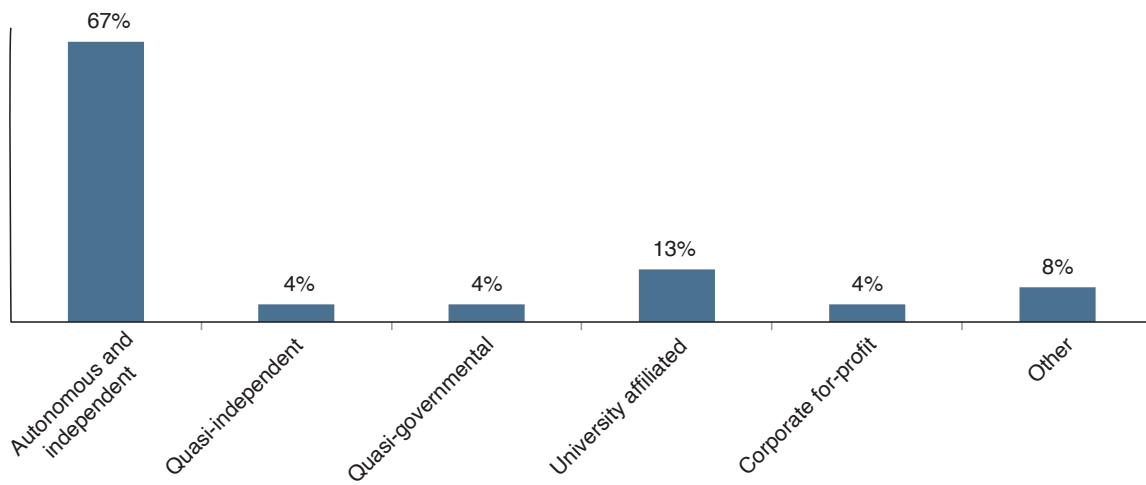
The vast majority of the entities surveyed for this project consider themselves to be autonomous and independent. As highlighted in Figure 8, below, most think tank sectors, apart from those in Algeria, Syria, and, to a lesser extent, Bahrain,¹⁸ are dominated by independent institutions. Although a number of think tanks consider themselves to be autonomous, the reality appears more complex from both governance and funding perspectives.

The online survey we disseminated to think tanks in the MENA region for this report asked how others perceive the status of their entity and how the entity perceives itself. As shown in figures 9-11, below, while 67% of respondents considered the think tank they represent as being autonomous and independent, only 54% of the entities confirmed that their stakeholders perceive it to be so.

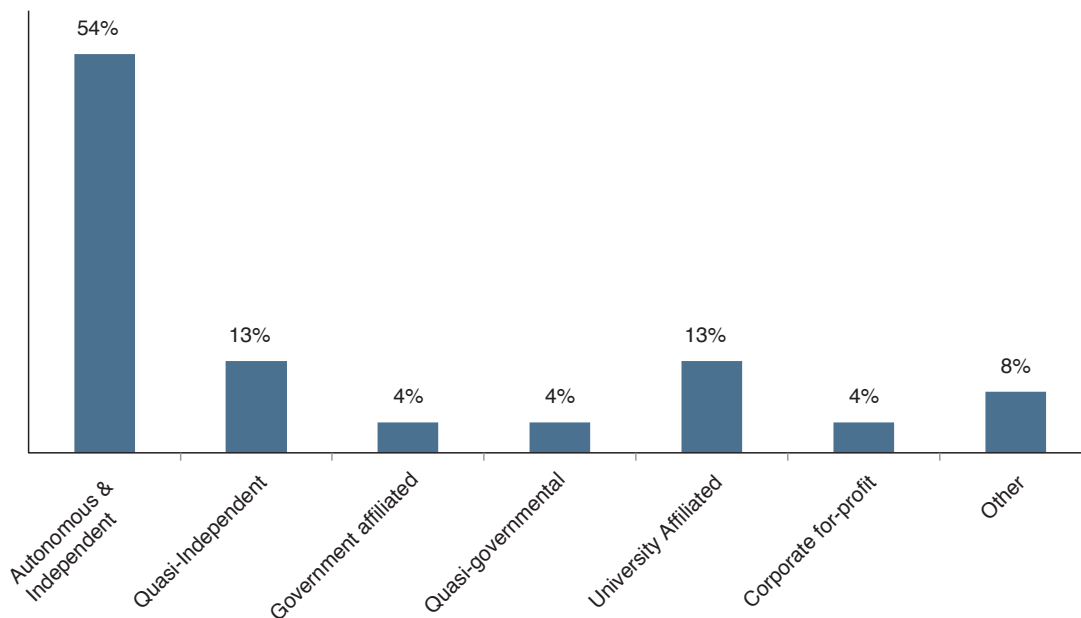
Figure 8. Affiliation of Arab think tanks (n=140).



Source: GOVERN Center, 2019.

Figure 9. Perception of think tanks' autonomy (n=24).

Source: GOVERN Center, online survey, 2019.

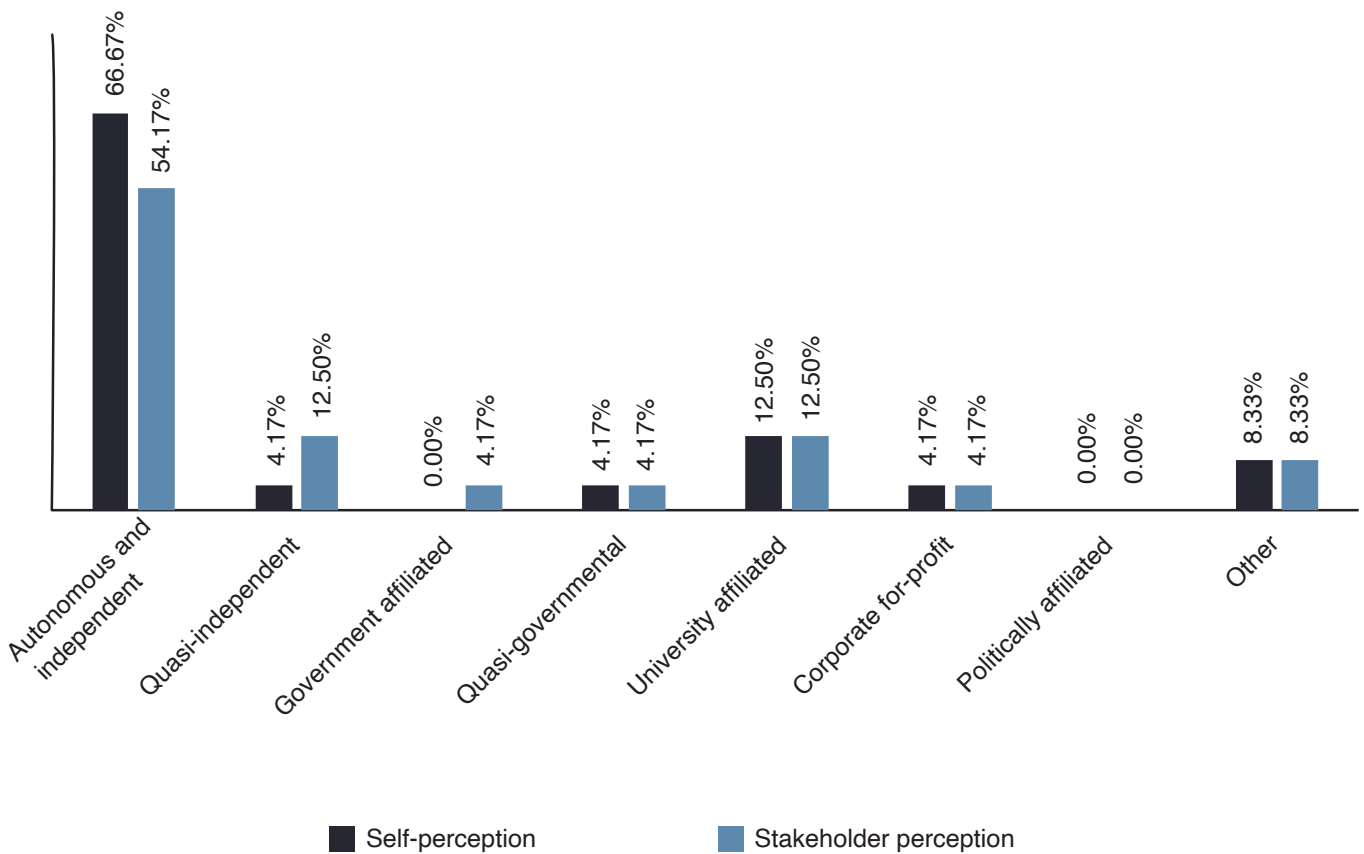
Figure 10. Stakeholder perceptions of think tanks' autonomy (n=24).

Source: GOVERN Center, online survey, 2019.

Important differences emerge between how the stakeholders of a given entity perceive it and how its board members or senior staff perceive it. For example, some think tanks, such as KAPSARC and the EDA, which consider themselves to be independent of the government, commented that external stakeholders might assume that they are linked to the government. Both are chaired by their countries’ relevant government ministers, and both receive government funding either directly or indirectly.

The EDA, whose board is chaired by the minister of foreign affairs, does not consider itself to be part of the government apparatus because it was established as an independent federal entity by a Council of Ministers’ decree. The minister for foreign affairs chairs the EDA’s board, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs allocates its budget. The EDA provides training to the foreign service but does not formally report to the ministry.

Figure 11. Comparative perceptions of think tank autonomy (n=24).



Source: GOVERN Center, online survey, 2019.

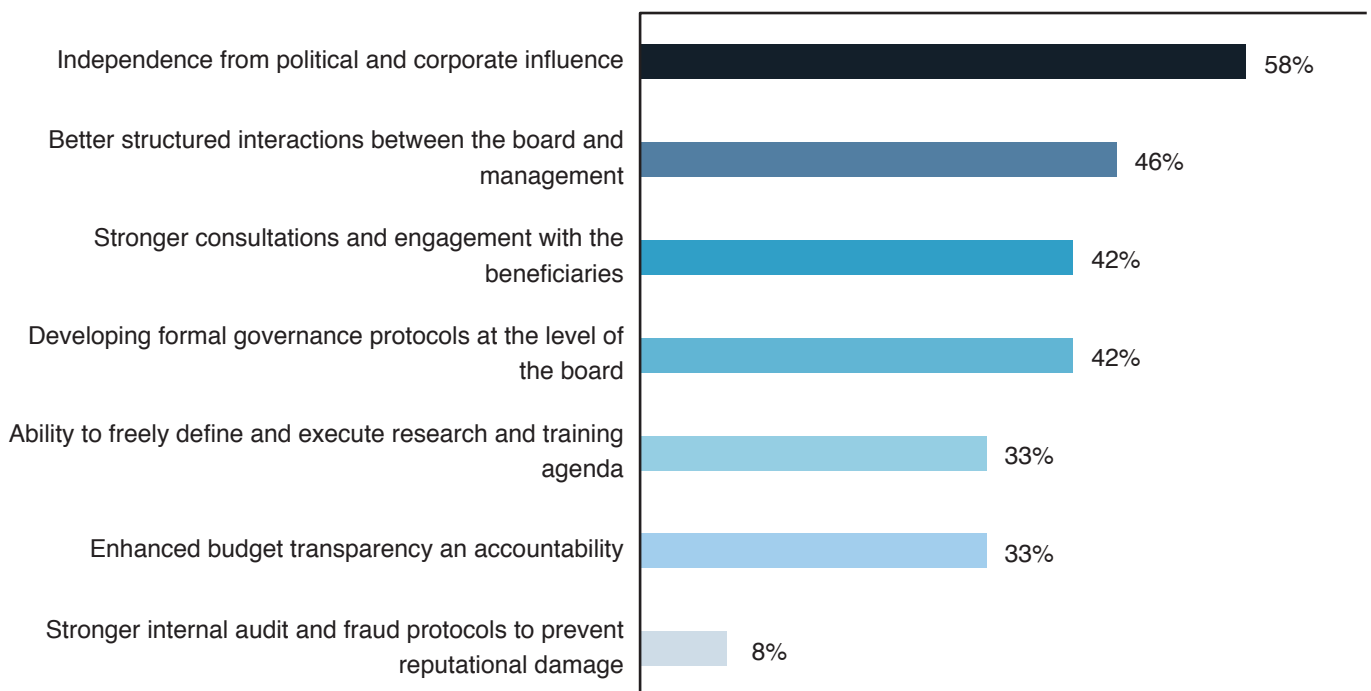
Of particular concern for entities such as the EDA is not only that they are perceived as being part of the government, but also that their research indirectly represents official government policy, which may not be the case. The EDA's management does not perceive that its governance structure results in the politicization of its activities, but that it reflects the government's priorities for diplomatic training (the mandate of the EDA is to develop the UAE's diplomatic corps).

KAPSARC, in Saudi Arabia, is chaired by the minister of energy and does not consider itself to be government-affiliated. Its budget is based on an endowment and is not subject to political interference, and its research agenda is set by its management, who are independent of the government. The board of KAPSARC reviews its thematic programs biannually at board meetings.

The funding model of a think tank drives its independence. Our research revealed that local government funding is often associated with the risk of politicization of think tanks' activities, whereas the same risk is not perceived for foreign donor support. The risk of domestic political interference is not only perceived vis-à-vis the government but also vis-à-vis different political factions (e.g., Fatah and Hamas in Palestine).

It is unsurprising, therefore, that the responses to the online survey we disseminated prioritized independence from political and corporate influence as an overwhelming priority (Figure 12). Political interference in think tank activities was perceived as a significant challenge, precluding many from registering as NGOs. Political interference was also seen as an obstacle to their ongoing operations.

Figure 12. Governance priorities, select think tanks (n=24).



Source: GOVERN Center, online survey, 2019.

As discussed in the following sections of the report, several factors place the independence of a number of entities at risk. These include a dependence on the government for funding, political interference in critical governance processes such as receipt of funding, board appointments and even research orientations. Notably, think tank representatives think that competition for funding, and the consequent influence of their donors, may have further reduced their independence.

Donors do not generally take a holistic view of think tank activities. Instead, they allocate funding to specific and shorter-term projects, whereas the impact of a think tank's activities may be spread over the long term. Some donors may have a long-term perspective, tracking performance indicators over three years or longer, whereas most donors will base their decisions on an annual perspective.

Government-funded think tanks less concerned with funding instability have expressed a concern that their own governance is also heavily influenced by political forces, and sometimes even at the level of project management. For example, the government-affiliated Algerian scientific think tank CREAD may be asked to deliver specific projects on an ad hoc basis by the government, even if they do not feature in their annual research program. This orients their activities towards shorter-term projects.

Several think tanks have publicly committed to their policies of not accepting government funding. For instance, the Maghreb Economic Forum (MEF) has the following policy in place to guard its financial independence: "The MEF will never favor the interests of any political party, government (national or international), donor, or non-governmental organizations over the interests of the common good."

"In the case that an expert receives inappropriate pressure on his or her analysis, conclusions, research, or other activities, the expert must immediately inform the president and relevant members of the MEF."

Maghreb Economic Forum website, 2019.

Government-funded think tanks are naturally subject to most political influence, both in terms of their substantive activities and their governance structures. For instance, the governance structure and substantive activities of CREAD are decided by the relevant minister. The board of the think tank is appointed by the minister, and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is also recommended by the minister and appointed by a presidential decree. For other entities throughout the region, the head of state nominates the CEO, who has the powers normally associated with boards.¹⁹

Think tanks that are government funded or otherwise affiliated with other entities consider a lack of board independence, and the inadequate separation between board and senior executive roles, as of particular concern to them. For example, one large government-affiliated think tank commented that its key governance obstacles included a lack of board or trustee independence and objectivity, an inadequate separation between executive and board roles, and a lack of governance awareness at the management level.

"Donations, grants, assistance and loans can be offered to PASSIA provided that they have no strings attached and provided that the administration of PASSIA approves them."

Deniz Altayli, Program Director, PASSIA, Palestine.



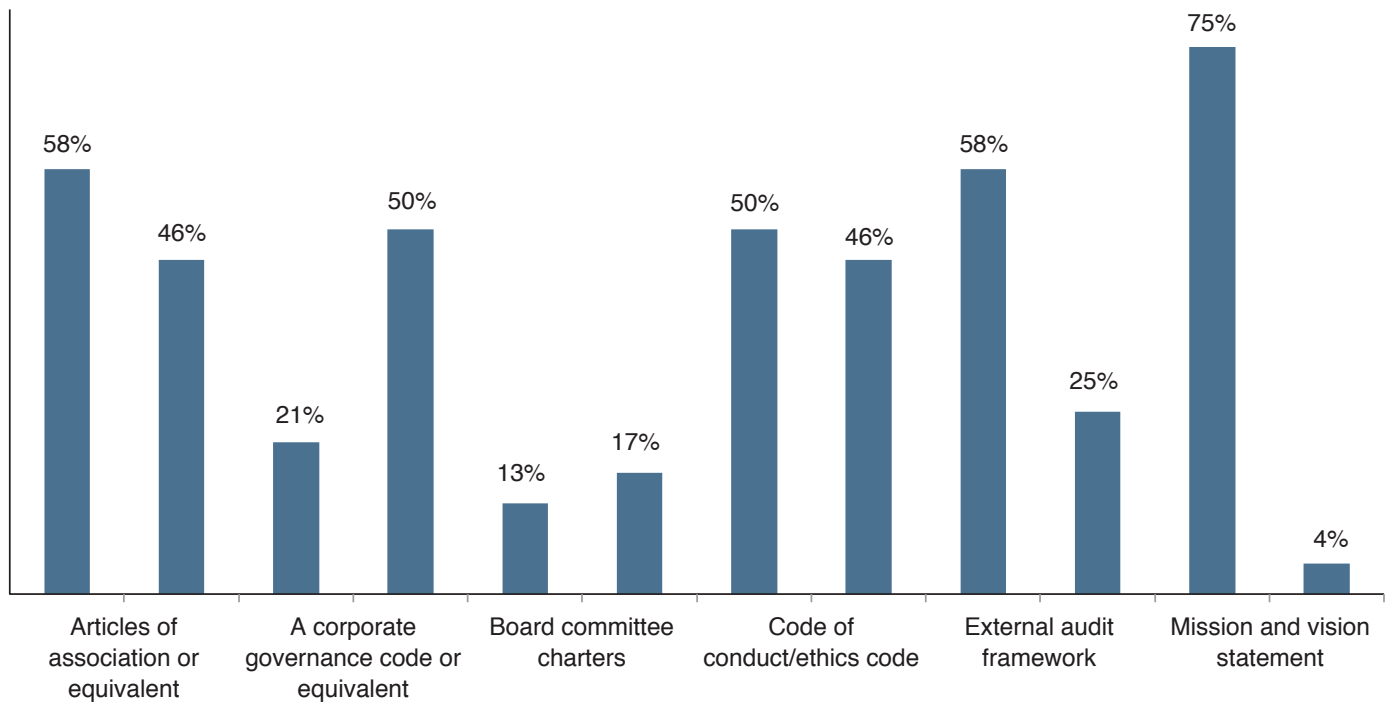
PART II. THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

Founding documents

The founding documents of Arab think tanks reflect the diversity of their legal registration. Think tanks in the MENA region can be registered by a royal or government decree, as a non-government organization, as a not-for-profit corporation, a for-profit entity, or a part of a university and, hence, not registered as a separate entity. The method of a think tank's incorporation determines the sophistication of its underlying governance framework.

Few of the think tanks we surveyed appear to have formalized governance frameworks, and even fewer make them publicly available. According to our survey of the largest think tanks in the region, the most common publicly available aspects of their governance were their mission and vision, whereas few think tanks provide public information on their delegation of authorities (25%) or their risk management frameworks (17%).

Figure 13. Founding documents (n=24).



Source: GOVERN Center, online survey, 2019.

While the largest think tanks across the region have boards of governors or boards of trustees, few have board charters, and even fewer have codes of ethics. For instance, the large think tanks in the UAE and Qatar do not appear to have any of these, representing an opportunity for them to improve. However, there are some best practices demonstrated by some entities that merit highlighting.

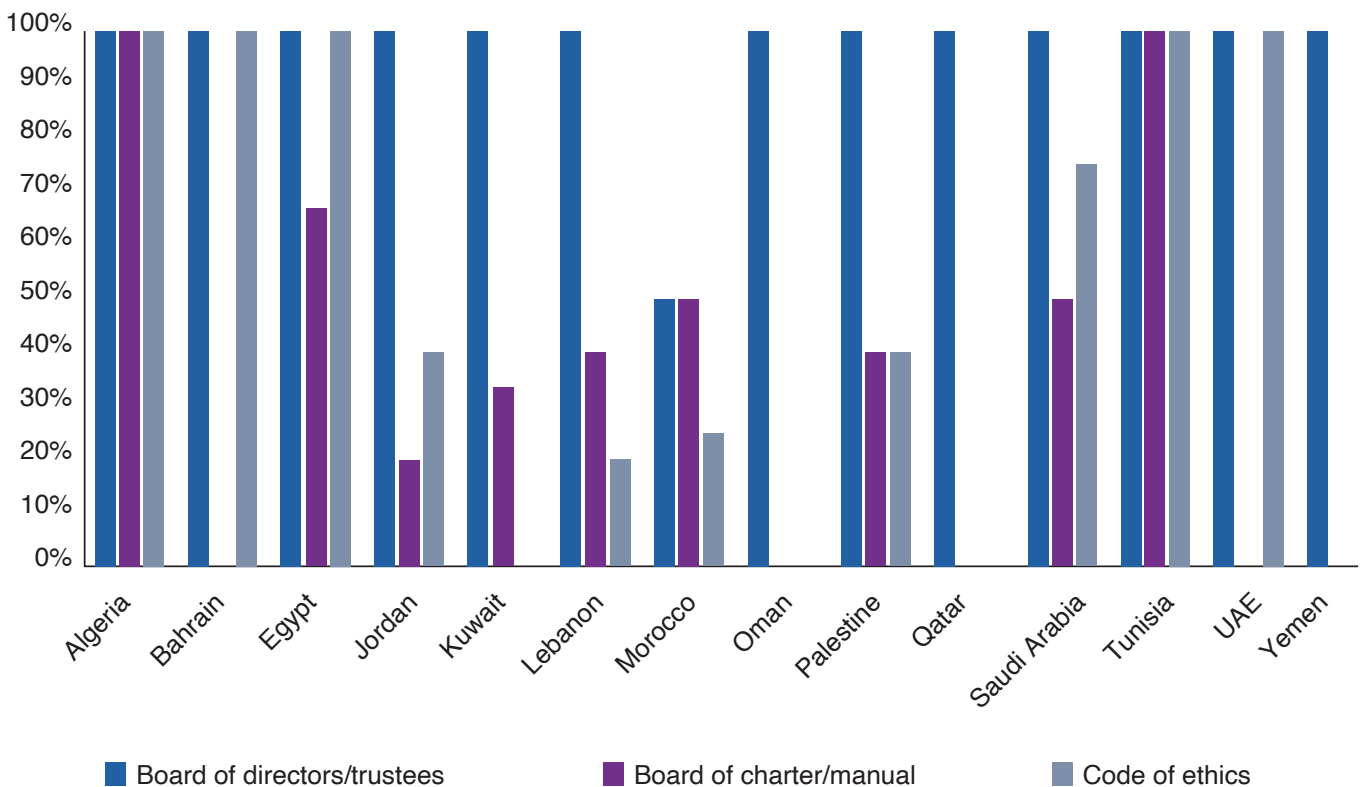
For instance, the ERF publishes its institutional charter, which clearly addresses its governance structure, including board appointments, the

mandate of the board, and the division of responsibilities between the board and the advisory committee. The charter also specifies the composition of the annual general assembly, the frequency of its meetings and the relationship between it and the board.

“Amendments to the charter may be proposed by the board of trustees or by at least 20% of the research fellows, following deliberations during the general assembly meeting.”

Economic Research Forum, Egypt, extract from its charter, 2019.

Figure 14. Board charters and codes of ethics (n=40).



Source: GOVERN Center, 2019.

While many think tanks state that they have external and internal audit frameworks, these are not made publicly available. Less than half of the region's largest think tanks have either an external or internal audit framework, and only six out of the 40 most active entities have a risk management framework. To some extent, this reflects other checks and balances, such as audits by the respective state audit bodies for government think tanks.

Best practices would call for at least an external audit framework to be in place, and some NGO laws require an external audit for organizations of a certain size. In some organizations, such as the EDA, the external audit framework is submitted to the chair of the board for their review and approval. Another positive example is Palthink. Its governance and audit framework is developed jointly with the strategic planning framework by its senior staff, reviewed and adopted by the board every three years.

In some instances, the lack of a formalized governance framework is a consequence of the entity's legal form of establishment. For instance, university-affiliated think tanks may have their governance structures subsumed under broader

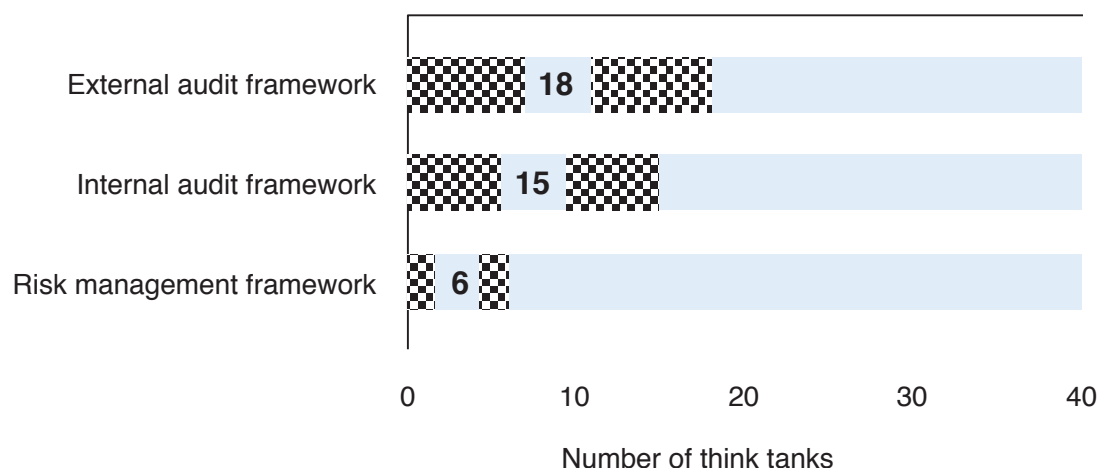
university governance structures. As such, they are governed through a two-tier structure comprising the university and think tank boards and do not necessarily have separate audit and risk frameworks.

In other cases, the lack of a formalized governance process is a reflection of the quality of the governance process of a given entity and the quality of the regulatory framework of a particular country. Interestingly, some leading regional think tanks, cognizant of these issues, have decided to register their operations outside the region. For example, the Gulf Research Center (GRC), originally established in Dubai, later registered in Geneva so that it would be governed by the Swiss NGO law, which requires specific governance parameters. This is perceived by the GRC's management to give the think tank's activities further credibility and transparency vis-à-vis its donors.

"One of the reasons for which we have, in fact, opened an office in Geneva was to further enhance the governance of GRC as the Swiss law has requirements in this regard, and Swiss NGOs are respected by donors for this reason."

Oskar Ziemelis, Director of Cooperation, Gulf Research Center.

Figure 15. Presence of risk and audit frameworks (n=40).



Source: GOVERN Center, review of websites, 2019.

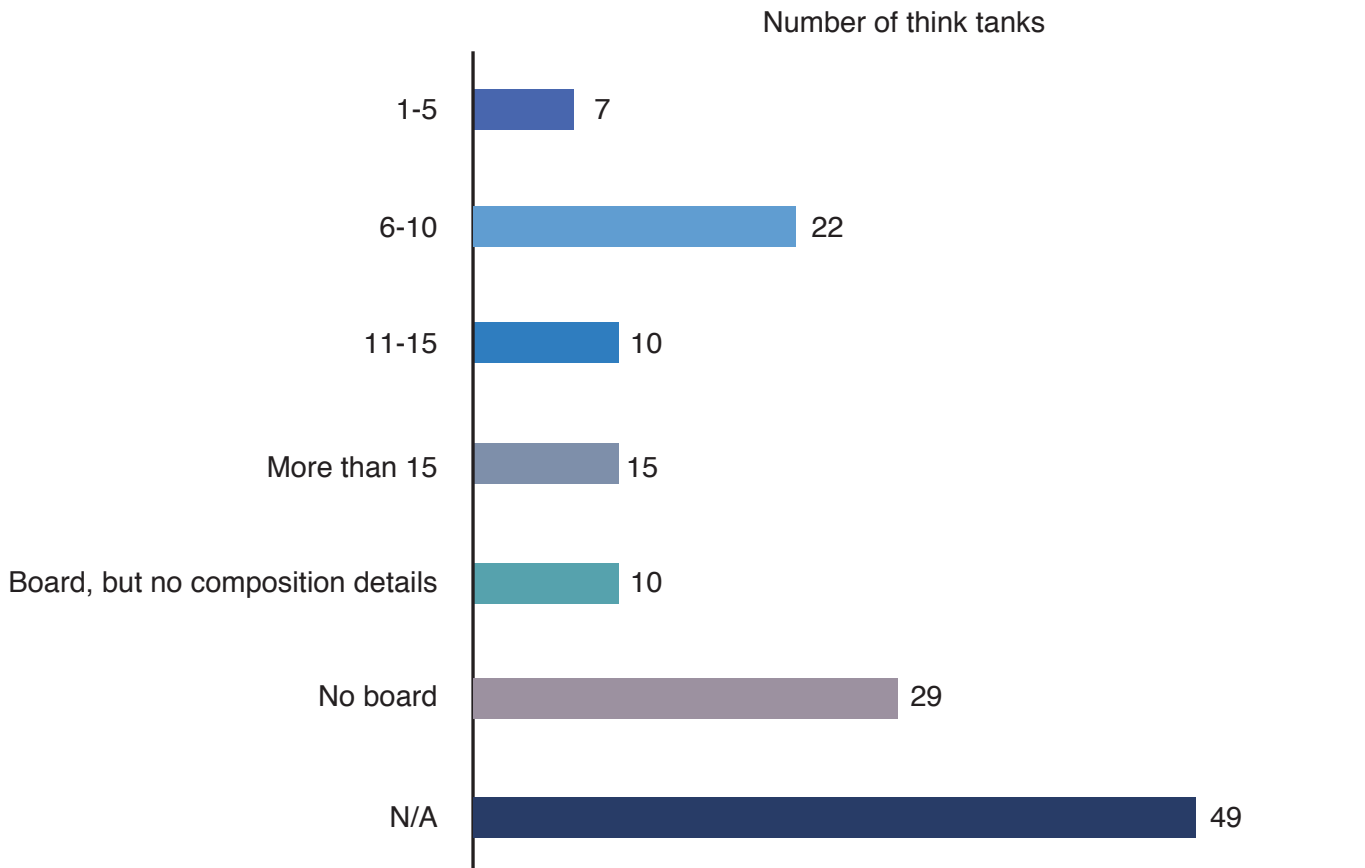
Board nomination and composition

Whether a think tank is registered as an NGO or a corporate entity, its board of directors or board of trustees is arguably the most critical supervisory organ. It is ultimately responsible for the delivery of its mission and the fulfilment of its obligations to donors and other beneficiaries. As highlighted by our research, only 49 think tanks in our sample of 140 appear to have a board and disclose its composition. This compares negatively to corporate board governance in the region, where board composition is better addressed.

As highlighted by Figure 16 below, the most common board size in the sample was between 6 and 10 members, which is broadly in line with those in the corporate sector. However, think tank boards vary a lot in size. For example, Palthink has a three-member board, whereas the Arab Thought Forum in Jordan and the Moroccan Institute for International Relations both have 25-member boards. While some think tanks are expanding their boards, others are reducing them.²⁰

As highlighted by figures 17 and 18 below, there does not appear to be any correlation between board sizes and the countries in which they are

Figure 16. Board size of Arab think tanks (n=140).



Source: GOVERN Center, 2019.

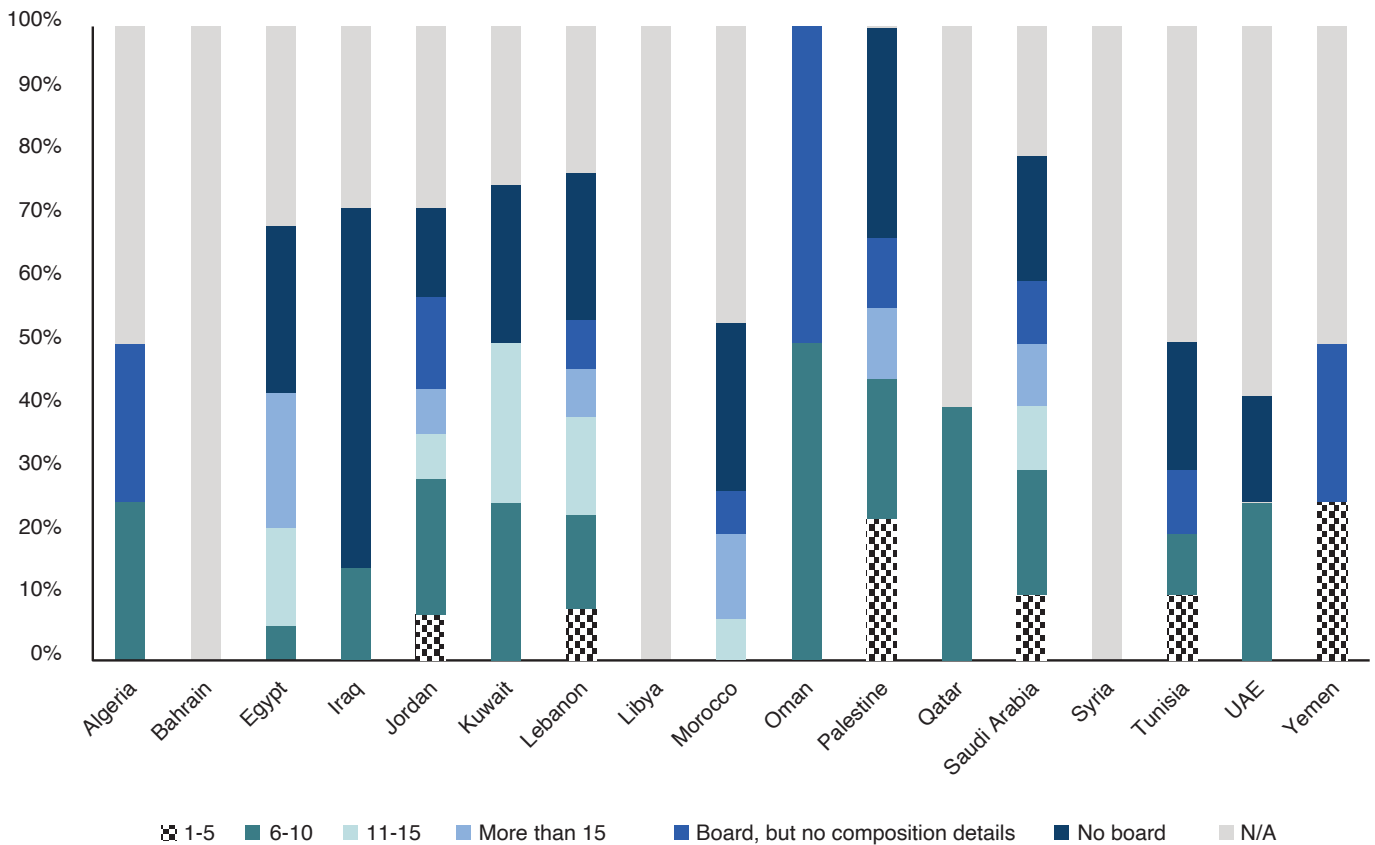
domiciled or type of think tanks. In general, however, it appears that for institutions with established governance processes, the board of directors, the board of trustees or the equivalent tend to be larger. This larger group represents a wider set of stakeholders, including donors, researchers and prominent social figures.

Whether a think tank is autonomous, government-affiliated or university-affiliated does appear to make a difference to its board structure (Figure 18). Even the conceptualization of what a board is and what its responsibilities are differs depending on the type of entity it serves. As a result, the responsibilities of a think tank board is not always clear.

Several think tanks have multiple boards, including a board of directors, a board of trustees, advisory and other boards. The responsibilities of these boards are not always clearly defined. Many boards, such as consultative or advisory boards, have no formal mandate, but their membership can be more structured than that of the main supervisory board.

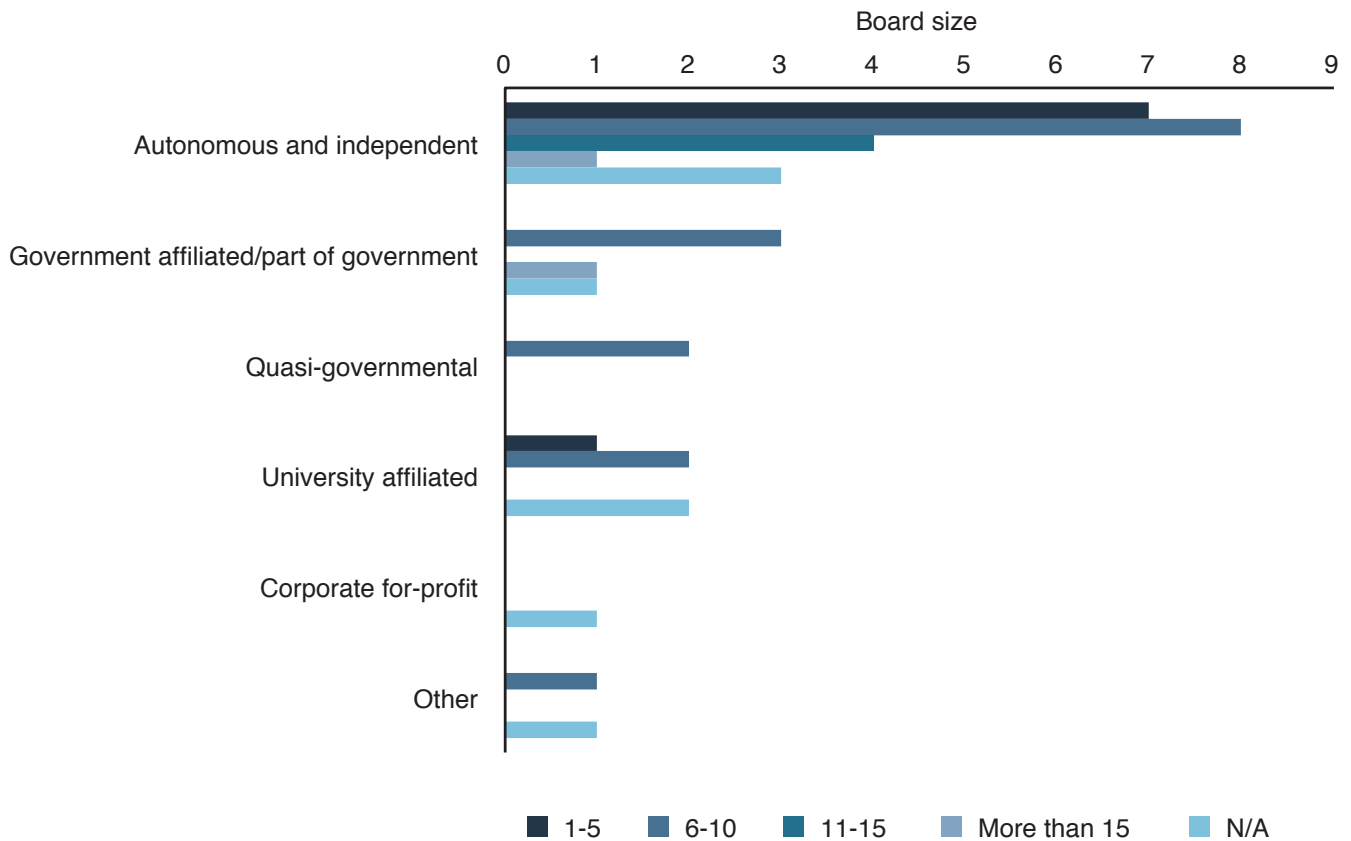
Some institutions have a dual-board oversight structure in place. University-based think tanks are generally supervised by both their own board and the university's board. The university board typically approves the university's budget and its senior appointments, including those of any think tanks hosted by the university. The think tank, in turn, often has its own board and, in best-practice cases,

Figure 17. Board size by country (n=140).



Source: GOVERN Center, 2019.

Figure 18. Board size by type of think tank (n=40).



Source: GOVERN Center, review of websites, 2019.

has its own governing documents, even if it is not established as a separate legal entity.

“As a university-based think tank, we are limited in our lobbying or advocacy activities. However, we enjoy the support of the university in terms of our research agenda, which we consider critical for the success of the entity.”

Mudar Kassis, CEO, Muwatin Institute.

For instance, the Muwatin Institute, which was first established as an NGO in Palestine, was subsequently merged with Birzeit University. This was to ensure its sustainability within the university framework, where it can draw upon academic and support functions to deliver its projects. The

institute is supervised by its own board but also by the CEO of the university and, less directly, by the university’s board. The institute’s board is structured as an advisory board of academics, whereas the university’s board acts more as a governing board.

Our interviews with think tank representatives in the region highlighted that the boards of government-affiliated think tanks are often appointed by the respective government. In privately managed think tanks, they are appointed by the CEO and/or the chair. The appointment of boards of government-affiliated think tanks is typically done through a ministerial decree. For instance, at the EDA in the UAE, the cabinet appoints the chair (i.e., the minister of foreign affairs), who nominates the other

members of the board. This selection is then ratified by the cabinet. The senior management team is also appointed by the cabinet, not by the board itself.

In privately run think tanks, board members sometimes become shareholders. They have to purchase shares at a nominal price to be appointed and be registered in the company's register. In our interviews, this was reported as occurring most frequently in Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine. This setup creates an ambiguous relationship between the board and the CEO, as the board does not decide on the recruitment, remuneration and dismissal of the CEO and the executive team.

Donors generally do not ask to sit on think tank boards. Instead, they exercise their oversight primarily through specific grant conditions or restrictions and by reviewing annual and periodic reporting. Donors operating in some politically sensitive jurisdictions such as Palestine appear to be more careful in their activities. As a result, some think tanks have commented that a majority of board and CEO responsibilities deal with "defending" projects that they are delivering.

Ultimately, think tank boards include those put in place purely to satisfy certain governance requirements, those that provide strategic and funding orientation, and those that largely provide guidance on research. The role of the board is also, in some cases, conceived as representing the interests of the organization vis-à-vis donors and stakeholders, rather than supervising the activities of the entity.

Nomination processes for think tank boards appear to be rather ad hoc, rather than the more structured processes that would be found in corporations. As such, the procedures for nomination and election, remuneration and dismissal are not codified in think tank founding documents, or are not applied as per the prevailing applicable legislation (i.e., NGO or corporate law).

This allows the composition of think tank boards to be determined by founding CEOs, or chairmen, as they often effectively 'recruit' the board. These processes ultimately dictate the type of boards that think tanks in the region tend to have. Only a few boards in the region prioritize the strategies of their respective think tanks. However, some entities, such as the Gulf Research Center, do believe that their boards are providing valuable strategic input.

"Our boards in Dubai and Geneva are extremely valuable as they provide further input on strategic issues that the GRC faces."

Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman, Gulf Research Center.

In general, two types of boards appear to be most common: a board that represents the think tank vis-à-vis its stakeholders and donors and whose role is therefore primarily funding related, and a board whose role is to oversee the think tank's alignment with government strategy. Few organizations in the region, such as PASSIA in Palestine, have boards of trustees comprised of leading academics that guide their research activities.

"The board of trustees is composed of a minimum of 10 members and a maximum of 20. The founders of PASSIA are automatically considered the first board of trustees, regardless of their number. The board elects new members from the active members within PASSIA."

PASSIA by-laws, 1987.

The structure of the boards of the region’s largest think tanks is summarized in Table 3 below. The table highlights a significant diversity of board sizes, committee structures and gender diversity, which are discussed in detail in the next section. Ultimately, despite this diversity in board structures, the challenge for boards of Arab think tanks is to focus on strategy oversight.

“At EDA, the focus of our board during its bi-annual meetings is on strategic orientations. For example, recognizing that the UAE diplomatic corps needs a more in-depth understanding of the Asian region, we have launched a UAE-Asia program.”

Phil Dufty, Acting Deputy Director General and Director of Research, the Emirates Diplomatic Academy, UAE.

Table 3. Board structure, select think tanks.

Think tank	Board size	Women on the board	External experts on the board	Board committees
Centre National pour la Recherche Scientifique et Technique	28	5	0	Scientific, ad hoc Audit
Arab Thought Forum	25	1	18	Executive
Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies	14	4	N/A	-
Economic Research Forum	13	5	11	Advisory, Ethics Finance
Egyptian Center for Economic Studies	12	1	0	Audit Executive
Arab Forum for Alternatives	11	6	8	-
Kuwait Economic Society	10	1	N/A	Various board- and executive-level committees
International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas	10	4	9	Advisory, Executive Ad hoc
International Center for Biosaline Agriculture	10	3	4	-
Emirates Diplomatic Academy	10	1	0	Advisory

Source: GOVERN Center, 2019.

Note: External experts are defined as non-nationals of the country where the think tank is registered.

Board diversity

Board diversity in the region's think tank sector is generally in line with that of the corporate sector. In a number of countries, including the UAE and Saudi Arabia, a certain percentage of board members are required to be nationals. In other countries, such as Palestine, it is difficult to invite external board members to sit on boards.

The laws and regulations governing the region's think tank (and corporate) sector rarely specify how board diversity is to be achieved. In most countries in the region, only the percentage of female non-executive directors in listed companies is specified in law. Board gender composition is generally not addressed, except, to some extent, in the UAE, where listed companies are required to nominate women to their boards.

In practice, most board members in Arab think tanks are appointed and remain on boards for more than ten years, as they have been brought on board by the founding chair, as is the case in the GRC. In university-affiliated think tanks, their appointment may be linked to the duration of their academic appointment (e.g., Muwatin). There is, therefore, a lack of renewal of these boards. On the one hand, this provides a degree of stability in oversight; on the other, it does not allow for fresh ideas to develop at the supervisory level.

Corporate boards in many countries in the region lack female representation. However, research center boards appear to fare better. Thirty think tanks (75% of our sample of 40) in the region

disclose the number of female board members. Twenty-four (60%) have at least one woman on the board and eight (20%) have four or more. Board diversity is slowly improving due to the increasing recognition that female participation is important.

For example, approximately one-third of Palthink's board is female. The Royal Institute of Interfaith Studies' board of 14 trustees has four women, and the ERF's board of 13 trustees has five women. The EDA's board, solely comprised of UAE nationals, has one female representative and its international advisory board of eight has two women. The Arab Forum for Alternatives appears to have the most diverse board, with women comprising approximately half of it.

"This is a reflection of the fact, to some extent, of the evolution of our clients. In the UAE diplomatic corps, the majority of EDA students are female."

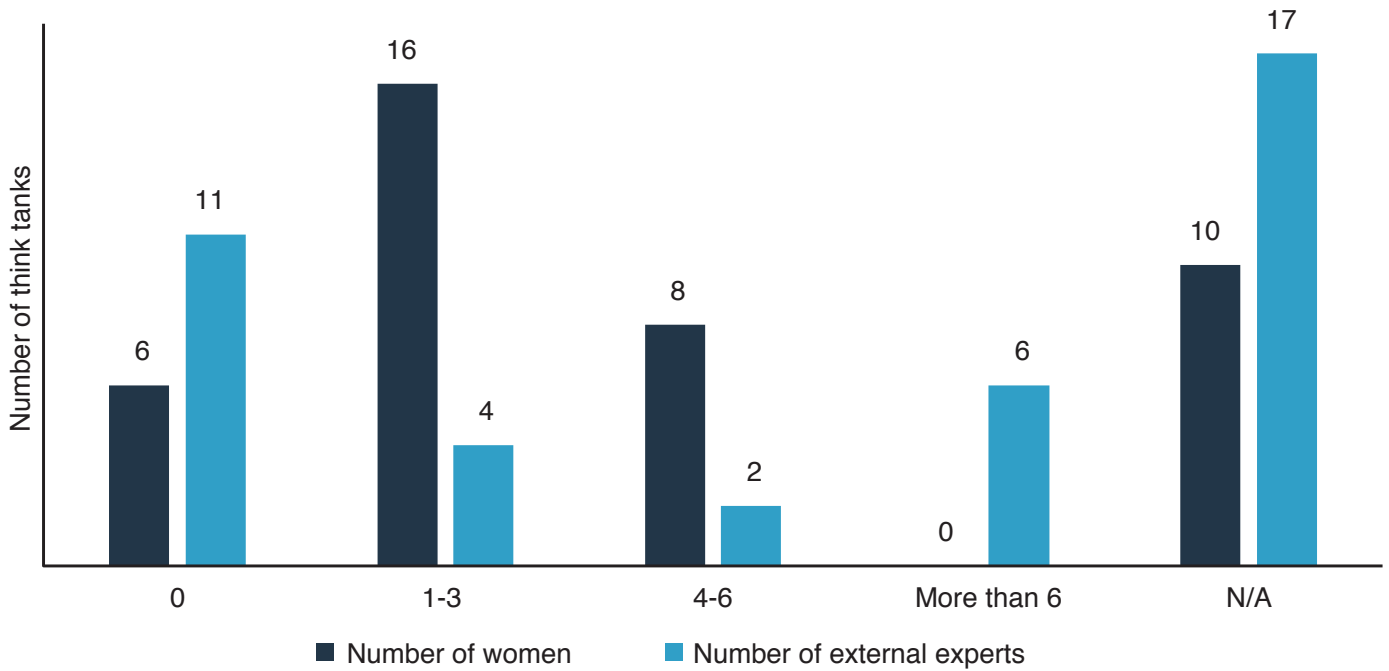
Phil Dufty, Acting Deputy Director General and Director of Research, EDA, UAE.

Boards of think tanks in the region are also increasingly being renewed in favor of new, younger members. The youth is an important segment of MENA societies and needs to be better integrated into research institutes, particularly in helping to define their research agendas. However, young researchers and social leaders are generally under-represented on the boards of Arab think tanks.

"For this reason, PASSIA is now actively reaching out to young leaders with a view to diversify the board from a gender and age perspective."

Deniz Altayli, Program Director, PASSIA, Palestine.

Figure 19. Board diversity in select think tanks (n=40).



Source: GOVERN Center, review of websites, 2019.

Note: External experts are defined as non-nationals of the countries in which the respective think tanks are legally registered.

While the boards of think tanks in the Arab world do not tend to be nationally diverse, international representatives are often present on their advisory boards. From our sample of 40 think tanks, 12 think tanks declared that they have international board members. International board members are most prevalent in non-government affiliated, autonomous and independent think tanks, especially in Lebanon and Jordan. Think tanks with regional and international focuses, such as the ERF in Egypt or the GRC in Saudi Arabia, tend to have more external experts represented on their boards than in nationally-focused think tanks.

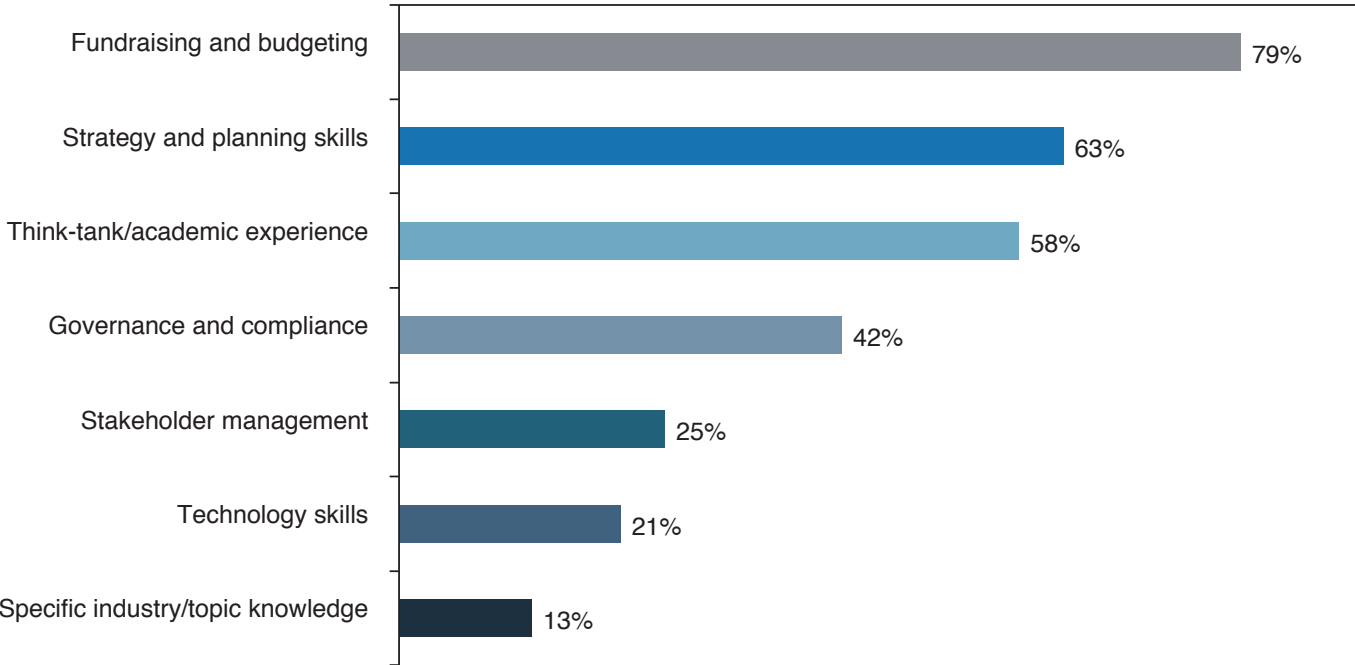
Almost no think tanks in the region explicitly outline their procedures or quotas for the appointment of directors. However, a number of best practices can be identified by observing the actual structures of boards of a few think tanks, such as the EDA in the UAE, the ERF in Egypt or KAPSARC in Saudi Arabia. For example, KAPSARC, one of the largest think tanks in the region, has a five-member board of trustees and a 10-member advisory board, of which two are Saudi nationals.

Board expertise

According to the survey conducted for this report, fundraising, budgeting and strategy skills are those most relevant to and demanded by think tanks in the region. Governance and compliance skills were rated as being less critical. This does not reflect the

levels of board knowledge on governance issues but rather that funding prerogatives dominate board agendas. Likewise, the need for strategy skills at the board level reflects the increasing recognition that boards need to take a more active role in setting think tanks' strategic agendas.

Figure 20. Needed expertise, select think tanks (n =24).



Source: GOVERN Center, online survey, 2019.

Board committees

Board committees in the regions’ think tanks are much less formalized and common than in commercial organizations. Unlike in commercial organizations, where the audit committee is most common, the most common committee for Arab think tanks is the advisory committee to the main board (Figure 21). It is generally not a committee of the board but acts in an advisory role to the board. In many instances, the advisory committee to the board can be as large as the board itself.

“The board of trustees shall appoint an advisory committee of nine members. The board of trustees shall also appoint the advisory committee’s chairperson from among those nine members. Members of the advisory committee shall be affiliates of ERF or other qualified persons.”
Economic Research Forum, Institutional Charter, Egypt.

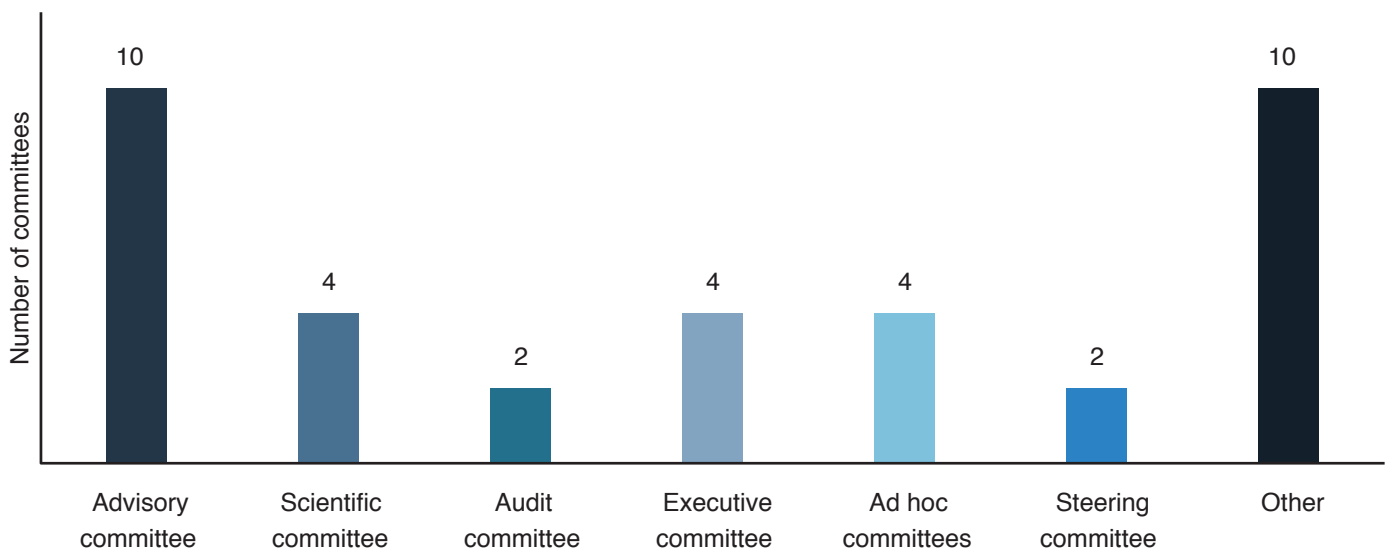
Risk management and governance committees are much less common in Arab think tanks than among

the region’s corporations. Some think tanks, such as the ERF, have ethics and finance committees. The board of PASSIA may appoint a special executive or a supervisory committee to oversee key financial operations (PASSIA by-laws 1987). However, such committees tend to be rare among the region’s think tanks (Figure 21).

The diversity of regional think tanks is not only reflected in their board composition but also in their committees. For instance, some think tanks in the science and technology domain have board science and technology committees. CREAD in Algeria is a science and tech think tank and has a scientific council instead of an advisory committee.

“The scientific council is chaired by a permanent researcher elected by the members of the scientific council from among the elected permanent researchers, of the highest rank. The scientific council decides on research programs and projects to be submitted to the board of directors.”
CREAD website, Algeria, 2019.

Figure 21. Committees of the board (n=40).



Source: GOVERN Center, 2019.

Our research has highlighted a significant variance in the frequency of board and committee meetings. Twenty-three entities surveyed disclose the frequency of their board meetings. However, the interviews we conducted revealed that this frequency is generally lower than that of corporate entities in the region. Over 60% of Arab think tank boards meet between one and three times annually. A few exceptions to this exist: the Muwatin Institute holds board meetings six to seven times a year, reflecting its board’s more active role in strategy and project delivery.

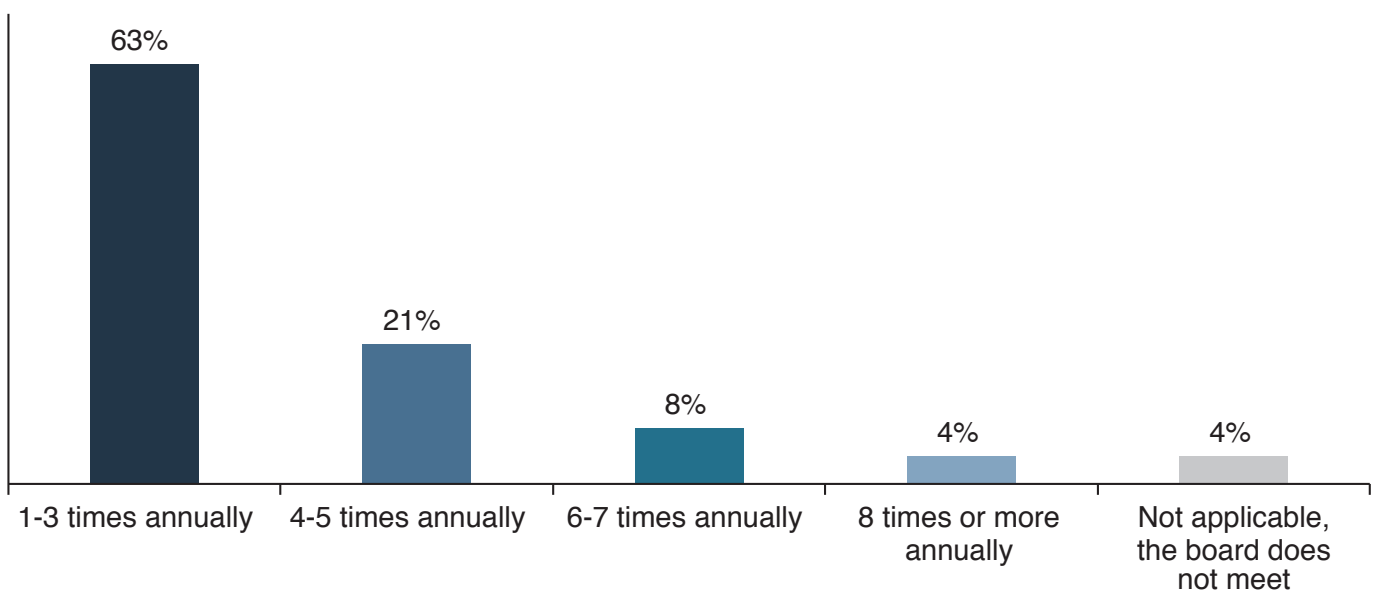
Also, the processes and formalities surrounding board meetings appear to be less formalized: the notifications of and the procedures guiding board meetings are less established than they should be, according to best practice. To some extent, this reflects the ad hoc nature of the governance processes of Arab think tank boards and the practical challenges they face. For example, PASSIA

suggested that its board of directors cannot meet in person due to travel restrictions in Palestine.

“The board shall meet at least once a year, upon the invitation of the chairman”
Institutional Charter, ERF, Egypt.

Except in a handful of institutions, the ad hoc nature of think tank board meetings reflects the absence of a formal corporate secretary. In recent years, the role of the corporate secretary has become increasingly formalized across the region’s corporations. The corporate governance codes of many countries in the region, especially Gulf countries, now require or recommend the appointment of a corporate secretary. However, only a handful of think tanks, such as the Arab Thought Forum and the EDA, have a dedicated board secretary, which has substantially improved the quality of governance at these entities.

Figure 22. Frequency of board meetings, select think tanks (n=24).



Source: GOVERN Center, online survey, 2019.

Senior leadership roles and responsibilities

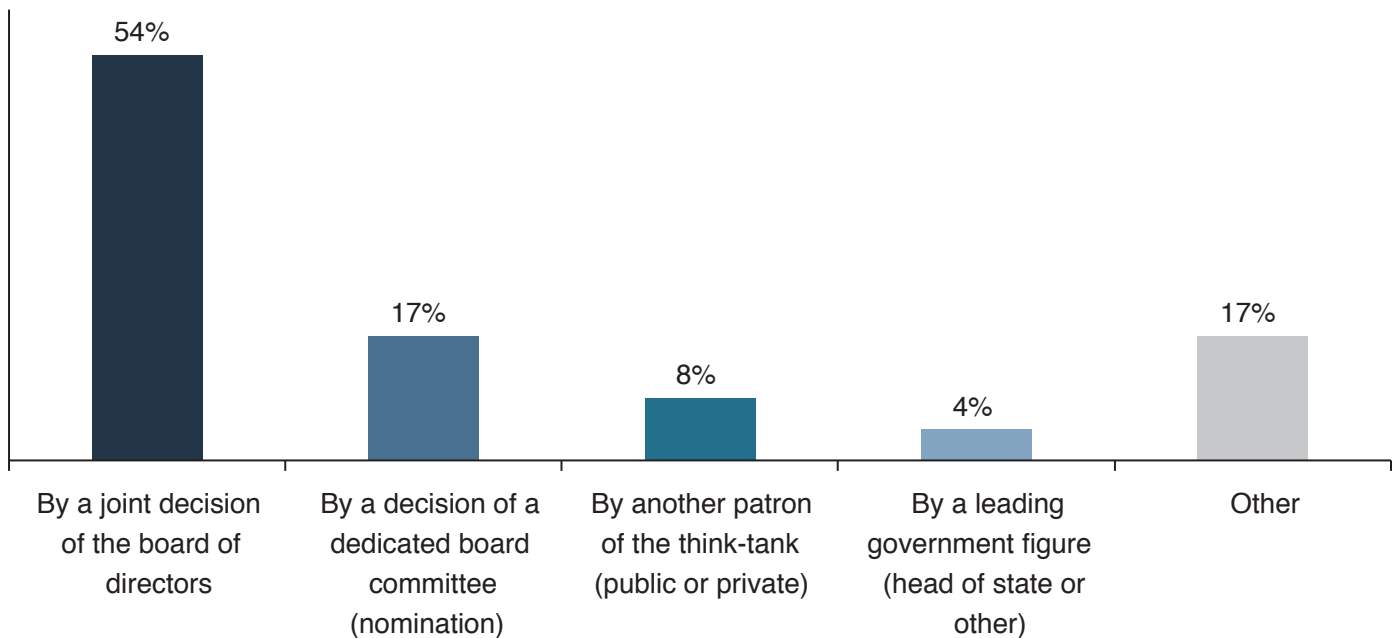
Few think tanks have a specific process for appointing CEOs or other senior executives. Approximately 50% of the think tanks we surveyed appoint the CEOs and other senior executives through a board decision, 17% use a dedicated board committee, 8% a think tank patron, and 5% a leading government figure.

In government-affiliated think tanks such as the CREAD in Algeria, the CEO is generally appointed by a leading government figure instead of the board. In privately organized think tanks, the role of the CEO and board members overlap. In fact, the CEO is often not formally appointed by the board, but ‘appoints’ the board.²¹

Few think tanks in the region have structured processes in place for the board to select the CEO and to replace senior executives (Figure 23). Less than 50% of the most active think tanks in the region have formal processes for succession planning. As a result, less than 15% of think tanks confirmed that they have a pipeline of senior executive and board candidates.

However, our research also identified several best practices. For instance, the ERF notes that its nomination committee, though not a formal committee of the board, is responsible for recruiting its CEO. Its board has identified an interim CEO in case of an emergency and communicates with the management on succession planning.

Figure 23. Appointment of senior executives, select think tanks (n=24).



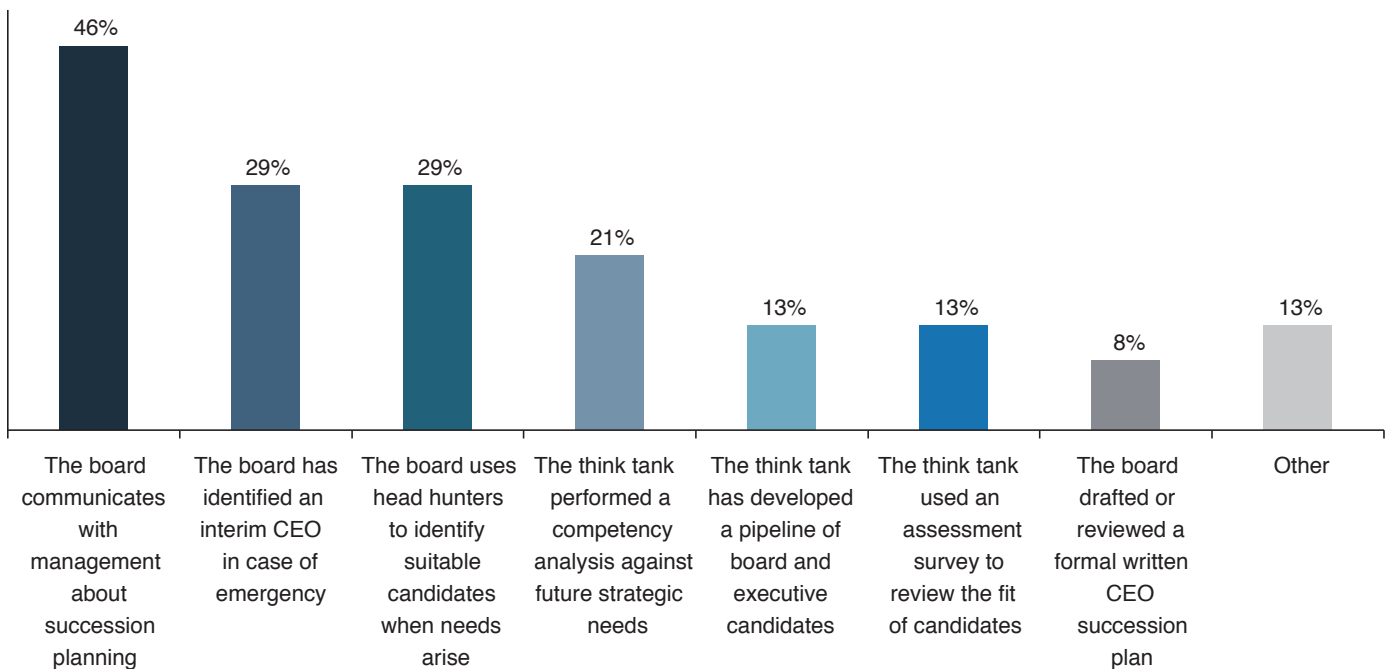
Source: GOVERN Center, online survey, 2019.

“The board of trustees shall appoint a managing director who will be experienced, qualified and enjoy leadership qualities. The board of trustees shall determine his/her remuneration and delegate to him/her broad authorities to manage the day to day operations of ERF.”

Economic Research Forum, Egypt, Institutional Charter.

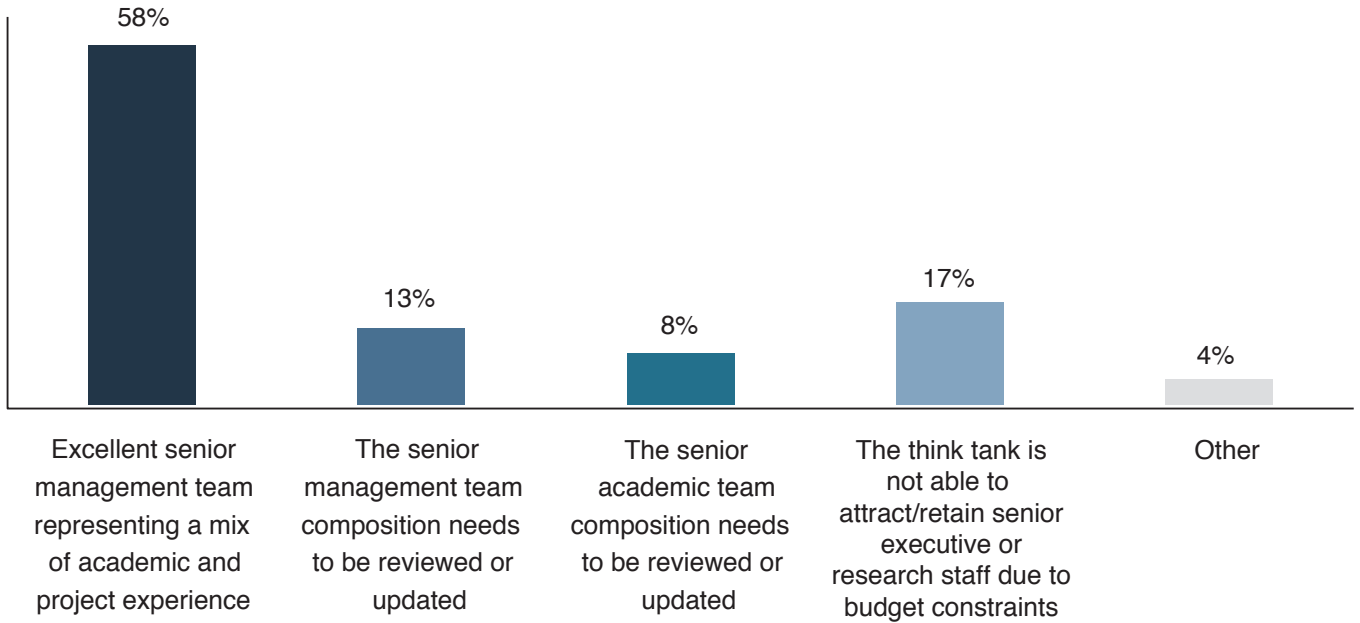
The lack of structured processes in place at think tanks to recruit senior management poses a sustainability risk. However, almost 60% of the entities that responded to our survey believe they have an excellent management team, and less than 15% believe that their senior management teams need updating. Less than 10% think that their academic teams need to be reviewed.

Figure 24. Appointment of senior executives, select think tanks (n=24).



Source: GOVERN Center, online survey, 2019.

Figure 25. Senior management experience, select think tanks (n=24).

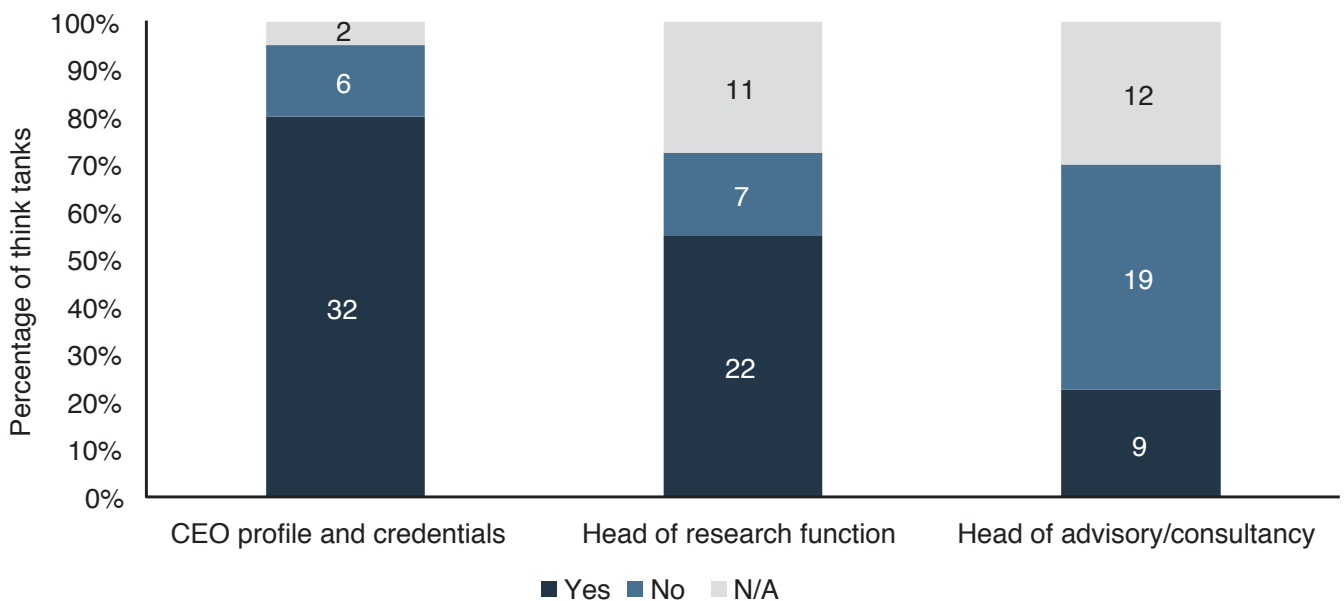


Source: GOVERN Center, online survey, 2019.

Most think tanks disclose their organizational structure and profile their key roles. In most cases, however, organigrams do not explicitly specify reporting lines and the relationship between their boards and management teams. In our sample, 32 out of 40 think tanks disclosed the profiles of their

CEOs, and 22 disclosed the profiles of their heads of research (Figure 26). The profiles of heads of advisory were less frequently disclosed. Not all think tanks have this function, as some are purely focused on research and do not engage in advisory activities.

Figure 26. Key roles in the organization (n=40).



Source: GOVERN Center, 2019.



PART III. TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

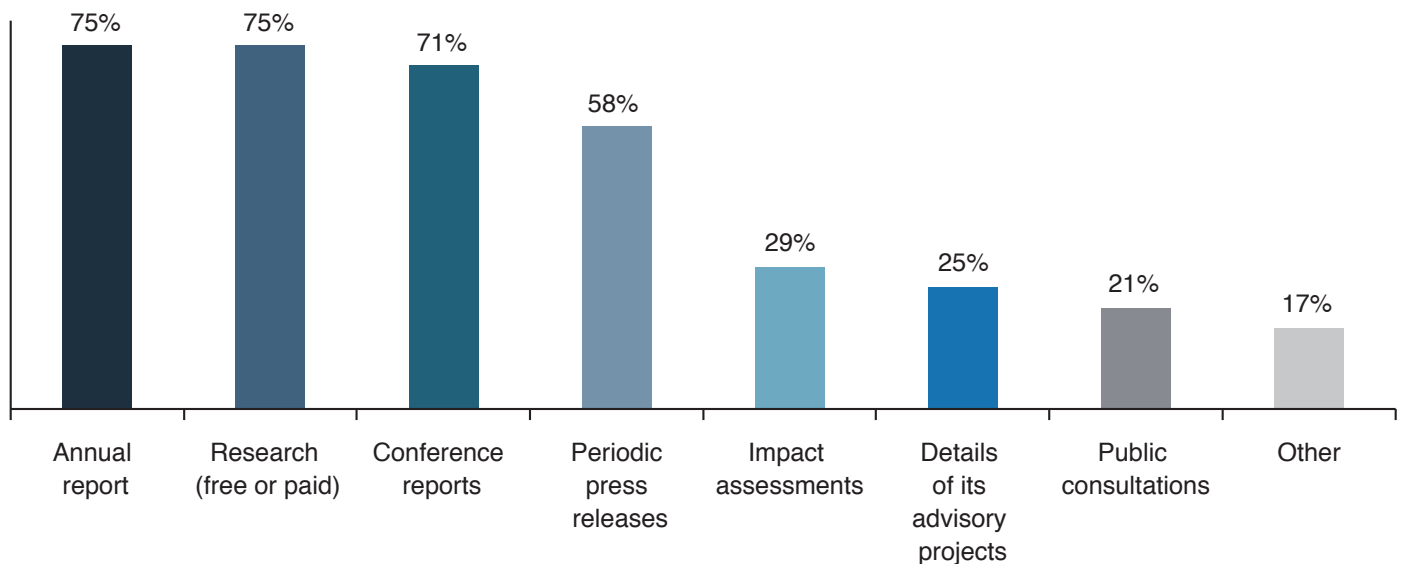
The quality of disclosure and transparency are key challenges in corporate and public governance across the Arab world. They are also challenges for the think tank sector. Data transparency and availability have been major obstacles in preparing this report, as many think tanks do not communicate their key governance and financial information through their website, either in English or Arabic.²²

This includes the availability of key governance and financial data that stakeholders and donors can use to judge the impact of a given entity's activities. While think tanks report to donors, they may disclose substantially less information to their stakeholders. Think tanks rarely report on their overall governance frameworks, including

board composition, stakeholder relations, and organizational structures.

The founding documents, apart from the vision and mission statements, which are, for the most part, general, are often unavailable to the public. There are, however, a number of exceptions to this which provide best practices for think tanks in the region. For instance, the Royal Institute of Strategic Studies (L'Institut Royal des Etudes Stratégiques), a Moroccan think-tank, publishes its founding documents online.²³ The Economic Research Forum in Egypt also publishes its charter, board composition and other governance-related documents.

Figure 27. Disclosure provided, select think tanks (n=24).



Source: GOVERN Center, online survey, 2019.

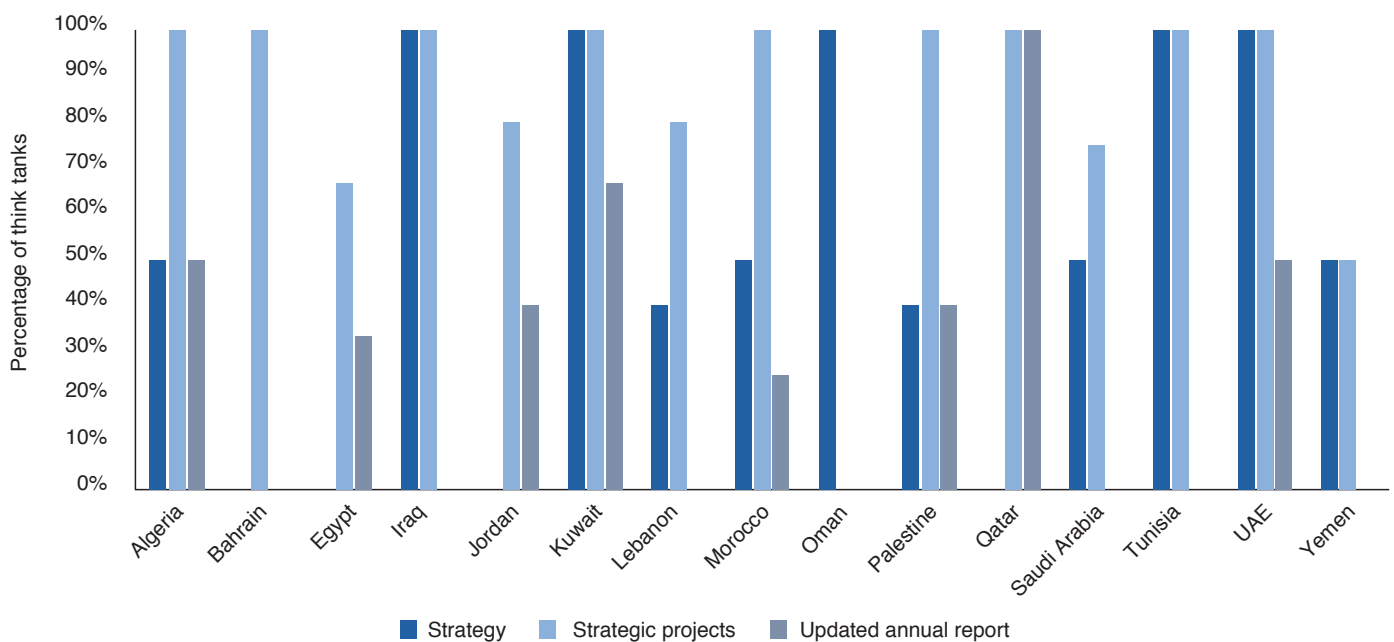
It appears that think tanks founded and funded by governments provide better quality disclosure than entities created and funded by the private sector. Private sector founded and funded entities appear to be concerned by the possibility that transparency might result in further audits from the government, or investigations into and political interference in their activities.

The size of the think tank appears to be an important factor determining the quality of disclosure. Larger think tanks provide better disclosure in a wider number of areas than their smaller peers (Figure 27). Over 70% of these larger think tanks disclose their annual reports and make their research and conference reports publicly available.

It is noteworthy that a number of the larger think tanks also publish periodic newsletters and publications, which indicates an advanced level of maturity and accountability. However, as highlighted by Figure 27, the region’s think tanks do not conduct many public consultations. This is something they share with the region’s public sectors, which engage less with their citizens than in other regions.

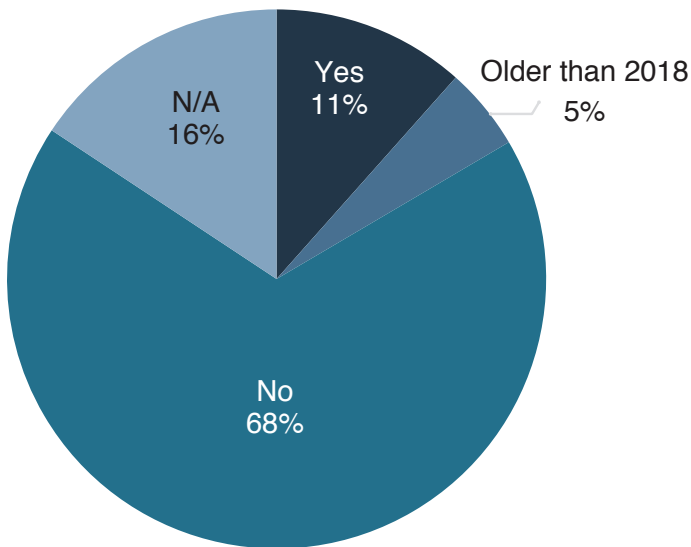
Theoretically, the quality of disclosure should be dictated by the national regulatory framework. Kuwaiti and Emirati think tanks appear to perform better than their peers in terms of their quality of disclosure. Notably, there is a requirement in some countries to submit audited annual reports to their respective authorities. This is the case for Palestinian think tanks operating in East Jerusalem, as their audited statements need to be submitted to the relevant Israeli authorities.

Figure 28. Disclosure of key documents and projects (n=40).



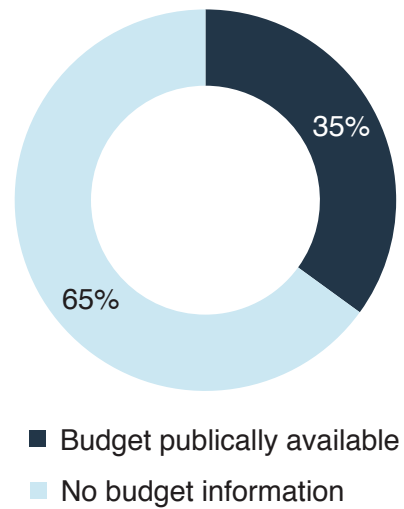
Source: GOVERN Center, 2019.

Note: We define updated annual reports as those available for 2018.

Figure 29. Availability of updated annual reports (n=140).

Source: GOVERN Center, 2019.

Note: We defined updated annual reports as those available for 2018. The N/A category refers to think tanks that claim to publish an annual report, but they were not found or available through our review of publicly available information.

Figure 30. Availability of financial information (n=40).

Source: GOVERN Center, 2019.

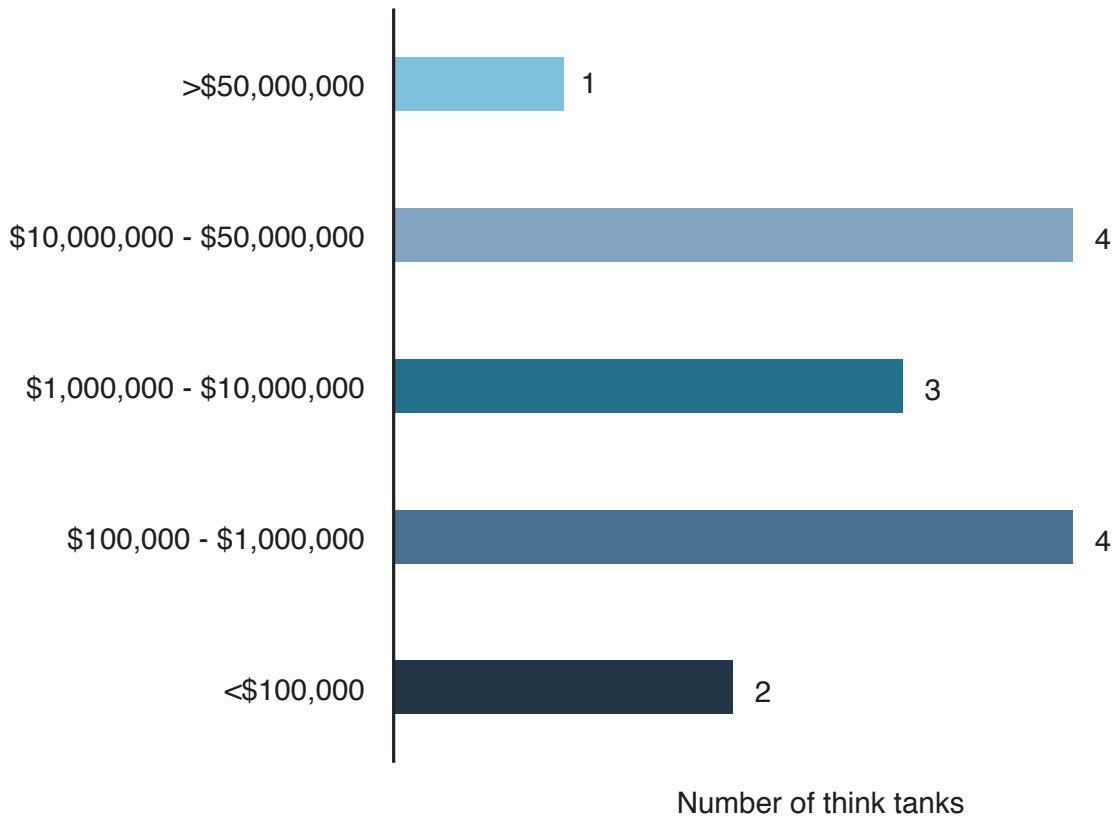
The interviews we conducted for this report revealed that think tanks are reticent to publish their financial data due to the economic informality of these institutions. In some cases, their financial profiles are only briefly mentioned in a general discussion of their activities. Thirty-five percent of large think tanks disclose their financial information publicly. However, other think tanks opt to have their annual reports audited, in large part to foster more trust with their donors.

Having reviewed the data disclosed by the various entities, we conclude that approximately 38% of our sample display an acceptable degree of funding transparency. Additional transparency around the advisory activities of think tanks would be useful – especially those registered as NGOs – as several of them perform additional consulting-type activities. Likewise, better disclosure of their governance in the form of board reports would also be welcome.

Some think tanks have established voluntary reporting frameworks to disclose their financial performances publicly, even when they are not required to by their applicable legal and regulatory frameworks. For instance, the Gulf Research Center publishes its consolidated and audited financial statements online (for the three jurisdictions in which it operates), including, notably, its sources of funding.²⁴

Figure 31 gives further information on the budgets of select think tanks. The disclosed financial information of think tanks rarely includes payments to their board and executive staff, which is, to some extent, because board and advisory committee members are often not remunerated. However, the disclosure of board and senior management remuneration is increasingly mandated by the region's corporations.

Figure 31. Budget disclosed, select think tanks (n =40).



Source: GOVERN Center, 2019.

Transparency around think tanks’ financial models appears to be correlated to their affiliation. Government-funded entities provide better disclosure, for example. However, the fact that most think tanks do not communicate on their governance appears to be correlated to the sophistication of their existing governance arrangements. Additional transparency on the governance of think tanks would be welcome, notably on the profile and composition of their boards and committees.

Our research has highlighted a few best practices in terms of disclosure. For example, CREAD is one of a few think tanks in the region that produce reports on their activities. CREAD’s reports outline the

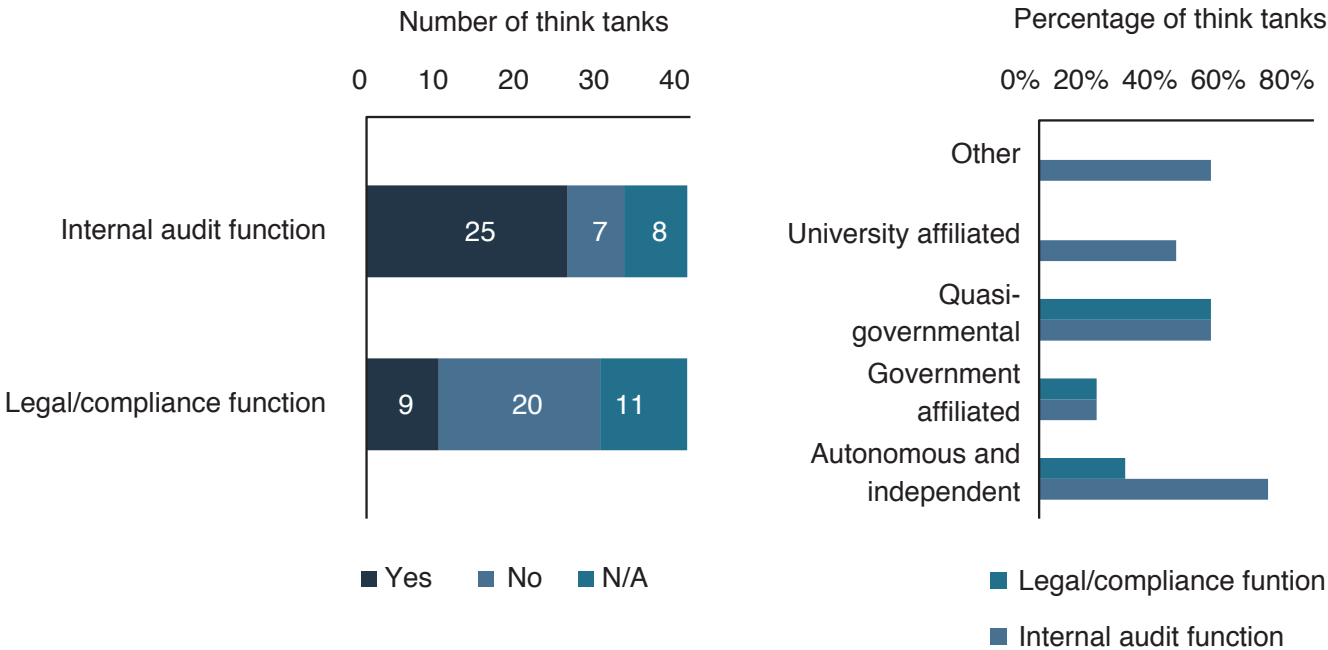
nature of its projects and their impact and provide overviews of its collaborative projects and published research. However, they do not disclose CREAD’s financial information.²⁵

The Policy Center for the New South (formerly the OCP Policy Center), a Moroccan think tank, provides its annual report in English and Arabic. The report provides a detailed overview of the think tank’s activities and projects.²⁶ It also provides a detailed overview of the think tank’s publications, its researchers and the impact of its activities, such as the number of participants that attend its various forums and conferences. It does not, however, provide any financial disclosure.

Indeed, there appears to be a lack of differentiation between an annual report and an activity report, which are occasionally combined, as in the case of CREAD. It publishes an annual report on its research activities but does not produce a board report or public financial statements. From our analysis, it follows that the concept of an annual report appears to be much less understood and developed in the region’s think tank community than in its corporate sector.

In line with these observations, the audit and compliance functions of the region’s think tanks demonstrate variable degrees of development. Of the 40 large think tanks we reviewed, 25 had an internal audit function and nine had a legal and compliance function. University-affiliated think tanks tend not to have their own legal and compliance functions since these functions are typically centralized at the university level. Other university-affiliated institutions appear to be missing these functions due to a lack of resources.

Figure 32. Audit and compliance functions (n=40).



Source: GOVERN Center, 2019.



PART IV. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

A key objective of this report was to investigate how better governance frameworks can support the development of the region's think tank sector by fostering better quality research, stakeholder trust and donor accountability. While previous sections of this report have focused on analyzing the weaknesses and opportunities in the think tank sector's formal governance structures, this concluding part of the report seeks to shed light on how governance structures can support the development of the sector more broadly.

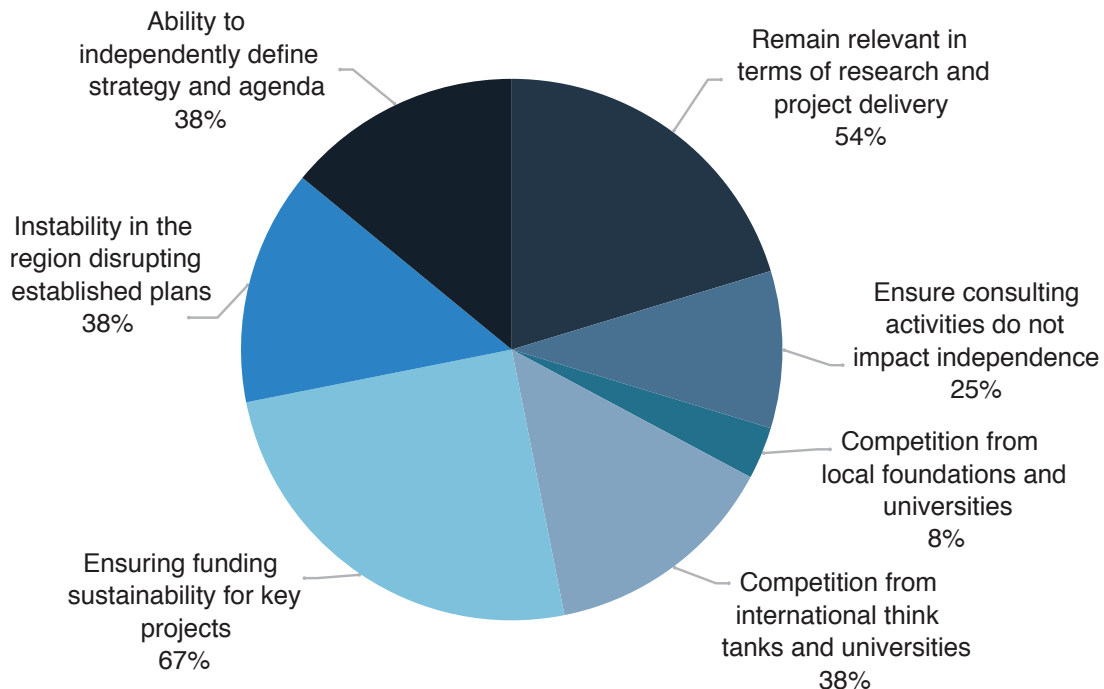
To do so requires a better understanding of the strategic challenges facing think tanks in the region. According to our survey of the largest think tanks in the region (Figure 33), their top priorities were

funding sustainability (67%), followed by maintaining relevance (54%). Regional instability and the ability to independently define strategy were allocated an equal 38%.

As discussed throughout this report, think tanks' sustainability of funding and operational independence are linked to the governance structures they adopt. The quality of these structures varies: think tanks adopt many legal forms, and there are many different national regulatory frameworks.

While some entities have opted to address their governance procedures through voluntary measures within the parameters set by the relevant domestic

Figure 33. Critical challenges, select think tanks (n=24).



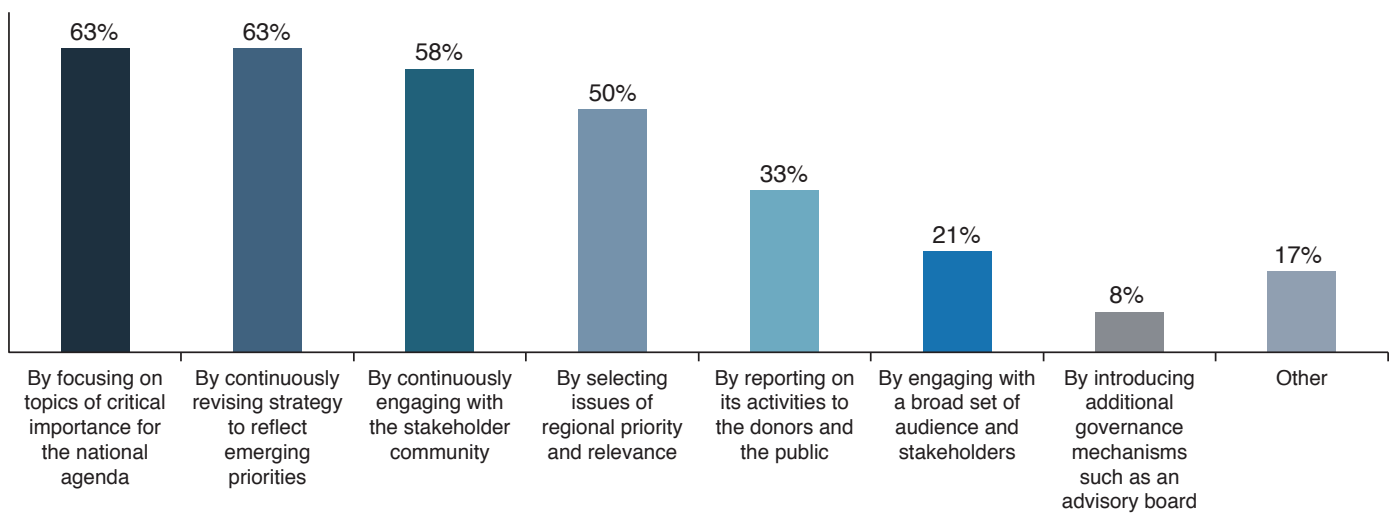
Source: GOVERN Center, online survey, 2019.

legislation, others, such as the GRC, have opted for an additional foreign registration in order to inspire further trust among stakeholders and confidence among its donors and partners.

Overall, think tanks have adopted a range of measures to foster trust among donors and stakeholders, most of them focusing on the national agenda (over 60%) and reflecting emerging priorities (over 60%). On the other hand, fewer think tanks reported their activities to donors and engaged with their stakeholders (Figure 34).

Survey responses have highlighted that, in order to foster trust, think tanks have adopted a broad range of measures to engage with their stakeholders. The most common of these is issuing invitations to key events and consultations on research priorities. Other measures, such as peer debates, are less frequently employed. Some organizations, such as the ERF, engage stakeholders at the early stages of strategy definition. This is a good practice that could be adopted by the rest of the sector in order for institutions to remain relevant.

Figure 34. Trust-building mechanisms (n=24).



Source: GOVERN Center, online survey, 2019.

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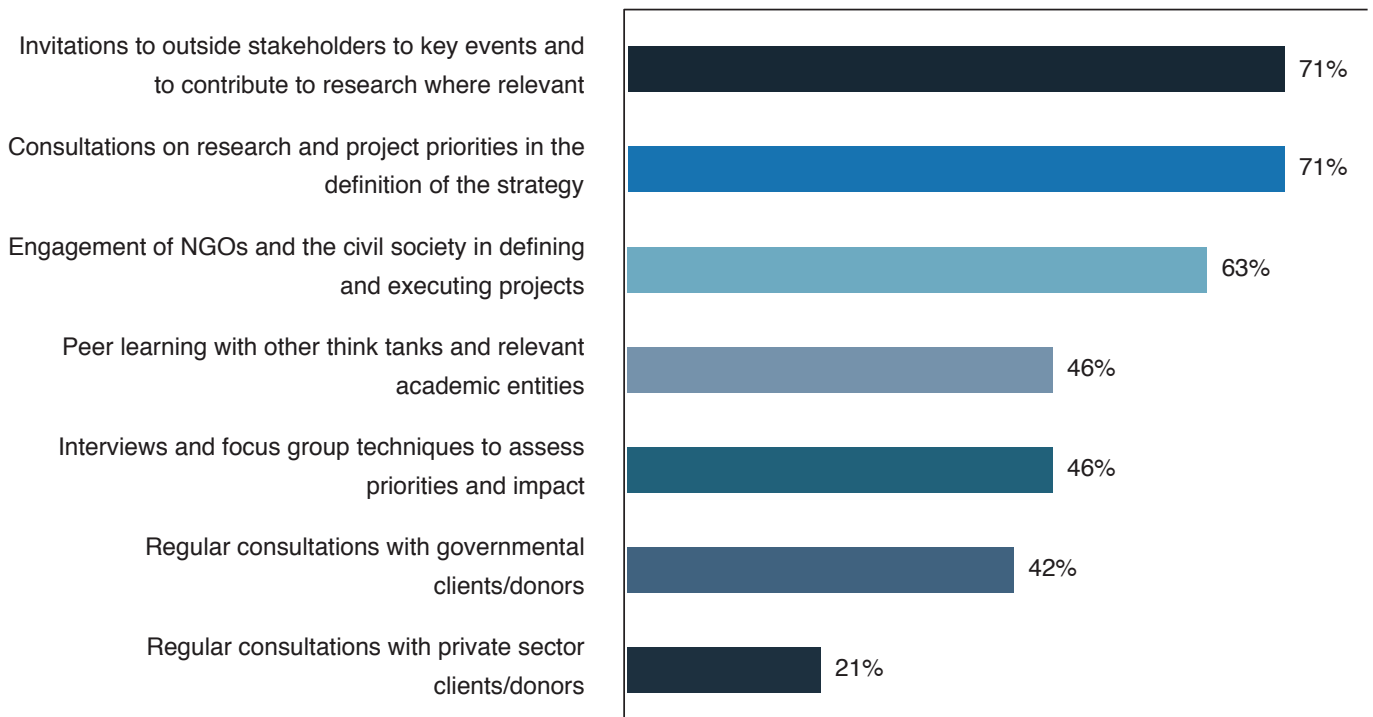
Another important mechanism used by think tanks to remain relevant is impact assessment. However, our research highlights that impact assessments remain relatively unstructured. As shown in Figure 36, most think tanks' impact assessments focus on the quality of their research, its impact on public policy debates and their ability to deliver on established projects.

“Few think tanks and NGOs in the Middle East conduct impact assessments, which are fundamental to understanding the value add of their activities”

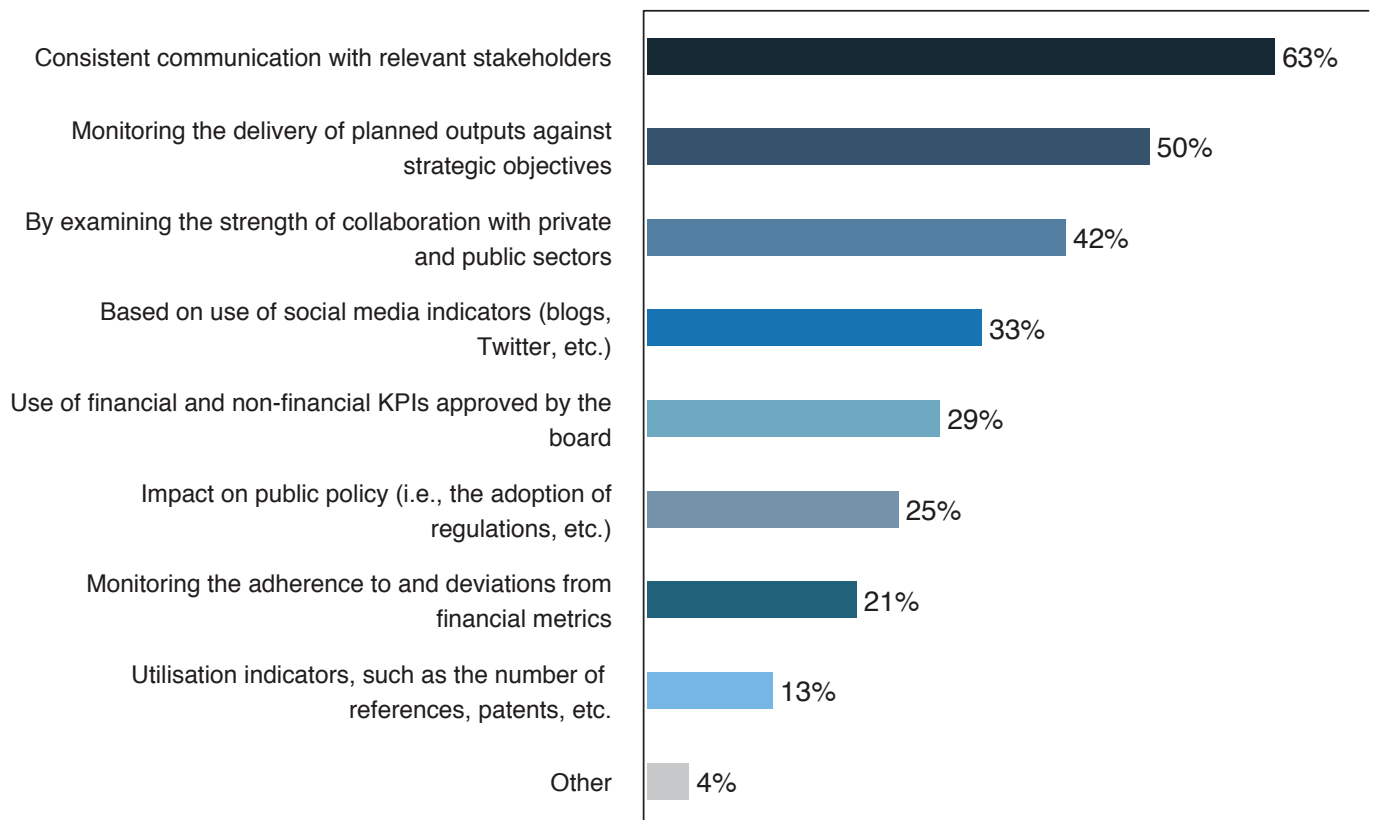
Naila Farouky, Director, Arab Foundations Forum, Jordan.

Most think tanks commented that their impact assessments are linked to objective key performance indicators (KPIs), such as the number of conference participants and the number of publications they produce. Although these metrics are objective, they are not forward-looking. Some entities use more sophisticated metrics, such as the number of new participants in their events, and the number of papers they have had published in recognized research journals.

Figure 35. Stakeholder engagement, select think tanks (n=24).



Source: GOVERN Center, online survey, 2019.

Figure 36. Impact assessments, select think tanks (n=24).

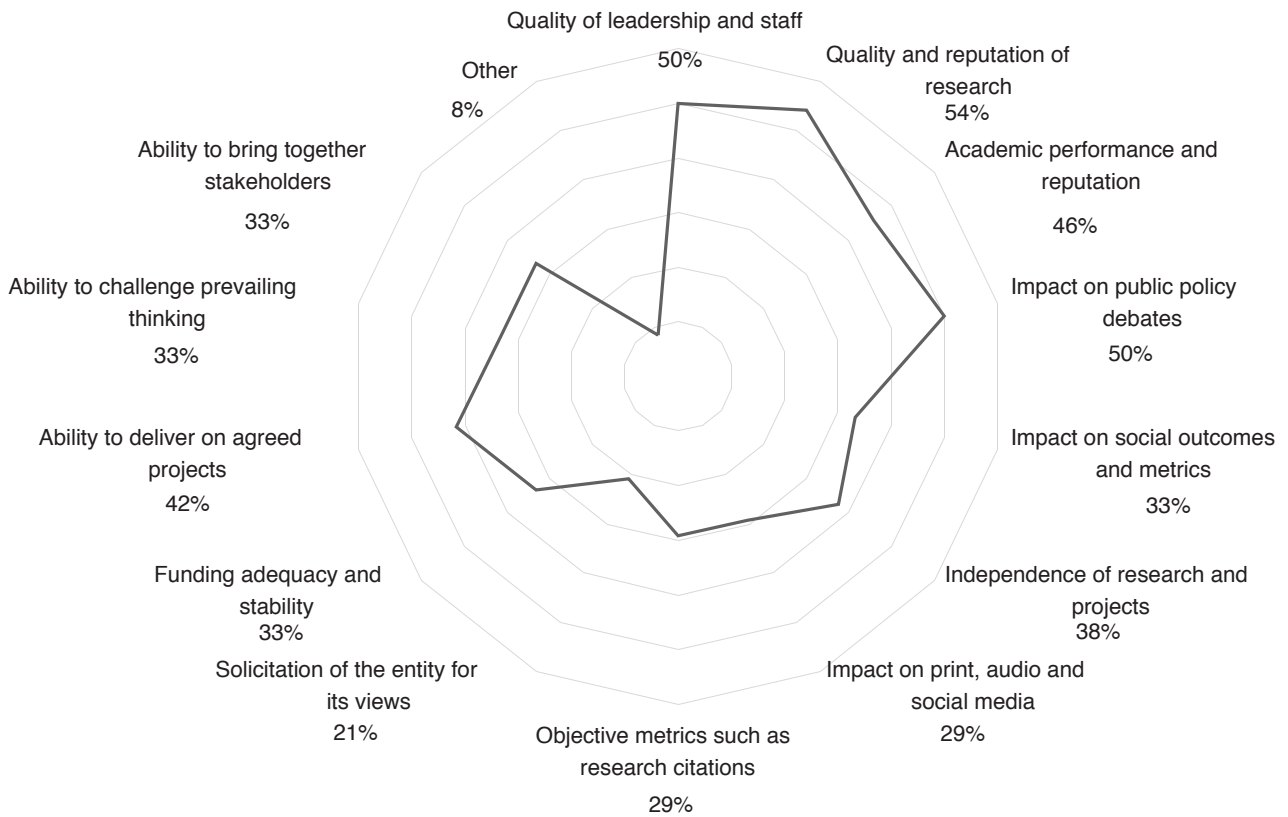
Source: GOVERN Center, online survey, 2019.

“More relevant KPIs include more innovative metrics such as new stakeholders being represented in debates, the ability to influence public debate and government policy. However, these are long-term KPIs, which may take decades to realize and track.”
Mudar Kassis, CEO Muwatin Institute, Palestine.

As highlighted by Figure 37, below, think tanks most frequently employ variables in their KPIs that attempt to capture the quality of their research and its impact on public policy debates, and the reputation of their leadership. However, it appears that boards are rarely involved in monitoring the performance of their organizations relative to these KPIs, which could potentially negatively impact the quality of the risk management process.

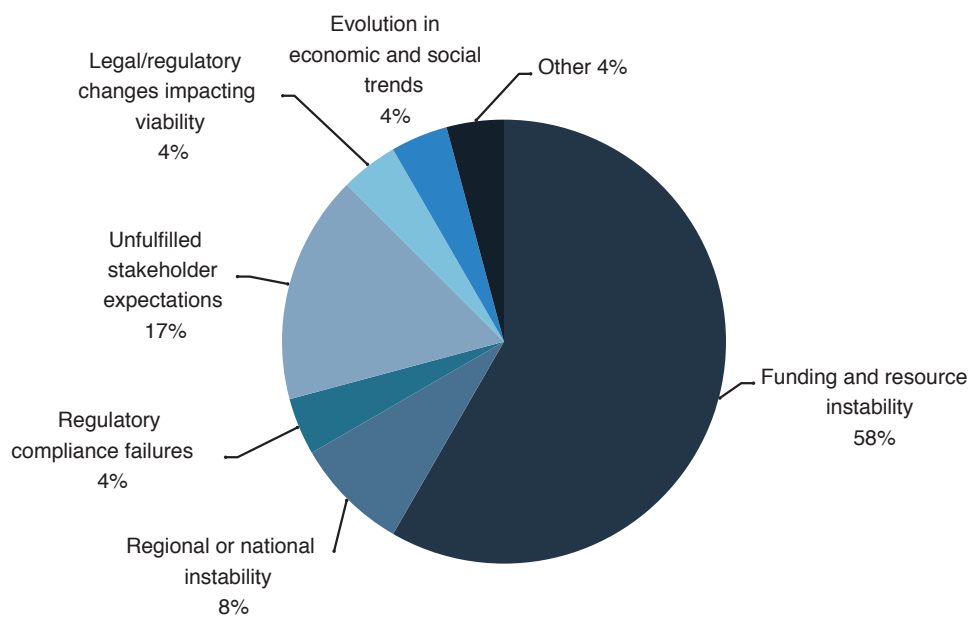
Senior representatives perceive funding instability to be the key risk to the sector: over half of the respondents to our survey highlighted it as the top risk, followed by unfulfilled stakeholder expectations, which can also be seen as a manifestation of funding shortages. Figure 38, below, summarizes the key risks facing the sector.

Figure 37. KPIs utilized in impact assessments (n=24).



Source: GOVERN Center, online survey, 2019.

Figure 38. Sources of risk, select think tanks (n=24).



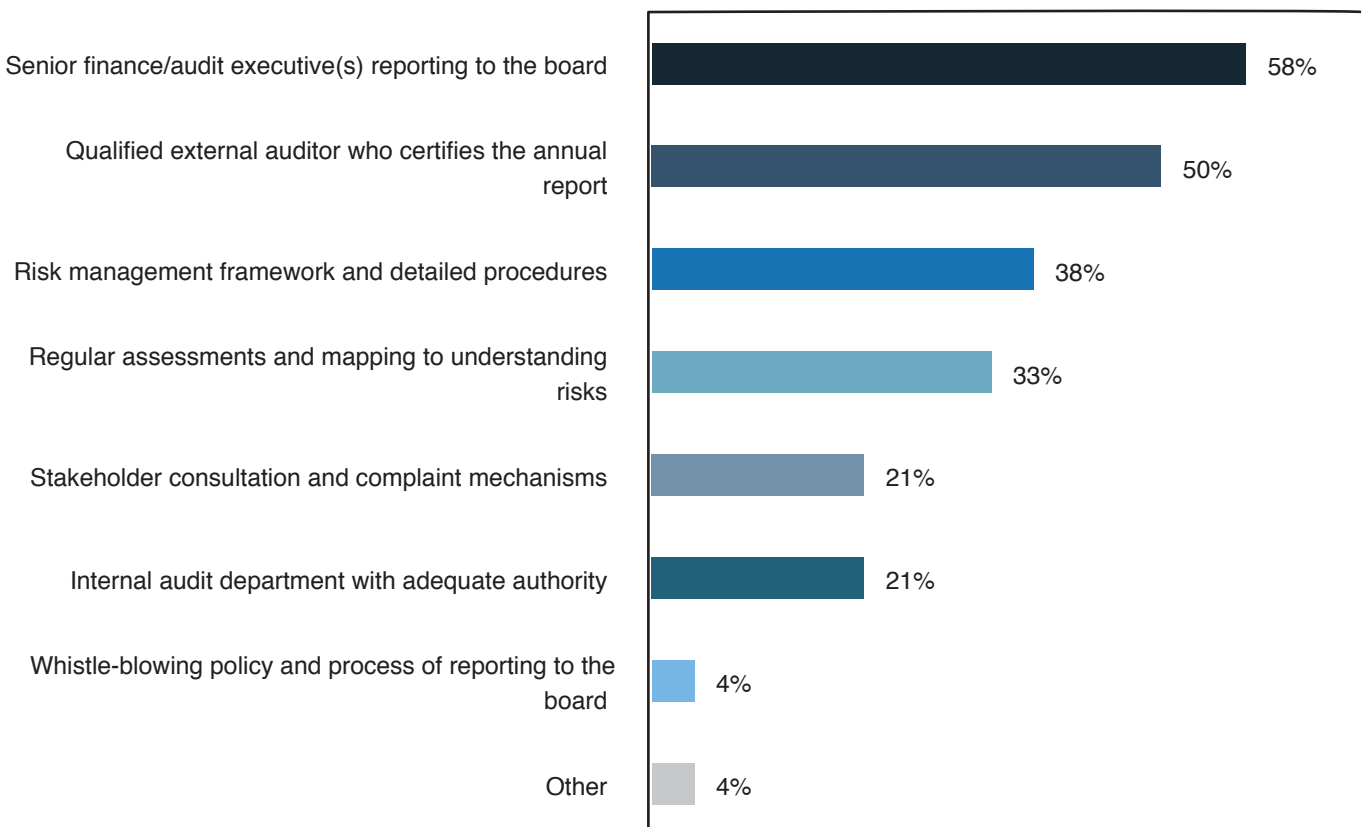
Source: GOVERN Center, online survey, 2019.

Improved risk management was ranked fourth in terms of governance priorities by think tank representatives. Better access to finance was once again ranked as the first priority, followed by better strategy oversight. Just over 10% of the respondents to our survey thought that better governance practices would result in a significant impact on the performance and eventual impact of their entity.

Achieving stronger governance practices entails addressing the most pressing challenges. Over 60% of survey respondents ranked political interference as their top challenge, followed by insufficient

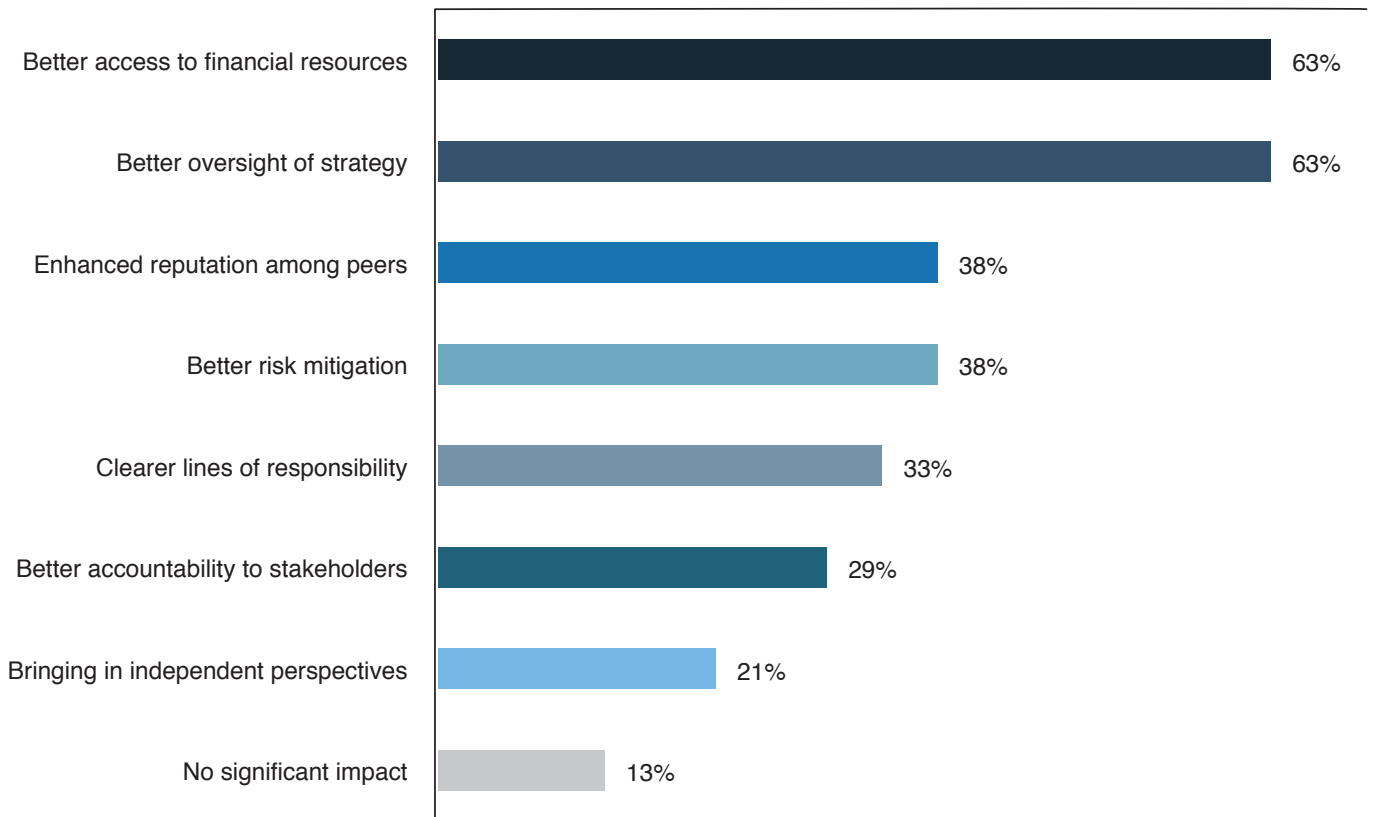
freedom to define their research agendas (over 50%). Lack of board member responsibility and objectivity was also highlighted as an important obstacle by half of the survey respondents. This reflects our analysis above, which highlighted that most board members in government-affiliated entities are appointed by the state, and in private entities they are recruited by the founders.

Figure 39. Risk management mechanisms, select think tanks (n=24).



Source: GOVERN Center, online survey, 2019.

Figure 40. Impact of better governance, select think tanks (n=24).



Source: GOVERN Center, online survey, 2019.

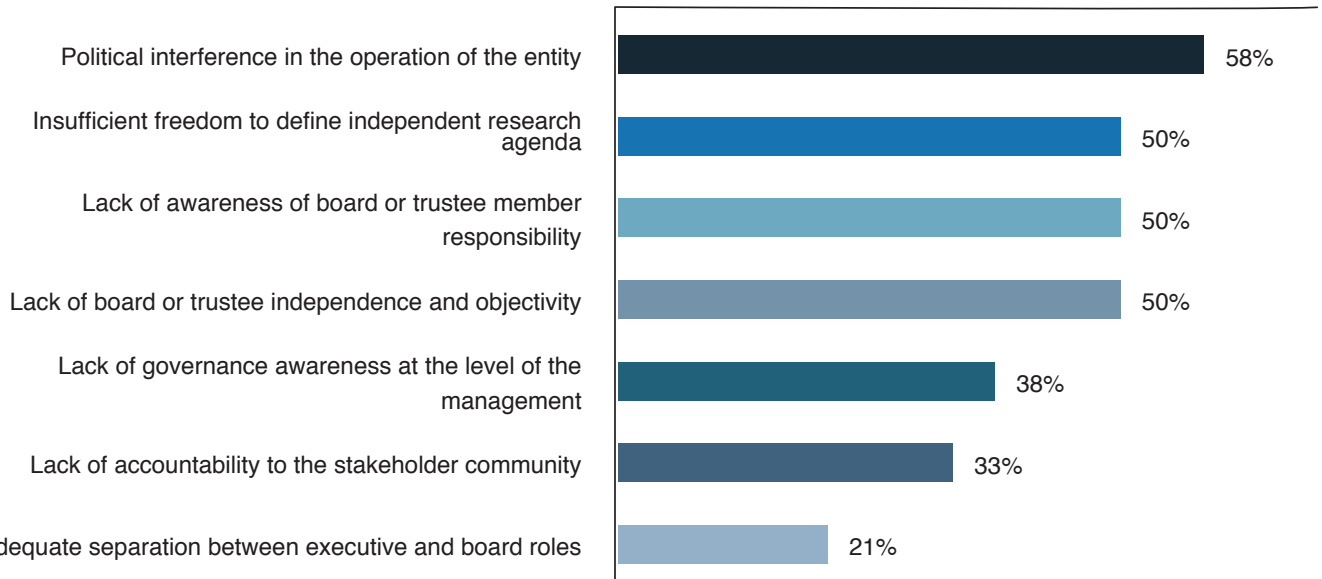
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The governance priorities highlighted by think tanks reflect these challenges; close to 60% of respondents noted that independence from political and corporate influence is a key aim. Other governance priorities included more structured

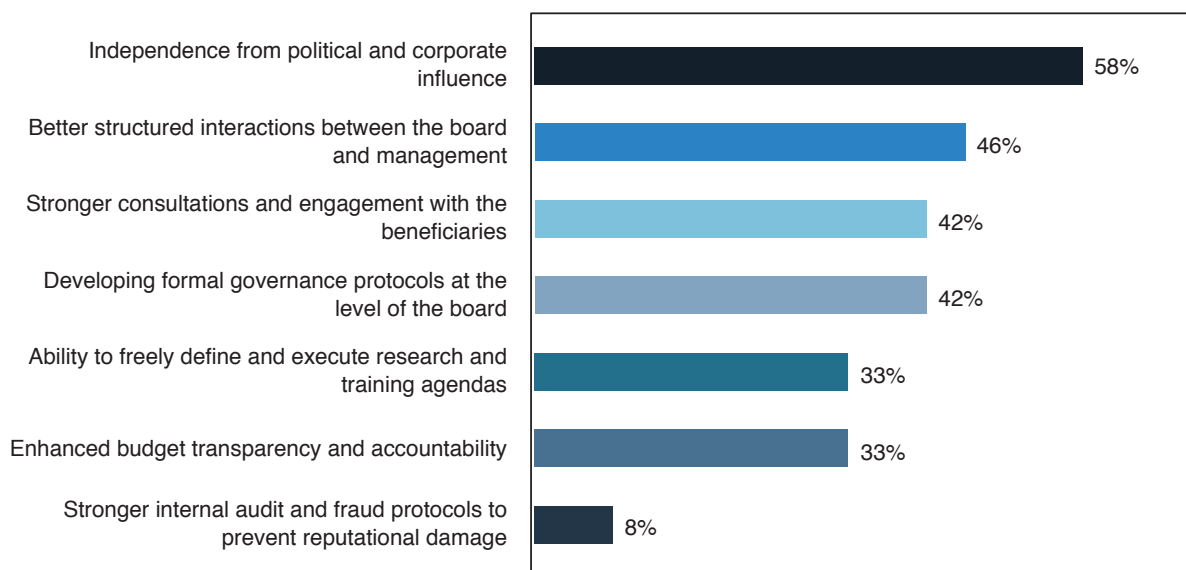
interactions between the board and management, formal board protocols and stronger engagement with beneficiaries (Figure 42). These priorities are summarised in this report’s recommendations in the following section.

Figure 41. Most important governance obstacles, select think tanks (n=24).



Source: GOVERN Center, online survey, 2019.

Figure 42. Governance priorities, select think tanks (n=24).



Source: GOVERN Center, online survey, 2019.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Legal framework

Policymakers should help think tanks register as non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations.

The governance frameworks of governmental or government-affiliated think tanks should be clearly codified in their founding documents to avoid unnecessary political influence.

The oversight of think tanks should be entrusted to designated ministries so that they have a defined interlocutor.

While the receipt of grants shall be subject to appropriate controls, the current involvement of government bodies in the approval of grants creates cumbersome and unwarranted interference.

The think tank sector should be free of political interference, including politicized board appointments and grant approvals, and implicit government censorship.

Policymakers should avoid unnecessary changes to NGO legislation or other legislation affecting think tank activities, as legal instability can adversely affect their long-term planning.

For think tanks registered as commercial entities, governance mechanisms and controls need to be introduced to ensure that think tank activities are separate and not influenced by any commercial engagements.

Policymakers may wish to consider allowing the establishment of entities with a dual for-profit and not-for-profit mandate to foster the creation of think tanks that have both functions.

Board-level governance

A better understanding is needed among think tanks of the differences between supervisory, trustee and management boards to facilitate a division of responsibilities among them.

As a matter of best practice, board and committee structures and other critical board governance protocols should be detailed in board manuals or their equivalent. These manuals should also specify the mechanisms through which amendments to the protocols can be introduced.

To ensure board sustainability, think tanks may consider having staggered boards, so that entire boards are not replaced once their terms expire.

Think tank boards may benefit from having advisory committees to provide input on emerging topics to enrich the research and project agendas.

Think tank boards would benefit from having a more diverse stakeholder structure and a more dynamic board renewal process. These would be based on formal mandates set out in their governing documents.

Think tank boards would benefit from defining and monitoring the execution of their strategic research and project agendas.

Think tank boards are advised to have a formalized process for recruiting and appointing the CEO and, possibly, other senior executives. This would ensure the long-term sustainability of their activities.

Boards should exercise formal responsibilities for appointing and setting the remuneration of CEOs and other senior-level staff.

Boards of larger think tanks may wish to consider establishing board committees and, if needed, advisory committees to the board. If established, the mandate and responsibilities of such committees should be codified in their board charters.

Governments, the private sector and other donors may wish to consider supporting think tanks that operate or seek to operate in specific domains, such as science and technology, where independent research is lagging.

The independence and any potential conflicts of interest of all grants and contributions to think tank budgets should be scrutinized.

Think tanks should establish clear policies and conditions for accepting funding and reporting on its use.

Strategy and risk management

Formal risk management mechanisms would benefit the sector's development and would help ensure institutional sustainability.

Risk management protocols, notably those focusing on key risks such as funding and political instability, would help ensure think tank sustainability.

Think tanks in the region could benefit from closer research and project collaboration, given their limited resources.

A coordination platform could be considered that allows think tanks to exchange knowledge on critical areas of research and pool resources.

Think tank boards should establish KPIs that help measure the short- and long-term impact of their activities.

In addition to simple qualified metrics such as the number of workshops think tanks hold, more sophisticated metrics on behavioral change, resulting from research or other activities, may be useful for larger entities.

Stakeholder relations

Resources permitting, think tanks should carry out impact assessments of their research and other activities utilizing relevant KPIs that are approved and monitored by the board.

Think tanks are encouraged to publish annual reports detailing their financial resources and expenditures, and their key achievements and impact, in order to build stakeholder and donor trust.

An annual external audit of annual reports is recommended and should be communicated with national authorities, donors and stakeholders.

Consultations with stakeholder groups can support the engagement of key constituencies with the think tank, not only as 'consumers' of its work but also helping to define its agenda.

Likewise, consultations and discussions with policymakers can help ensure the relevance of think tank activities to public policy.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

International organizations and donors may be advised to consider how to channel funding toward research projects to avoid fostering unnecessary competition among think tanks in the region.

Think tanks are advised to provide better disclosure, in particular around the nature of their research and advisory work, and how they manage potential conflicts of interest.



ENDNOTES

- ¹ These include, for instance, New York University in Abu Dhabi and the Sorbonne University in Doha.
- ² Refer to, for example, <https://www.legatum.com/philanthropy/>
- ³ In Tunisia for example, the Institut Arabe des Chefs d'Entreprises hosts a governance think tank which operates quasi-independently.
- ⁴ The countries included in our analysis include Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. This report only analyzes think tanks based in the region. We have excluded think tanks focused on the Arab world but based outside the region, unless they have established a physical presence in the region (i.e., the Carnegie Center).
- ⁵ A significant outlier in this regard is the Institute for Scientific Research in Kuwait which has over 500 employees.
- ⁶ The ATF was launched as an independent, pan-Arab non-governmental organization in 1981 by 25 leading Arab thinkers, decision-makers and development experts, and led by a member of the Jordanian Royal Family.
- ⁷ The ERF was originally established as a regional network to promote sustainable development in the Arab world (as well as Iran and Turkey). It has two regional offices and several collaborative research agreements, including with leading international universities.
- ⁸ For instance, PASSIA, a Palestinian international relations think tank, collaborates with external experts and organizations, from whom it commissions work. It requires its board to oversee this process.
- ⁹ Judging by the receipt of corporate donations, collaboration with the private sector is also generally weak, except for a few specialized entities. For example, the Pearl Initiative, focused on governance and transparency and launched by a private sector entrepreneur, is funded by a range of corporate donors.
- ¹⁰ International organizations are important donors to and partners of regional think tanks, especially those in certain jurisdictions, such as Palestine.
- ¹¹ These entities view this as a challenge that negatively affects their independence.
- ¹² Government-funded think tanks such as CREAD and EDA are also subject to broader government rules and procedures concerning procurement and expenditures, and are subject to external audits.
- ¹³ For example, the Muwatin Center in Palestine noted this as a top priority for its sustainability.
- ¹⁴ This categorization is also rather fluid as it is not always clear whether a think tank considers itself as part of the government or an NGO. This is because, in some instances, they are registered as not-for-profit governmental or corporate entities, but effectively operate as NGOs and/or consider themselves to be NGOs.
- ¹⁵ Registering as an NGO was not a feasible option for more established think tanks in the region, such as the Gulf Research Center, as the relevant domestic legislation had not been developed at the time of its creation.
- ¹⁶ For example, in Jordan, grants have to be approved by four different ministries as well as the prime minister's office.
- ¹⁷ As a result of the instability of the regulatory framework, some MENA NGOs have migrated from one country of the region to another (for example from Egypt to Lebanon).

ENDNOTES

- ¹⁸ The think tank sample in these countries was insufficient to make statistically meaningful inferences.
- ¹⁹ For instance, in the Moroccan Royal Institute for Strategic Studies (Institut Royal pour les Etudes Stratégiques), both the CEO and the board are appointed by Morocco's king.
- ²⁰ For example, the board of the Gulf Research Center, which was appointed by its founder and chairman, has been reduced from 16 to six. However, the size of other think tank boards, such as KAPSARC's, for example, is likely to increase to reflect the growth of these organizations.
- ²¹ This is the case in the GRC and PASSIA.
- ²² The data collected for this report was compiled based on a review of websites and other publicly available information provided by think tanks in the region. Where the data sought was not available, we have sought to address this through the online survey and interviews to gather more qualitative information and perspectives.
- ²³ <https://www.ires.ma/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Dahir-portant-creation-de-l-Institut-Royal-des-Etudes-Strategiques.pdf>
- ²⁴ Incidentally, it is also the think tank with the largest disclosed budget in the Arab world.
- ²⁵ The report is available at <http://www.cread.dz/tmp/2019/04/Rapport-dactivite-CREAD-2018.pdf>
- ²⁶ <https://www.policycenter.ma/sites/default/files/Rapport%20d%27activite%202018%20%28Version%20English%29.pdf>



ANNEX I. ARAB THINK TANKS, CLASSIFIED BY COUNTRY

Highlighted: selected think tanks (n=40)

	Name	Country
1	African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT)	Algeria
2	Cercle d'Action et de Réflexion Autour de l'Entreprise (CARE)	Algeria
3	National Institute of Strategic Global Studies	Algeria
4	Research Center in Applied Economics for Development (CREAD)	Algeria
5	Bahrain Center for Human Rights	Bahrain
6	Bahrain Center for Strategic, International and Energy Studies (DERASAT)	Bahrain
7	Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies (ACPSS)	Egypt
8	Alternative Policy Solutions (AUC)	Egypt
9	Arab Forum for Alternatives (AFA)	Egypt
10	Arab Reform Forum	Egypt
11	Baseera	Egypt
12	Center for Political Research and Studies	Egypt
13	Economic Research Forum (ERF)	Egypt
14	Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights (ECESR)	Egypt
15	Egyptian Center for Economic Studies (ECES)	Egypt
16	Egyptian Center for Public Policy Studies (ECPPS)	Egypt
17	Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs (ECFA)	Egypt
18	Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights	Egypt
19	Egypt's International Economic Forum	Egypt
20	Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies (ICDS)	Egypt
21	Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC)	Egypt
22	Institute of National Planning	Egypt
23	Law & Society Research Unit - AUC	Egypt
24	Partners in Development (PID)	Egypt
25	Social Justice Platform	Egypt
26	Al Bayan Center for Planning and Studies	Iraq
27	Arab Studies Center, Al Mustansiriyah University	Iraq
28	Dar Al Khibra Organization (DKO)	Iraq
29	Hammurabi Center for Research and Strategic Studies	Iraq
30	Iraqi Center for Policy Analysis and Research	Iraq
31	Middle East Research Institute (MERI)	Iraq
32	New Iraqi Center for Research and Strategic Studies	Iraq
33	Al Badeel Center for Studies and Research	Jordan
34	Al Rai Center for Studies	Jordan
35	Al Urdun Al Jadid Research Center (UJRC)	Jordan
36	Al-Quds Center for Political Studies	Jordan
37	Arab Foundations Forum	Jordan
38	Arab Institute for Security Studies	Jordan
39	Arab Thought Forum (ATF)	Jordan

ANNEX I. ARAB THINK TANKS, CLASSIFIED BY COUNTRY

	Name	Country
40	Center for Strategic Studies (CSS)	Jordan
41	Center for The Study of The Built Environment (CSBE)	Jordan
42	Jordan Institute of Diplomacy	Jordan
43	Middle East Scientific Institute for Security (MESIS)	Jordan
44	Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies	Jordan
45	The Phenix Center for Economic and Informatics Studies	Jordan
46	West Asia and North Africa Institute	Jordan
47	Arab Planning Institute (API)	Kuwait
48	Center for Gulf Studies	Kuwait
49	Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait	Kuwait
50	Center of Strategic and Futuristic Studies (CSFS)	Kuwait
51	Kuwait Economic Society	Kuwait
52	Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS)	Kuwait
53	Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR)	Kuwait
54	Middle East Center for Economics and Finance (CEF)	Kuwait
55	Al-Zaytouna Center for Studies and Consultations	Lebanon
56	Arab Forum for Alternatives (AFA)	Lebanon
57	Carnegie Middle East Center	Lebanon
58	Center for Arab Unity Studies (CAUS)	Lebanon
59	Center for Strategic Studies Research and Documentation (CSSRD)	Lebanon
60	Ideation Center (Strategy&)	Lebanon
61	Institute for Palestine Studies	Lebanon
62	International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA)	Lebanon
63	Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI)	Lebanon
64	Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS)	Lebanon
65	Lebanese Institute for Market Studies	Lebanon
66	Rami Makhzoumi Corporate Governance Initiative	Lebanon
67	The Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship at AUB	Lebanon
68	Libyan Organization for Policies and Strategies (Loops)	Libya
69	Sadeq Institute	Libya
70	Amadeus Institute	Morocco
71	Arab Center for Scientific Research and Human Studies	Morocco
72	Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches en Sciences Sociales (CERSS)	Morocco
73	Centre Jacque-Berque études en sciences humaines et sociales	Morocco
74	Centre National pour la Recherche Scientifique et Technique (CNRST)	Morocco
75	Group of Studies and Research in the Mediterranean (GERM)	Morocco
76	Institut de Recherche pour le Développement	Morocco
77	Institut des Etudes Africaines	Morocco
78	Laboratoire d'Etudes politiques, des Sciences humaines et sociales (LEPOSHS)	Morocco

	Name	Country
79	Laboratory for Research on Comparative Democratic Transition	Morocco
80	Le Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Aziz Belal (CERAB)	Morocco
81	Moroccan Institute for International Relations	Morocco
82	Moroccan Institute for Policy Analysis (MIPA)	Morocco
83	Moroccan Interdisciplinary Center for Strategic Studies	Morocco
84	Policy Center for the new South (formerly: OCP Policy Center)	Morocco
85	Prometheus Institute for Democracy and Human Rights	Morocco
86	Public Policy Center (PPC)	Morocco
87	Royal Institute for Strategic Studies (IRES)	Morocco
88	International Research Foundation (IRF)	Oman
89	Tawasul	Oman
90	Contemporary Center for Studies and Policy Analysis (Medad)	Palestine
91	Health, Development, Information and Policy Institute	Palestine
92	Issam Sartawi Center for the Advancement of Peace and Democracy (ISCAPD)	Palestine
93	Muwatin Institute for Democracy and Human Rights	Palestine
94	Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA)	Palestine
95	Palestinian Center for Peace and Democracy	Palestine
96	Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research	Palestine
97	PalThink for Strategic Studies	Palestine
98	Peace Research Institute in the Middle East (PRIME)	Palestine
99	Al Jazeera Centre for Studies (AJCS)	Qatar
100	Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies	Qatar
101	Brookings Doha Center	Qatar
102	Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS)	Qatar
103	Qatar Foundation	Qatar
104	Center for Strategic Development	Saudi Arabia
105	Desert Agriculture Initiative	Saudi Arabia
106	Gulf Research Center (GRC)	Saudi Arabia
107	International Institute for Iranian Studies/FKA Arabian Gulf Center	Saudi Arabia
108	King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Centre (KAPSARC)	Saudi Arabia
109	King Abdullah Institute for Research and Consulting Studies	Saudi Arabia
110	King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies	Saudi Arabia

ANNEX I. ARAB THINK TANKS, CLASSIFIED BY COUNTRY

	Name	Country
111	King Salman Center for Local Governance (KSCLG)	Saudi Arabia
112	Prince Sultan Institute for Environmental, Water and Desert Research	Saudi Arabia
113	Sustainable Energy Technologies Center	Saudi Arabia
114	Syrian League for Citizenship	Syria
115	Association des études internationales	Tunisia
116	Center for Mediterranean and International Studies (CEMI)	Tunisia
117	Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR)	Tunisia
118	Democratic Transition & Human Rights Support Center	Tunisia
119	Institut Arabe des Chefs d'Entreprises (IACE)	Tunisia
120	Kheireddine Institute	Tunisia
121	Maghreb Economic Forum	Tunisia
122	Tunisian Institute for Strategic Studies (ITES)	Tunisia
123	Tunisian Observatory for a Democratic Transition	Tunisia
124	Tunisian Observatory for Economics	Tunisia
125	Dubai Public Policy Research Center	United Arab Emirates
126	Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR)	United Arab Emirates
127	Emirates Diplomatic Academy	United Arab Emirates
128	Emirates Policy Center	United Arab Emirates
129	Future Center for Advanced Researches and Studies	United Arab Emirates
130	Hedayah	United Arab Emirates
131	International Center for Biosaline Agriculture	United Arab Emirates
132	Legatum Limited	United Arab Emirates
133	Mohamed bin Rashid School of Government (MBRSG)	United Arab Emirates
134	Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research	United Arab Emirates
135	The Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis (INEGMA)	United Arab Emirates
136	WAMDA	United Arab Emirates
137	Organization for Defending Rights and Democratic Freedoms	Yemen
138	Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies	Yemen
139	Sheba Center for Strategic Studies (SCSS)	Yemen
140	Studies and Economic Media Center	Yemen



ANNEX II. ONLINE SURVEY

How do you perceive the entity you represent based on its board and governance structure?

- Autonomous and independent
- Quasi-independent
- Government affiliated/part of government
- Quasi-governmental
- University affiliated
- Corporate for-profit
- Politically affiliated
- Other, please specify_____

How do the stakeholders perceive the entity you represent based on its board and governance structure?

- Autonomous and independent
- Quasi-independent
- Government affiliated/part of government
- Quasi-governmental
- University affiliated
- Corporate for-profit
- Politically affiliated
- Other, please specify_____

Please indicate the focus of the think tank's activities. Please select the most relevant category.

If the think tank's work covers multiple areas, please select a maximum of 3.

- Energy and natural resources
- Environment and climate change
- Foreign policy or international affairs
- Agriculture, water or food security
- Education, healthcare or social policy
- Economic or financial policy
- Science and technology
- Other, domestic focus
- Other, international focus

What do you believe have been the most significant obstacles to improving the governance of think tanks in the region? Please select the top 3.

- Lack of board or trustee independence and objectivity
- Lack of awareness of board or trustee member responsibility
- Political interference in the operation of the entity
- Inadequate separation between executive and board roles
- Lack of accountability to the stakeholder community
- Insufficient freedom to define an independent research agenda
- Lack of governance awareness at the management level
- Other, please specify_____

Which of the following formal governance documents/protocols does your think tank have?

Please select all that apply.

- Articles of association or equivalent
- Special law/decreed establishing the think tank
- A corporate governance code or equivalent
- Board charter or manual
- Board committee charters
- A risk management framework
- Code of conduct/ethics code
- Internal audit framework
- External audit framework
- Delegation of authorities
- Stakeholder audit framework
- Mission and vision statement
- Other, please specify_____

What is the size of the board of directors or the board of trustees of your organization?

- 2-6
- 7-9
- 10-12
- 13 or more
- No formal board

How many female board/trustee members or senior executives does the entity have?

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-5
- 5 or more

How independent do you consider your board of directors and/or trustees? Select the option that best applies to your organization.

- Fully independent and objective, operating in the interest of the beneficiaries
- Partially independent and objective, operating in the interest of beneficiaries and donors
- Subject to considerable political and/or corporate influence in its strategic and operational decisions
- Board decisions are fully dictated by political considerations or funding availability
- Other, please specify_____

What is the frequency of board meetings (excluding committee meetings)?

- 1-3 times annually
- 4-5 times annually
- 6-7 times annually
- 8 times or more annually
- Not applicable, the board does not meet

What committees, if any, have been established at the board level? Please select all that apply.

- No board committees established
- Audit
- Risk
- Remuneration
- Nomination
- Executive
- Strategy
- Governance
- Research
- Advisory committee to the board
- Other, please specify_____

What are the top barriers to improving board effectiveness in your entity? Please select the top 3.

- The board or the management do not prioritize governance
- Weak director capabilities and lacking expertise
- Lack of clarity between the chairman and the CEO's responsibilities
- Dominant chairman does not foster communication
- Tone at the top does not help establish a governance culture
- Lack of renewal or diversity in board members
- Board controlled by the founder of/donors to the entity
- Lack of qualified board members in the region
- The think tank does not have the resources to have adequate governance
- Conflict of interest between research and advisory functions
- Inadequate oversight of key functions such as research
- Other, please specify_____

How do the board and senior management foster trust and the relevance of the think tank's activities?

Please select all that apply.

- By continuously engaging with the stakeholder community
- By focusing on topics of critical importance to the national agenda
- By selecting issues of regional priority and relevance
- By engaging with a broad set of audiences and stakeholders
- By reporting on its activities to the donors and the public
- By introducing additional governance mechanisms such as an advisory board
- By continuously revising strategy to reflect emerging priorities
- Other, please specify_____

Where would you like to see more expertise in terms of the board's knowledge? Please select the top 3.

- Think tank/academic experience
- Specific industry/topic knowledge
- Governance and compliance
- Strategy and planning skills
- Stakeholder management
- Fundraising and budgeting
- Technology skills
- Other, please specify_____

What is the process of appointing the CEO of the think tank?

- By a leading government figure (head of state or other)
- By another patron of the think tank (public or private)
- By a joint decision of the board of directors

- By a decision of a dedicated board committee (nomination)
- On the suggestion of the donor(s) to the think tank
- Other, please specify_____

What are the sources of risk that you perceive to be most important for your think tank?

- Funding and resource instability
- Regional or national instability
- Regulatory compliance failures
- Unfulfilled stakeholder expectations
- Inability to deliver impactful research
- Inability to engage with the stakeholders
- Legal/regulatory changes impacting its viability
- Evolution in economic and social trends
- Other, please specify_____

The think tank has the following risk management practices. Please select all that apply.

- Risk management framework and detailed procedures
- Regular assessments and mapping to understanding risks
- Internal audit department with adequate authority
- Senior finance/audit executive(s) reporting to the board
- Qualified external auditor who certifies the annual report
- Whistleblowing policy and a process for reporting to the board
- Stakeholder consultation and complaint mechanisms
- Other, please specify_____

How would you qualify the experience and the contribution of your senior executive team? Please select a statement that best corresponds to the current situation.

- Excellent senior management team representing a mix of academic and project experience
- The senior management team composition needs to be reviewed or updated
- The senior academic team composition needs to be reviewed or updated
- The think tank is not able to attract/retain senior executive or research staff due to budget constraints
- Other, please specify_____

Do you feel that succession planning for key posts has been adequately addressed? Please select all that apply.

- The think tank performed a competency analysis against future strategic needs
- The think tank has developed a pipeline of board and executive candidates
- The think tank used an assessment survey to review the fit of candidates
- The board has identified an interim CEO in case of an emergency
- The board uses head hunters to identify suitable candidates when needs arise
- The board communicates with management about succession planning
- The board drafted or reviewed a formal written CEO succession plan
- Other, please specify_____

What disclosure does the think tank provide to its stakeholders and the public? Please select all that apply.

- Annual report
- Periodic press releases
- Conference reports
- Details of its advisory projects
- Impact assessments
- Public consultations
- Research (free or paid)
- Other, please specify_____

Is the think tank able to engage with its key stakeholders effectively? Please select all that apply.

- Government
- Private sector
- NGO community
- Academic community
- General public
- Donors
- International community
- Other, please specify_____

What statement would best describe the current funding structure of your entity?

- Reliant on a government endowment
- Reliant on a corporate or private endowment
- Reliant on corporate funding on a multi-year basis
- Reliant on corporate funding on a year-to-year basis
- Reliant on government funding on a multi-year basis
- Reliant on government funding on a year-to-year basis
- Reliant on donations from high net worth patrons
- Other, please specify_____

Are disclosures regarding the following items made publicly available in the annual report or in other sources of information? Select all that apply.

Board/trustee composition and profiles
 Composition of the senior management team
 Funding structure and resource utilization
 Strategic priorities and the resources allocated to them
 Compensation of board members and senior executives
 Key decisions taken by the board and management
 Key risks and strategies to address them
 Project impact assessments
 Other, please specify_____

What are the mechanisms that you utilize to engage with the stakeholder community? Please select all that apply.

Consultations on research and project priorities in the definition of the strategy
 Engagement of NGOs and the civil society in defining and executing projects
 Interviews and focus group techniques to assess priorities and impact
 Invitations to outside stakeholders to key events and to contribute to research where relevant
 Peer learning with other think tanks and relevant academic entities
 Regular consultations with governmental clients/donors
 Regular consultations with private sector clients/donors
 Other, please specify_____

How does the think tank evaluate its impact? Please select all that apply.

Through the rigorous use of financial and non-financial KPIs approved by the board
 Through consistent communication with the relevant stakeholders
 By monitoring the delivery of planned outputs against strategic objectives
 By monitoring its adherence to and deviations from financial metrics
 Through 'utilization' indicators such as the number of references, patents, etc.
 Through its impact on public policy (i.e., the adoption of regulations, etc.)
 Based on the use of social media indicators (blogs, Twitter, etc.)
 By examining the strength of collaborations with the private and public sectors
 Other, please specify_____

What KPIs do you utilize in assessing impact? Please select all that apply.

Quality of leadership and staff
 Quality and reputation of research
 Academic performance and reputation
 Impact on public policy debates
 Impact on social outcomes and metrics
 Independence of research and projects
 Impact on print, audio and social media
 Objective metrics such as research citations
 Solicitation of the entity for its views
 Funding adequacy and stability
 Ability to deliver on agreed projects
 Ability to challenge prevailing thinking
 Ability to bring stakeholders together

What impact do you believe the introduction of better governance might have for the think tank? Please select all that may apply.

- Better risk mitigation
- Clearer lines of responsibility
- Better oversight of strategy
- Bringing in independent perspectives
- Better access to financial resources
- Enhanced reputation among peers
- Better accountability to stakeholders
- No significant impact

What governance priorities do you believe are most critical for think tanks in the region?

- Developing formal governance protocols at the board level
- Better structured interactions between the board and management
- Enhanced budget transparency and accountability
- Stronger consultations and engagement with beneficiaries
- Independence from political and corporate influence
- Ability to freely define and execute research and training agendas
- Stronger internal audit and fraud protocols to prevent reputational damage
- Other, please specify_____

What are the most critical strategic challenges facing think tanks in the Middle East?

- Remaining relevant in terms of research and project delivery
- Ensuring consulting activities do not impact independence
- Competition from local foundations and universities
- Competition from international think tanks and universities
- Ensuring funding sustainability for key projects
- Instability in the region disrupting established plans
- Ability to independently define strategies and agendas
- Other, please specify_____



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G O V E R N
ECONOMIC AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE CENTER