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The role of think tanks in influencing policy-making in Israel

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ABSTRACT
This paper examines the emergence and role of research think tanks in Israel, particularly with regard to their influence on policy-making. The establishment of the first think tanks coincided with the founding of the state, with their numbers increasing since the 1990s. This paper attempts to map these Israeli think tanks, which are classified under four categories: government, private or independent think tanks, political party think tanks, and academic think tanks ('universities without students'). The paper is divided into two themes. The first considers the core issues of their interest against the existence of these think tanks in the Israeli parliamentary political system. The second applies both the quantitative and the qualitative features of these think tanks in an attempt to discover the extent of their influence within the process of decision-making in Israel.

KEYWORDS
Arab–Israeli conflict; Israel; Palestine; think tanks

Introduction

In his book *The New Middle East*, Israeli president Shimon Peres (1993) describes the future foundations on which Israel will be based and states that the focus of power in the coming decades will be in universities and not in barracks (Al-Jarrad 2000). This statement by Peres expresses the extent of the Israeli leadership's interest in scientific research. This is the foundation on which Israel depends in order to complete its settler plans. Rather, this research forms the source of its power, just as Peres describes.

For Israel, this dependence on research and study is not an exigent matter. The very founding of that occupying state is based on the plans and ideas drawn up by its thinkers and experts (Al-Masiri 1999), and its security is reliant on science, knowledge and research. During the Herzliya conference for national security in 2010, the Institute for Policy and Strategy attempted to formulate a concept of strategic security for Israel. This resulted in 53 'mission statements' for the concept of Israeli security in the future. Ten of these are of particular significance, five of which are connected to education and scientific research. The first and second mission statements are related to education and scientific research and are the most important and most agreed-upon among researchers (Golav 2010). Therefore, it is not strange that science, research, knowledge and study should constitute the essential foundation of Israel's security strategy for it to be able to survive in its regional environment. The groundwork for these think tanks[1] coincided with the birth of the Israeli state. Their existence is a pressing necessity not only in

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Israel but also in other countries looking at the future. The process of public policy-making is no longer monopolized by the state and its official institutions. There are new emerging forces (think tanks) with their own contribution and role that undertake new functions that governments are unable to assume. The emergence of these think tanks came as a result of social needs and developments in the international arena (Teitz 2009).

Therefore, this paper will attempt to map the Israeli think tanks with regards to the beginning of their emergence, their classification and the core issues of their interest against the background of their existence in a parliamentary political system. This system is built upon political plurality and the formation of coalition governments as a necessary characteristic of the political context in Israel. This operates within a Zionist settler ideological framework of expansionist plans that require research and analysis to be realized. Moreover, these think tanks exist in a social context that is characterized by internal conflicts and social divisions. This paper studies the extent to which these frameworks influence issues of interest to these institutions or how they explain the limits of their role in the process of policy-making in Israel. Hence, this research paper is divided into two themes. The first examines the map of Israeli think tanks and their significance while the second discusses the influence of think tanks on the process of decision-making in Israel.

Theme 1: Mapping Israeli think tanks and their importance

The establishment of Israel was based on the deep intellectual effort and strategic planning by a group of thinkers, experts and military leaders. Israel was founded on the basis of the vision of its thinkers and the plans and studies which they produced (Al-Masiri 1999). The development of this matter is no longer an individual effort for a number of intellectuals and researchers. Rather, it has taken on an institutional form embodied in think tanks.

There are numerous types and categories of think tanks. The map of those research institutions shows several types that may be classified under four main categories. The first category is academic think tanks that belong to government universities. All these universities come under a series of think tanks that are concerned with Israeli affairs (foreign policy, national security and the demographic situation). The second category includes think tanks belonging to the public sector (ministries, information centres and research centres belonging to the Knesset). They conduct research on political, economic, demographic and technological issues. The third category includes think tanks belonging to political parties that carry out the task of providing the party leaders with analyses of internal and external situations and developments. Despite the ability of the party leaders, they nevertheless may resort to using independent think tanks for opinion surveys or polls, especially during election times. Parties may also seek help from specialist think tanks in the area of political and security research. The fourth category includes private and independent think tanks that are concerned with issues in the Arab–Israeli conflict and developments in the region. These are characterized by their lack of a governmental character and prepare plans and research for trade purposes. The influence of these think tanks varies according to their closeness and distance from decision-makers. Furthermore, their influence is dependent on how far policy-makers respond to them. This is clear from studying the government policies that the Israeli government has adopted as a kind of response to the recommendations of these think tanks.

Figure 1 illustrates the map of these think tanks. From the map of think tanks in Israel, it appears from the process of institutionalizing that these think tanks came with the founding of this state in 1948. However, 1922 saw the establishment of the Agricultural Research Organization.[2] Its website describes how it became the 'primary driving force' of the Ministry of Israeli Agriculture and Rural Development. The priority to establish this think tank may be explained in the light of the fact that Israel was built on an agricultural economy. Thus, this settlement entity required the study of the environment as well as education and knowledge of suitable crops, and how to employ immigrants in farming and appropriate agricultural methods. This was in addition to other issues that occupied the interest of the Zionist leaders at that time in order to build the state. Therefore, the founding of the nation demanded the creation of government think tanks, especially those with a military background, in order to play the desired role. This was in view of the role played by the military in establishing the state which prioritized embarking on expansionist wars that might lead to comprehensive wars in an environment hostile to Israel. Therefore, there was a necessity to draft plans and gather and

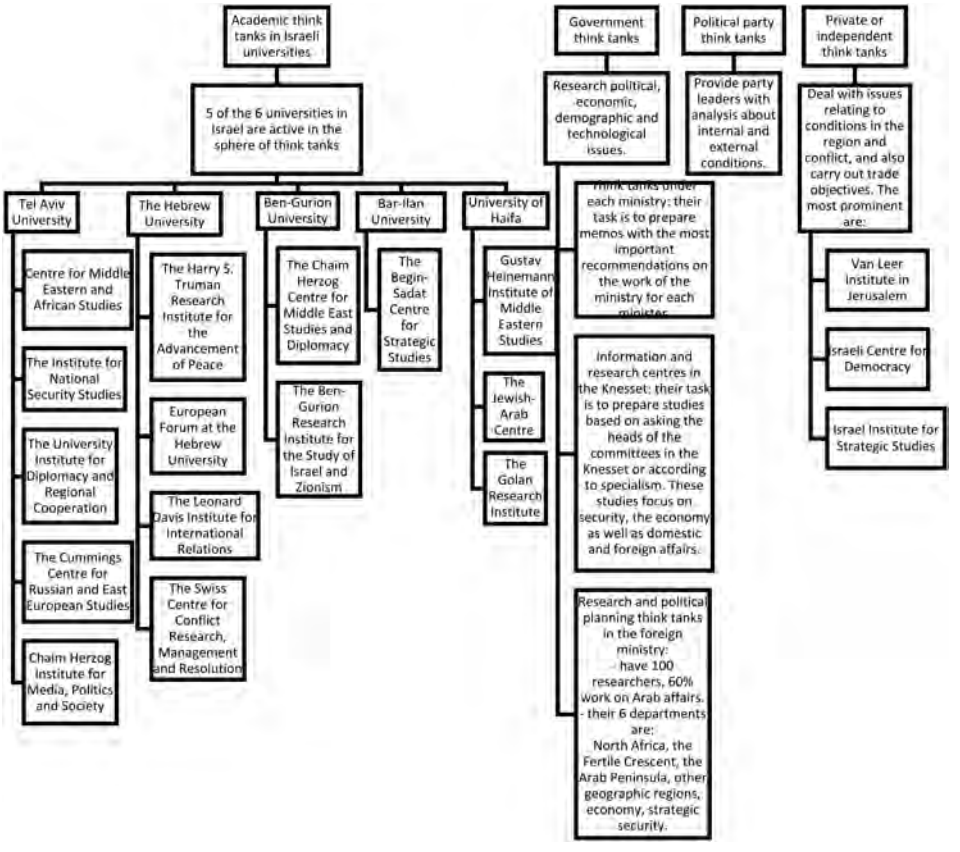

Figure 1. Map of think tanks in Israel.
Sources: Al-Qahwi (2004, 51), Humaydat (2009, 100 and 118), Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs (n.d.) and the Knesset Research and Information Centre.

analyze information about the capabilities of the enemy and the opportunities available to Israel.

This period also saw the emergence of some of the independent think tanks, due to the efforts exerted by the Jewish diaspora and global Jewish organizations in particular. These aimed to study the regional situation and propose alternative policies to serve the interests of Israel and help it to put pressure on foreign forces that opposed it. As for the think tanks belonging to the legislature, such as the Knesset Information and Research Centre, these emerged at the beginning of the 21st century due to the efforts of the 15th president of the Knesset, Avraham Burg. He became convinced of the importance of having a research entity under the Knesset to serve its goals, help members of parliament and facilitate the work of parliamentary committees. This was in view of parliament's reliance on the advice of the independent think tanks and institutions for its information, especially foreign centres, hence the establishment of this think tank.

These think tanks differed in their affiliations, the organizations to which they belonged, the roles they played and their target groups. Similarly, the issues that interested them were also diverse and their ideological orientation ranged between the extreme right to the moderate left. Thus, this theme will attempt to examine and discuss the map of these think tanks, their different types and categories, and the issues of interest to them.

Academic think tanks – 'universities without students'

Israel has six government universities. However, only five of them are active in think tanks: Tel Aviv University, The Hebrew University, Bar-Ilan University, the University of Haifa and Ben-Gurion University. A number of think tanks, or 'universities without students', work under the auspices of these universities and perform the task of analyzing policy issues. Researchers from an academic background work in them, including graduates from distinguished universities around the world who hold master's and doctorate degrees. These think tanks are mainly concerned with preparing scientific academic papers using accurate and specialized research methods and tools in the social sciences (Desmoulins 2002).

The roots of these university think tanks go back to 1959 to the Reuven Shiloah Institute which bore the name of the first head of Mossad. The website of the Moshe Dayan Centre for Middle Eastern and African Studies[3] mentions that the institute was later incorporated into Tel Aviv University, and the Moshe Dayan Centre was founded in 1983, combining this institute with the university's documentation units. This beginning with its intelligence background reflects the role that these institutions were expected to play in providing the necessary information to assist the Israeli intelligence apparatus. This role then began to develop with changing internal and global circumstances in order to meet the increasing and developing needs of the Zionist settler plan – the state of Israel.

The think tanks in Israel range between the camps of the right and the left, that is, between the doves and the hawks, with regard to their research orientation and agenda which they have adopted. Rather, they move repeatedly between the two camps according to their intellectual persuasion. For example, we find that the Institute for National Security Studies[4] expresses the ideas of the right inasmuch as it emphasizes the importance of arming and security and produces studies on ways to increase the Israeli army's power, military supplies and so on. The Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement

of Peace[5] adopts a leftist idea that is interested in dialogue between Arabs and Israelis and normalization. The Moshe Dayan Centre is regarded as a centre-left think tank since it is positioned equally between the two trends. This think tank's interest is in peace initiatives, but its vision differs from that of the Harry S. Truman Research Institute. Moreover, it is interested in Israeli security but does not adopt the openly left character of the Institute for National Security Studies (Al-Masiri 1999; MADAR (The Palestinian Forum for Israeli Studies) 2013).

This research paper will apply the criteria arrived at by a number of Western writings for classifying think tanks. These comprise five categories: the first is based on the type of research production provided by these think tanks, the second is connected to the scope of their work, the third is based on their research specialization, the fourth is based on the membership of those think tanks and their affiliation and independence, and the fifth is based on their target group (McGann 2010). These categories are now explained.

Combination of criteria for the membership and affiliation of think tanks and their type of research production

These think tanks are affiliated to universities but they are 'universities without students'. They prepare studies of a predominantly academic and long-term nature. Most of their research production is represented by books, annual, biannual or quarterly periodicals, magazines, intelligence publications and opinion surveys. For example, the Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies website[6] lists its publications such as: Mideast Security and Policy Studies, Colloquia on Strategy and Diplomacy, Perspectives Papers, and the Madeleine Feher Annual European Scholar Series. There is a specialist team working in each think tank according to the agenda of its interests. The think tanks may help other experts from different organizations inside and outside Israel. These think tanks aim to develop the research capabilities and knowledge of their researchers and encourage them to complete their higher studies in order to obtain higher academic degrees from some of the major universities in the world. The Harry S. Truman Research Institute, for example, has up to now provided over 70 annual study grants to Israeli researchers and those from other countries to obtain master's, doctorate and postdoctoral degrees.

Criteria for the research specialization

By applying the research specializations mentioned by McGann (2010), which come under the interest of those think tanks, it is clear that they may all be applicable since these centres work in the eight specializations: international development, health policy, environmental policy, security and state affairs, domestic economic policy, social policy, science and technology, and transparency and good governance. However, in view of this paper's interest in the area of social sciences, its focus will be on those think tanks listed under this category only.[7]

A review of the interests of these research institutions makes clear that their interests combine these specializations since it cannot be said that any individual think tank is limited to one specific research branch. One think tank is interested in more than one research area that includes several issues, such as the study of modern history and Middle Eastern affairs, while another think tank is interested in the study of peace issues in the region, such as the Harry S. Truman Institute, and another is

interested in the study of issues in Arab–Israeli affairs, peace initiatives and supporting relations between Arabs and Jews. Moreover, there is a think tank interested in the study of Arab organizations and societies while another is specializing in this area more and studying the affairs of some other Middle Eastern countries, such as Egypt and Iran. There are also think tanks interested in global Islam in addition to minority affairs.

There are think tanks interested in the study of internal affairs within Israel, such as the economic and demographic situation, the study of social peace as well as the sources and causes of internal conflicts. There are leftist think tanks concerned with studying the values of tolerance, dialogue and peaceful coexistence between peoples and nations, and the future of the settlements. There are also think tanks interested in studying the affairs of the Jewish diaspora and their connection to Israel. This is in addition to those studying the regional dangers that are represented in the majority of studies, such as political Islam movements and the ideology of jihad and terrorism adhered to by some regional movements and states. As well as this, there is an interest in the affairs of Russia, the eastern European states and the Latin American states. International policy has gained more interest in the agenda of these institutions, such as the study of American policy in the Middle East and Israeli-European relations which are studied at the European Forum at the Hebrew University.[8]

Criteria for the target group

The think tanks are aimed at both decision-makers and the public. The definition of public may be expanded to include the Palestinians inside Israel (the '1948 Arabs'). Some of these think tanks are aimed at preparing the climate for a peaceful life inside Israel, such as the Harry S. Truman Institute and the Jewish-Arab Centre for Peace at Givat Haviva.[9] Here the public includes students in Israeli and European societies through grants and cultural exchange programmes. The Institute for National Security Studies combines activities that carry out two essential programmes, both of which are aimed at a specific group: the first is concerned with Israeli society and public opinion, the second aimed directly towards offering advice to decision-makers on confronting the challenges facing Israel based on the rules of international law. The media is not excluded from the interests of these research institutions in universities. The researchers, experts and administration of the Moshe Dayan Centre have strong ties to all kinds of media (television, radio and print). However, the interest in the media is not the main goal of these academic think tanks but is only a means to influence.

Criteria for the geographical scope of work

The majority of these think tanks are local and work inside Israel. Although their research interests are varied and oversee different geographical regions in the world, there are also think tanks that work on an international scale, such as the European Forum at the Hebrew University. Its website lists members that include a number of European institutions like the Helmut Kohl Institute for European Studies, the Marjorie Mayrock Centre for Russian, Euro-Asian and East-European Research, the Paul Desmarais Centre for the Study of French Culture, and the Centre for the Study of Italian Culture which joined it in 2005.

Government think tanks

These think tanks specialize in research on political, economic, demographic and technological matters that deal with issues relating to conditions in the region. The affiliation of these research institutions varies between institutions belonging to the state legislature, like the Knesset Research and Information Centre,[10] and other institutions belonging to the state executive(for the ministries), such as the Centre for Political Planning and Research in the Foreign Ministry.

The formation of these tanks preceded the founding of the state since interest in them began in 1922 with the establishment of the Agricultural Research Organization. This was concerned with studying the type of land and agricultural produce in order to set up a strong agricultural economy. This in fact formed the basis for the state of Israel in 1948 as the country was founded on an agricultural economy established by the agricultural settlements of the Kibbutz and Moshavim movements. Hence, their existence paved the way for the existence of the state and after that they became the main farmers in the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture. Following this, the government think tanks began to develop in order to respond to the needs of decision-makers. For example, the centre for research belonging to the Knesset was created in 2000 in response to the development of the nature of cases put forward in the Knesset. The complex background of these cases forced some members of parliament to turn to non-governmental institutions so as to obtain their advice and consultation in return for financial remuneration. Nevertheless, this situation provoked the unease and anger of the president of the Knesset at that time, Avraham Burg (the 15th president of the Knesset) who feared the motives and objectives of those organizations, especially in view of certain cases that arose. Hence, Burg believed in the necessity of establishing an internal unit in parliament that would provide the necessary information to the members of the Knesset. In Burg's speech on the reasons for creating the think tank, he stated that the Knesset lacked the professional tools and entities to enable it to make sound decisions. The incorrect information that it was acquiring kept it from making the right decisions in many respects and some of this information was serving the interests of specific groups. This situation resulted in a gradual decline in the status of the Knesset due to its inability to perform its functions properly. Reuven Rivlin, the 16th president of the Knesset, contributed to its development by increasing the allocation for discussion of the state budget in Israel (Avrami 2011).

Having considered the criteria for classifying the think tanks belonging to the state and applying these criteria, it is evident that they are these are institutions created by an order from the government, whether from the executive or the legislature. These think tanks receive privileges from departments of the government and are obligated by the same duties. Furthermore, they are aimed at decision-makers since they were established to support the policies issued by them and funded by the state budget. This may be explained as follows.

Criteria for the membership and affiliation of think tanks

These think tanks belong to the public authorities, either the executive or the legislature. The order to create those institutions came from either the prime minister or from a particular minister. This is the case for the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities[11] which was created in 1959 on the order of the Minister of Education, Ben Zion-Dinur,

and the permanent committee of scholars to become a focal point for the gathering of Israeli scholars in the domain of the natural and human sciences. The order may also come from the president of the legislative authority, as was the case in the creation of the Knesset Research and Information Centre (Avrami 2011).

Usually, these think tanks are funded by the state budget. The funding for a think tank may come entirely from the state budget, as, for example, with the Knesset Research and Information Centre. Otherwise, the think tank may be partially funded in this way, as was the case for the Israeli Centres for Research Excellence initiative (I-CORE), described on the website of the Council for Higher Education.[12] The government funds one-third of its budget which came to a total of US$30 million in 2000. The remainder of the budget comprises one-third contributed by research institutes and one-third from strategic institutions and partners.

Criteria for the target group

In view of the fact that these think tanks were established by decision-makers, they are a tool to serve the aims of these decision-makers and to play a role in justifying the policies adopted by the think tanks belonging to the Foreign Ministry. They also serve to improve decisions that have been adopted already, as in the case of the Knesset Research and Information Centre.

Criteria for the research specialization

The research specializations of these think tanks intersect with the eight areas mentioned previously. They are assigned with import issues relating to national security, drafting long- and medium-term plans, and studying the security threats facing Israel and terrorism. As well as this, they attempt to build on social issues (social policy) through an interest in studying the situation of the Jewish diaspora and strengthening their relationship with the state. The think tanks also study the situation of Palestinians inside Israel, Arab villages, settlement policies and settlement building, as in the case of the Centre for Settlement Studies. Moreover, these think tanks are concerned with studying the challenges facing local society, the phenomenon of Israeli emigration and proposals for policies to assist migrants. Cultural issues also occupy a place on the agendas of these think tanks inasmuch as they study Jewish history and art and the Hebrew language, such as, for example, the Israeli Centre for Research and Development. Think tanks, such as the Israeli Academic Centre, also research ways of normalizing cultural relations between Israel and the Arab states. Moreover, the administrations belonging to the Foreign Ministry aim to develop Israel's relationship with other countries especially, and thus, it has opened institutes and centres in various countries to realize this goal.

Criteria for the scope of work

There are government think tanks working on a domestic level because of their proximity to the decision-makers, in which case they offer support directly to a particular minister. Other think tanks work in Israel by virtue of the nature of their work, such as the Centre for Settlement Studies. There are also think tanks working within a regional or international scope. These have branches in more than one state, such as the think tanks of the Foreign Ministry which have been opened in several countries with the aim of developing Israel's relationship with other countries around the world. This is in addition to the

ministry's dependence on the sources of information in the reports which these branches issue and which are drawn from the reports of Israeli diplomats in various countries.

Criteria for the research production

Government think tanks deal with the study of urgent issues and undertake a partial implementation of recommendations due to the fact that they are part of the executive and legislative institutions of the state. Moreover, their work may intersect with that of the contracted private think tanks which provide the necessary scientific expertise to different bodies, administrations and employees of the government as well as members of parliament. However, the work of these government think tanks is not based on the idea of a contract or contracted projects since they are a part of each part of the governmental bodies. That is due to the fact that these think tanks obtain funds from the state budget. Hence, their work is characterized by its lasting and ongoing nature in contrast to the contracted projects.

Political party think tanks

These think tanks carry out the task of supplying party leaders with analyses of internal and external conditions. For example, the Arabic Studies Institute issues research and publications on the nature of Jewish–Arab relations, government affairs, the political and legal system, and the economic situation. The role of these think tanks is not limited to this task. Indeed, they play another key role through the educational and cultural activities they offer, such as programmes for teaching Hebrew to Arabs and strengthening Jewish education as offered, for example, by the Institute for Arab Studies and the Central Agency for Culture belonging to the Histadrut trade union organization. The Arabic Studies Institute was founded in 1963 as part of the Jewish-Arab Centre for Peace at Givat Haviva (a left think tank) in order to work towards creating better relations between Arabs and Jews and to strive to build a better mutual understanding about the essence of democracy and the rights of citizens in Israel as well as to reduce the gulf with neighbouring Arab countries. This think tank has developed a model of work to support social and educational goals (Kiwan 2009). In addition to that, there is the role that these research think tanks perform in justifying policies carried out by the leaders of the party to which they belong. In considering the criteria for classifying these think tanks, the following may be noted.

Criteria for the type of research production, affiliation and research specialization

These think tanks serve the interests of the parties and their political agendas, responding to their political needs. Thus, they constitute the research arm of these parties. The ideological orientation of these think tanks varies in accordance with the agenda of the party to which they are providing the necessary support. Therefore, they are graded as left, centre left, centre right, right, religious right and secular. The think tanks depend on their affiliation to the parties and the concept of party loyalty. For example, we find that although there are 20 Arabs and Jews working in the Arabic Studies Institute at Givat Haviva and it is close to the 'Israeli left', there are also activists there from different parties (Kiwan 2009). It provides services to over 15 000 students, educators, professionals and specialists. The agenda of these think tanks is defined by the priorities of each party

and their intellectual current. There are key issues that concern every party, especially at the time of parliamentary elections in order to rally support. These issues form the criterion for dividing each camp into right and left, for example, their positions on the Palestinians inside Israel (the '1948 Arabs'), peace with the Arabs, security concerns, the budget allocated to the army, withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967 and settlement building (Dowty 1998). Hence, the think tanks belonging to the political parties work towards studying these issues. For example, the political party think tanks inside the left camp are interested in several issues, such as the Islamic movement inside Israel, peace initiatives in the Middle East, Arab–Israeli negotiations, the status of Palestinians inside Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, Arabs' impressions of Jews, disseminating the Hebrew language, reviving Jewish culture, and consolidating relations between Israel and other countries.

Most of the parties are suffering from the financial crisis, such as the Labour Party whose debt has reached 140 million shekels (Somfalvi n.d.). Therefore, its research think tanks not only depend on party funding but also are trying to obtain funding from other quarters by undertaking contracted research for the benefit of some ministries and organizations. For example, the Arabic Studies Institute (which belongs to the left camp) is implementing a programme on studies of the Middle East for the benefit of the Ministry of Education and the private sector.

Criteria for the target group

Political party think tanks are aimed mainly at the political elites of these parties. These think tanks aim to improve the parties' performance by providing analyses of internal and regional conditions. They also aim to improve the policies adopted by parties so that these are aligned with current situations. Moreover, these think tanks are aimed at public opinion inasmuch as they help the political parties in implementing their social and political programmes. This is done through the provision of Hebrew and Arabic language lessons and the organization of educational activities for Jews and Arabs designed to spread the Hebrew language and revive Hebrew culture. This task is undertaken by the Central Agency for Culture (Kiwan 2009).

Criteria for the scope of work

Political party think tanks work within Israel due to the fact that the parties are present inside the country. Hence, they are local think tanks despite their interest in various regional and international issues.

Private or independent think tanks

These think tanks are interested in the Arab–Israeli conflict and developments taking place in the region. They are distinguished by their independence from the government and for carrying out work on projects and research for trade purposes. Essentially, they express the viewpoints of their directors and supporters. These think tanks differ from their institutional counterparts as they have come about as a result of the efforts of groups of businessmen. For example, the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute[13] for research was established due to the efforts of the family of the late businessman Bernard Van Leer. There are also think tanks established due to the individual efforts of certain state

leaders and statesmen, such as the private independent organizations that are not affiliated to any state institutions, for example, the Peres Centre for Peace. Additionally, there are other think tanks that have been established and supported financially by universities and Jewish organizations in America and Europe. The think tanks connected to Israeli or American circles, or in universities or academic institutes, rely on consultative councils that include prominent academics and political personalities from Israel and abroad. Among the most well-known of these personalities are Henry Kissinger, Harold Brown, Alexander Haig, Cyrus Vance and Bernard Lewis (Mirza 2007).

This type of think tank is not new to the research environment in Israel since its roots go back to the end of the 1950s. For example, the website of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute states that 'Since 1959 it has operated as a centre for advanced studies and for intellectual public discourse'. The number of private think tanks began to spread in the 1990s as most were interested in undertaking research on democracy studies, like the Israeli Centre for Democracy, as well as peace studies, like the Peres Centre for Peace and the International Centre for Peace in the Middle East. As well as those working on a local level, there are those working internationally, such as the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI).[14] Despite having its headquarters in Israel, its website states it has a main office in Washington, DC, in the United States and also branches in more than one country.

Criteria for the target group

The private think tanks aim at the decision-makers and media through comprehensive programmes that focus on reform, developing the media sector and enlightening public opinion. This is carried out through dialogues, opinion surveys and programmes they adopt in order to enable citizens to become immersed in political life. A large number of these think tanks have powerful connections to decision-makers, such as the Israeli Centre for Democracy.

Criteria for the research specialization

The research specializations of these think tanks are numerous. They are interested in political, social, economic, domestic, international and security matters as well as issues around democracy, civil society, ways of building democracy in Israel, Jewish culture, studying Israeli society, regional and economic cooperation, peace-building, the environment, technology and art.

Criteria for the research production

The type of research production varies according to the agenda of the founders of these private think tanks and their objectives. There are think tanks whose expertise is contracted to government bodies, administrations and employees as well as members of parliament in exchange for financial remuneration that is included in its funding, for example, the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute. There are think tanks for defence and appeals, such as B'Teslem which defends human rights. There are also 'think and do tanks' that resolve public policies and provide advice on these issues, like the Israeli Centre for Democracy. This is in addition to certain unproductive think tanks that are used in the electoral propaganda of statesmen and in the justification of their policies so as to win public approval and thus legitimacy.

Furthermore, this category of private think tanks also includes strategic policy think tanks such as independent think tanks that do not belong to any governmental or legislative body.

It is possible to draw two main conclusions about Israeli think tanks and their different categories from the preceding description. Firstly, the political, cultural, economic and social context surrounding these think tanks is reflected on their research agendas. The problems present on a domestic level are seen in their research output, such as the situation of Palestinians inside Israel, sectarian discrimination between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews, the internal conflict between the religious Jews and secularists, the problem of identity, reviving Jewish heritage and the Hebrew language. Secondly, the Israeli think tanks perform several functions to influence the process of policy-making. This begins by defining the problem, observing its features through the preparation of research and studies on the problems facing Israel domestically and abroad. The work to improve and support the process of policy-making is achieved through the activities think tanks provide to determine the issues of priority, to raise the awareness of the general public, decision-makers and the media of these pressing problems. Likewise, think tanks contribute to the state's implementation of domestic and foreign policy, for example, the political party think tanks and the research and political planning think tanks in the Foreign Ministry. Thus, they are planning for the future and performing the role of circulating ideas and justifying government policies, as in the case of the political party think tanks.

Having reviewed and analyzed the map of think tanks (Figure 1) and the issues with which they are concerned, this raises questions about the extent of their influence on the policy-making process. Is there a difference in this influence from one group to another and in the nature of the tools used by these think tanks due to their presence in the research domain in Israel? The second theme will attempt to answer these questions.

Theme 2: The influence of think tanks on public policy-making in Israel

The prime minister uses advisers in their personal capacity on security issues, fighting terrorism and Palestinian demographics in Israel. There are also other advisers who are used temporarily on specific political issues. These advisers play a political role close to that of a minister by virtue of their specialization and closeness to the prime minster (El-Gendy 2010). Yet, the prime minister and other decision-makers in Israel do not frequently resort to think tanks to seek their opinion and advice or to study problems and propose solutions. This leads to an important question about the extent to which these think tanks influence the process of policy and decision-making.

It is difficult to measure the influence of the think tanks given the nature of their work. They aim to change ideas and beliefs. This is difficult to measure due to the fact that changing ideas does not happen overnight but is a long-term process that may last years. In addition to that, the process of policy-making and taking decisions happens in closed circles and, hence, it is not easy to know who has been most influenced or who has had a preference for taking a particular decision or adopting a specific policy. However, some thinkers have made efforts to attempt to measure this influence or demonstrate that these think tanks have a role in formulating public policy. There is a trend that adopts quantitative features (Boucher et al. 2004) rather than the trend that promotes

qualitative features (Abelson 2010). Additionally, there is a trend that unites the two types of features and at the forefront of this is McGann (2010).

I prefer to utilize the third trend given that it combines both quantitative and qualitative features, while also noting that it is difficult to measure some of these features which I will attempt to examine and observe in particular. Therefore, I will apply the following features of these research think tanks to attempt to discover the extent of their influence within the process of decision-making in Israel:

- The ability to survive over time.
- The employment of elite researchers and analysts and the increase in membership of the administrative councils of the think tanks.
- The available financial resources and the extent of their continuity.
- The presence of public personalities at conferences and seminars, the ability to approach elites and academics, and the extent to which these thinks are independent.
- The issuing of refereed publications and the move to increasing these publications.
- Excellent academic reputation on an international level.
- Media coverage of activities and relationship with the media.
- Observation of specific advice from think tanks applied by policy-makers, the existence of a direct relationship between think tanks' efforts and positive change, the drafting of proposals for laws and research papers.

The ability to survive over time

The ability of think tanks to survive and continue over time gains them renown and provides evidence of their success. This is especially in the light of the difficulty of measuring the direct influence of these research institutions (McGann 2010). By reviewing the history of the work of the Israeli think tanks, it is clear that their success has been of various kinds. The history of the creation of certain academic, government, independent and political party think tanks goes back to the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. There are also think tanks that were established at the end of the 1950s, like the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, and others at the start of the 1990s (Kiwan 2009). Hence, these think tanks have succeeded in surviving and continuing as institutional entities able to bear and face challenges and to work under changing ruling elites and changing public policy priorities in Israel, indeed in the region and world as a whole.

The ability to employ elite researchers and analysts

The think tanks include an outstanding group of experts possessing knowledge and competence. They attract distinguished elements among researchers, academics, diplomats, soldiers and businessmen. These elements are a factor in the power of those think tanks, especially as they can support and promote them internationally and globally and build strong relationships with international organizations and outstanding universities in the world. Likewise, these think tanks can turn to great experts in the world for help to support their research teams and their research output. In fact, a number of think tanks are linked to well-known global personalities who are involved in the membership of their administrative councils or advisory committees.

The work team

The think tanks rely on an elite group of outstanding researchers who hold different specializations according to the field of work of each think tank. According to its website, the research team at the Cummings Centre for Russian and East European Studies[15] specializes in the history, culture and social life of the target region which may have an influence on the social history of Israel. The website of the Moshe Dayan Centre for Middle Eastern and African Studies states that its researchers specialize in the study of history. That requires, as a necessity, the availability of several tools as a skill for documentation. Most of the researchers are proficient in more than two languages among those used in the Middle East countries, such as Arabic, Hebrew, Farsi, Kurdish and Turkish. The centre also utilizes researchers of many backgrounds and foreign organizations. These think tanks are interested in raising the abilities of their researchers, especially the younger ones, by granting them scholarships like those offered by the Swiss Centre for Conflict Research, Management and Resolution.[16] Furthermore, there are think tanks that offer monetary prizes to encourage researchers in research and knowledge production. For example, the Institute for National Security Studies website mentions that it awards the Tshetshik Prize worth 40 000 shekels for the preparation of a study that deals with the challenges facing Israeli national security.

Most of the think tanks have excellent relations with decision-makers and the elite, regardless of whether their identity is as a government, political party, university or even independent think tank. That is evident in many cases, such as the presence of these decision-makers at the think tank's activities. Through the activities it organizes, the Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies hosts a select group of decision-makers in military and civilian life, as well as diplomats, academics from around the world and media moguls. These or other experts are employed to prepare particular studies whenever necessary. They may also undertake contractual research for the benefit of a government or private body. For example, the Israeli Centre for Democracy organized a forum for political reform on 27 March 2011 to offer recommendations to the Knesset and these reached the president of the Knesset. These centres may also work as a human resource for government positions in the bureaucratic apparatus of the state. For example, the website of the Institute for National Security Studies mentions that a large number of its researchers occupy positions in the state or have been assigned official duties. For example, Udi Dekel chaired the Israeli team in the negotiations with the Palestinians at the Annapolis talks during Olmert's government; Shlomo Brom is employed as deputy national security adviser to the prime minister; Meir Elran took over as assistant head of the Winograd Commission inquiry after the war on Lebanon in 2006; and Oded Eran is an advisor to the Knesset.

Administrative councils of the think tanks

The think tanks are managed through a council of trustees or guardians who comprise members from various academic, diplomatic, military and economic backgrounds. The website of the Moshe Dayan Centre, for example, states that it is managed by a board of governors. With the diverse specializations of members of these councils of trustees varying from academic, military, business or economics, it is notable that in most of the think tanks, including the academic ones, the number of researchers and doctorate holders is not the largest number. This is in contrast to the situation in most think

tanks which include a larger number of researchers and academics in their council of trustees in order to facilitate their tracking of the think tank's work and to determine its research agenda in accordance with pre-existing needs, the issues being raised and the potential for the think tank to be a research institution that provides alternative policies for policy-makers (Struyk 2006). The Harry S. Truman Institute and the Institute for Policy and Strategy are examples of this. The lower number may be explained in view of the nature and specificity of Israel as a Zionist state that requires its research think tanks for use in various military and economic backgrounds in addition to the academic uses.

It is noticeable that the director of the think tank may be also included on the council of trustees team, as is the case at the Institute for National Security Studies. Alternatively, the director may be appointed as director of the think tank to manage its research and administrative affairs and may be an academic, diplomat or from a military background. For example, the think tanks, especially the academic ones, prefer their director to be a specialist in the same issues of interest to the think tank. For example, Itschak Weismann, former head of the Jewish-Arab Centre at the University of Haifa, is also a professor at the University of Haifa, a specialist in Islamic movements and a member of the Executive Board of the University of Haifa. However, this is a general rule and there are exceptions. The website of the Institute for National Security Studies lists its director as Major General Amos Yadlin who served in the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) for 40 years and then as chief of military intelligence, but who does not hold a doctorate degree. It may be that the reliance here on a non-academic director is due to the nature of the think tank's work. Therefore, its agenda takes priority over the fact it is an academic think tank.

Sources of funding

Israel created a Ministry for Research and Technology due to its belief in the importance of research and development (R&D) for realizing its goals. This is especially because of its specific characteristic as a settler state that requires R&D to continue to exist in its regional environment. In this context, we find that Israel has a great interest in scientific research and spending on this. The allocation for this increases year after year and doubles every three years, in some years exceeding 4% of the gross national product (GNP). Israel is the fifth biggest spender in the world on education in relation to its gross domestic product (GDP). It spends 8.3% of its GDP on education, which amounts to US$110 billion. The share for scientific research is US$5.3 billion and the private sector contributes 74% of the resources allocated to scientific research (Abu ʿAmir 2012).

The funding for the think tanks in their different types (government, independent, etc.) comes under the allocations for scientific research. Each type has an allocation based on the source of its funding. That is due to the fact that the greatest part of the government budget that is allocated to spending on scientific research is directed towards R&D inside universities. The amount spent reaches 42% of the total government expenditure on scientific research. Research on industry obtains the largest share of government funding for scientific research, and this reflects the interest in developing Israel's economic environment, especially the industrial sector. This is followed by spending on funding private research by developing the infrastructure which expresses one of the pillars of national security in Israel. This is particularly as the clause on development and modernizing

the fundamental structure comes under the budget allocated for the security sector (Baath Arab Socialist Party 2011). Moreover, part of the budget of the Institute for National Security Studies is funded by the Council for Higher Education.

Academic think tanks

The government allocates a separate budget to encourage academic scientific research, like the Golan Research Institute. This think tank is managed in partnership with the Ministry of Sciences which contributes the largest share of its budget. These academic think tanks obtain funding from other sources, such as research grants from funding bodies. In addition, these think tanks carry out contracted research to gain income, such as the Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies since it relies for part of its funding on the revenue from contracted research with the government and other bodies. Likewise, endowments sometimes form an important source of funding. As stated on its website, the Moshe Dayan Centre depends on funding from an endowment. This has been donated by friends of the centre and is allocated to ensure that it continues. Similarly, the endowment given to the Institute for National Security Studies funds the largest part of its activities. Contracted research is regarded as another source of income. For example, the Moshe Dayan Centre receives a research funding grant for its research.

Government think tanks

There are think tanks funded by the government. For instance, the Ministry for Scientific Research funds the activities of the regional think tanks for R&D in the ministry. We find that other think tanks receive sources of funding from more than one government department. This is in addition to obtaining financial contributions from research institutes and centres especially, such as the Council for Higher Education which has a budget of US$30 million. One-third of this is government funding, another one-third is contributed by the institutes for research, and the remaining one-third comes from strategic institutions and partners.

Independent think tanks

Some of these think tanks obtain their funding from a charitable endowment as well as financial support from charitable bodies. For example, the Israeli Centre for Democracy is basically funded by an endowment from the Van Leer Trust in addition to the contributions from Israeli bodies and personalities like Eric R. Sirkin. Lastly, there is the contracted research undertaken by these think tanks for the benefit of some government and private bodies. The Israeli Centre for Democracy conducts research for government bodies, such as the report it prepared in March 2011 on political reform in the Knesset in which it offered recommendations and proposals in this respect.

Political party think tanks

In view of their affiliation to the political parties, most of the funding allocation of these think tanks comes from these parties. However, some parties have been suffering financial crises, and this has had a negative impact on the financial support directed to the entities belonging to them. The Labour Party is suffering a huge debt that reached 140 million shekels in February 2009 (Somfalvi n.d.). Some of the political party think tanks receive support from certain universities and private institutions in order to undertake research

duties that serve their interests. An example is the Afro-Asian Institute for Research which is funded by contributions from Tel Aviv University and the American Union for Labour (Kiwan 2009).

However, irrespective of the different sources of the financial resources of these think tanks, they nevertheless enjoy a good financial status that enables them to attract a quality workforce of experts, scientists and researchers who hold doctorates and master's degrees from the world's major universities. For example, the Ministry for Research and Technology provides 80% of the ministry's budget to support the essential human research structures and infrastructure of the academic think tanks and institutions. That is due to the increase in knowledge and the creation of a new generation of scientists who are developing Israel's capacity to confront future challenges, as stated on the website of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Space.[17] The budget for the Israel Institute for Biological Research reached US$4 million in 2000 and its revenue was US$3 million (Wikipedia 2015).

It is noteworthy that the government's financial allocations for research centres have not diminished the power and independence of these think tanks because they all aim to serve the settler project. This includes even the left think tanks which call for dialogue and peace since any peace will be according to the Israeli method and will have to adhere to Zionist fixtures and values in which they believe. Therefore, the continually increasing size of government spending on R&D in Israel gives a clear indication of the importance which Israel places on building a knowledge-based economy (Baath Arab Socialist Party 2011).

The presence of public and important personalities at conferences and seminars, the ability to approach elites and academics, and the independence of these think tanks

The think tanks vary with regard to their closeness or distance from policy-makers due to the identity of those research institutions. The government think tanks are part of the government structure and were created by the order of decision-makers to implement their policies. For example, the Israel Institute for Biological Research was established because of legislation passed by the prime minister in 1952 with the mediation of Ernst David Bergmann, scientific advisor to Prime Minister David Ben Gurion and chief of scientific research in the defence ministry, Alexander Keynan, first director of the institute. The institute works in a public framework of silence as a result of the secrecy of its work and its military nature that is connected to the IDF. It cooperates closely with the Israeli government bodies.

As for the academic think tanks, most are involved in a relationship with the elite which adopts several purposes, such as the think tank undertaking contracted projects for the benefit of one of the governmental bodies or the employment of its researchers in official positions (like the Institute for National Security Studies, mentioned above) or the presence of important personalities for activities it has organized. The activities of the Harry S. Truman Institute bring together experts, researchers, diplomats, journalists, politicians and members of the government from Israel and various other countries.

Those think tanks also have good relations with academics in Israel and abroad by carrying out joint research projects and funding scholarships that take the form of student

exchanges, attendance at international scientific conferences and seminars, and writing for the well-known scientific journals of various universities. For example, the Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies has developed cooperative relationships with strategic research centres in different countries and cities, from Ankara (Turkey) to Washington, DC, London (UK), and New Delhi (India). Moreover, its researchers have participated in conferences in over 30 countries.

As for the private or independent think tanks, some of them have a relationship with policy-makers that is similar to that of the academic think tanks. For example, the Israeli Centre for Democracy established the George Schultz Roundtable Forum which is attended by statesmen and opinion leaders from a variety of political backgrounds to discuss the issues raised and open the way for dialogue and drafting recommendations that can be implemented.

The elite at whom the party political think tanks are aimed are essentially the party elite. They participate in the party's events and conferences organized by the party. These think tanks also have ties to academics in Israel and abroad, and some of them have a very good international standing, such as the Arabic Studies Institute which received an UNESCO prize in 2001 for teaching peace.

The measure of independence among these think tanks is considered one of the sources of their power and one of the most important factors for their survival and continuance. The Israeli think tanks differ with respect to their independence. The government think tanks are funded by the government, either totally or partially, and, thus, it controls their administrative councils and their agendas. However, the criterion here is the professional nature of these think tanks, especially as there are highly technical and specialized think tanks like the Agricultural Research Organization and the think tanks for technological research. The party political think tanks essentially serve the party to which they belong since the party determines their agendas and funding. The think tanks must adhere to their intellectual ideology (Boucher et al. 2004). However, they play a critical role in fulfilling the objectives of the party by organizing activities to serve it. For example, the Jewish-Arab Centre for Peace at Givat Haviva organizes meetings between students in senior schools with the aim of destroying the mental stereotypes in exchange for supporting cultural dialogue. According to its website, the institute also offers training to teachers on equality, plurality and effective citizenship.

It is notable that government funding is a guarantee of the continuance of these think tanks. This is in comparison with the political party think tanks that rely on funding from their parties. Also, the relationship with the government avoids any misgivings about the external sources of funding which may negatively affect the reputation and integrity of the think tanks (Boucher et al. 2004).

The academic think tanks, or 'universities without students', are government institutions that have limited independence. On the one hand, they belong to the Council for Higher Education in Israel which sets public policies for universities in accordance with its vision and is led by the minster for education. On the other hand, the universities enjoy the independence of following the scientific and research track. Therefore, those in senior posts making decisions in universities possess the freedom to invest the available capabilities in these think tanks according to their personal aspirations and affiliations to particular intellectual and ideological schools of thought (Baath Arab Socialist Party 2011). However, the professional academic nature of these think tanks governs their

work since they must adhere to academic standards in their work which is characterized by neutrality and independence.

The independent think tanks have a legal status that is non-partisan and not profit-oriented. That is so that they are not limited by any standards, ideologies or intellectual doctrines (Boucher et al. 2004). These think tanks are not reliant on their government funding as they may conduct contracted projects with government bodies. However, this comprises a small amount, and they have other sources of income from charitable endowments and foreign quarters in addition to the contributions made by some Israeli and foreign personalities and organizations. Furthermore, the membership of their administrative council and advisory committees includes some well-known international personalities.

Issuing refereed publications and the move to increasing these publications

The Israeli think tanks issue a number of refereed scientific journals by a select group of experts and academics. These differ according to their area of interest and the agenda of each think tank and include monthly, quarterly, biannual and annual issues. This is as well as books and also the articles which their researchers publish in domestic and international scientific journals, in addition to the columns written by some researchers. These publications are issued mainly in Hebrew and English though they may have Arabic version, or it may be sufficient instead to have a summary in Arabic. They also include studies in Russian, such as those of the Cummings Centre for Russian and Eastern European Studies. The Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies has published 90 research papers, eight books and organized over 225 lectures and conferences since it was founded. Three of the centre's experts have permanent columns in the *Jerusalem Post* newspaper. The centre also undertakes research for the government and other organizations. Some think tanks cooperate with foreign universities in order to disseminate Israeli studies and contribute financially to publishing scientific journals which discuss these. For example, The Ben Gurion Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism[18] contributes to funding the journal *Israeli Studies* which it publishes with Indiana University Press, as mentioned on its website. Furthermore, some think tanks have produced pages about their journals on social network websites, thereby aiming to create a space for detailed discussion. The Moshe Dayan Centre has also set up an online blog called '*Diwaniyya*' (the Arabic word for an informal council) which provides a space to discuss freely various issues in the region.

Excellent academic reputation particularly on an international level

The Israeli think tanks have excellent ties with many international think tanks and universities in various countries, for example, in Europe, the United States, Russia, Latin America, Asia and Turkey. These include think tanks that have concluded joint cooperation agreements for student exchanges or to establish joint research projects. Some foreign universities also fund research projects undertaken by these think tanks. The Israel Democracy Institute,[19] for example, has 72 project partners. The Moshe Dayan Centre has cooperative relations with a large number of organizations and institutions in various parts of the world. In 2004, it established the Konrad Adenauer

Programme for Jewish-Arab Cooperation which its website describes as 'an expansion of the Program on Arab Politics in Israel established by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and Tel Aviv University in 1995' and the purpose of which is 'to deepen the knowledge and understanding of Jewish-Arab relations in Israel'.

Some think tanks have gained an international position among international organizations. The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities has observer status at the European Science Foundation, and it also runs exchange programmes with the British Academy, the Royal Society in the UK, the Swedish Royal Academy, and the National Research Council of Singapore. The Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations is a member of the Thematic Network of European Studies (SENT), the Euro-Mediterranean Forum of Institutes of Economic Sciences (FEMISE), the Anna Lindh Foundation and the Euro-Mediterranean Study Commission (EuroMeSCo). Moreover, other think tanks have won global prizes and reached high positions on lists of distinguished universities. For example, the Harry S. Truman Institute was ranked in 15th place in the list of think tanks in the Middle East and North Africa compiled by the University of Pennsylvania's think tanks and civil societies programme in 2010 (McGann 2010).

Media coverage of activities and relationship with the media

The think tanks have very good relationships with the media through the coverage of their activities in the media. Their researchers also make appearances on news bulletins providing opinion and commentary as well as on discussion programmes and radio stations, like the *Voice of Israel.* This is in addition to writing articles, studies and weekly columns in newspapers and magazines, as in the case of the researchers and experts from the Moshe Dayan Centre and likewise the Institute for National Security Studies. Other think tanks have established online platforms to discuss issues that come under their area of interest, for example, the *Seventh Eye* website of the Israel Democracy Institute.

Observation of specific advice from think tanks applied by policy-makers, the existence of a direct relationship between think tanks' efforts and positive change, and the drafting of proposals for laws and research papers

Certain think tanks have succeeded in passing some of their recommendations so that policy-makers have adopted these when formulating and taking decisions related to these recommendations. The following are examples of some successes I was able to discover by examining and studying the map of Israeli think tanks:

- The Israel Democracy Institute, through its rapid actions, was able to establish the Knesset Research and Information Centre. It prepared an initial proposal for the state constitution. It embarked on a successful campaign to cancel the system of bilateral voting. It formulated the first comprehensive draft to resolve the feud between religion and the state in Israel. It put forward an initiative to establish the Israeli Economic Council. It urged the prime minister to create a special body for minority affairs attached to his office. It supported the passing of a series of laws to strengthen national security, combat corruption and defend human rights. As mentioned on the institute's

website, in 2009 it was awarded the country's highest honour: the Israel prize for lifetime achievement and exceptional contribution to the nation and society.

- As cited on the website of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, the contributions of a core of celebrated researchers working there enabled the successful implementation of reforms and the introduction of modern and creative methods in the fields of formal and informal education, policy research, civil empowerment and cultural diversity.
- The Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies has made several contributions. Efraim Inbar and Shmuel Sandler were the first to discuss the problem of Palestinian statehood in an important international publication of the international Institute for Strategic Studies.[20] Dany Shoham published a detailed study warning of the dangers of Arab chemical and biological weapons. This was before the dangers of such weapons were observed by anyone else and he was the predecessor of both Efraim Inbar and Aamickam Namani. The in-depth study by Stuart Cohen on the change in the relationship between Israeli society and the IDF became the basis for policies on human resources in the army as well as the basis for planning these resources in the long-term. Gerald Steinberg was among the first to warn of the growing danger of Iranian nuclear power.

Conclusions

Lastly, we can say that Israeli think tanks have accompanied the founding of Israel in their four categories of government, independent, political party and university think tanks. These think tanks were able to continue existing as well as to adapt to the changes around them. That is evident in their use of tools to influence the process of policy-making as they could utilize the available technology. Hence, they have conquered the media such that it serves their agendas. In addition, they have utilized the international information network. The majority of think tanks have a website and in more than one language, just as most have accounts on social networks such as Facebook and Twitter where they publicize their studies and activities and any other information as they wish. These think tanks issue many publications and put forward suggestions for legislation to contribute to raising the awareness of the target group. Moreover, they used the political institutions in the state to disseminate their ideas and opinions, such as sitting for hearing in parliament. This is in addition to the forums and conferences that they organize. They constantly want to form a network of relations with international bodies and organizations in order to gain themselves a good reputation. The tools they use for influence are not limited to this as there is also a special use for the public. Many think tanks arrange what is called a 'cinema club' with the aim of raising the public's awareness and educating them about the conditions and issues arising regionally and internationally, especially events in the Middle East.

The think tanks carry out several functions in order to influence the policy-making process. They begin by determining the problem, observing its features through the preparation of research and studies on the problems Israel faces internally and externally. The work towards improving and supporting the policy-making process is achieved by the activities these think tanks undertake so as to define the issues of priority for their timetable and agenda, including raising awareness among the public, policy-makers and the

media of urgent problems. Similarly, think tanks contribute to implementing the foreign and domestic policy of the state. For example, the party political think tanks offer their services to rally a popular base to support their party, the centre for research and political planning in the Foreign Ministry. They also play a role in planning for the future, disseminating ideas and justifying government policies, as in the case of the party political think tanks.

The functions and roles that these think tanks perform do not occur in isolation from their surrounding environment. It has a great influence on the work of these research institutions. The political environment has a clear influence on the space available to these think tanks, whether this is the electoral or parliamentary system or the nature of the work of the ruling institutions in the state especially in view of their ownership of their own think tanks. The Israeli parliamentary system has specific characteristics distinct from other parliamentary systems in the world due to the proportional electoral system. This pushes the winning party to form a coalition government with other different political parties and ideological orientations which may be completely opposed to its own ideas and principles as well as the policy it will follow. This type of government has many faults that have a negative effect on the stability of the government and legislature which destroys the party system, or rather the power of the parliamentary system. This reduces the restrictions with which the parliamentary system can burden think tanks. The political parties do not have the power that enables them to rely on themselves and their advisors in order to obtain the necessary knowledge and advice to formulate policy. However, at the same time, the proportional electoral system leads to a negative role that may hinder the work of those think tanks. The electoral system does not encourage the election of officials who are interested in adopting new and independent ideas and policies. Furthermore, the system of proportional representation allows political parties with special interests to influence the main parties by entering into a coalition that supports their interests and projects. Such a phenomenon deters creative intellectuals from trying to obtain positions or authority. This does not encourage the creation of policies to solve the problems put forward in the arena. That leads to the formation of an inorganic party coalition that is unconcerned with dealing with the main important issues. In such an environment where the powerful parties dominating politics are instigated by narrow interests, there is very limited space available to think tanks and political experts (Meyers 2009). Therefore, the electoral system becomes a two-edged sword that can dominate the party interest at the expense of study and research. This is especially as the political parties in Israel have, for a long while, been suffering from many internal problems which do not allow them to have an interest in study and research. Hence, political life in Israel is characterized by several features that reflect the weakness of these parties and their inability to obtain a parliamentary majority, such as the contradictory electoral support for parties, the diminishing presence in the Knesset and the coercion to enter into ministerial coalitions. This is in addition to the many rifts between party leaders, the increasing rotation of the elites and their instability as well as the growing debt of some parties (Somfalvi n.d.) and the disappearance of existing parties.

In view of the space granted by the political, social and intellectual system in Israel, we see that the think tanks enjoy internal work elements that give them power and influence. They have a select group of outstanding experts and researchers with the highest degrees from renowned universities as well as strong executive councils with good internal and

international relations. In spite of the darkness surrounding the budget belonging to each think tank, their sources of funding have continued and diversified due to the state's interest in encouraging scientific research and study. These think tanks enjoy relative independence but in accordance with their contribution to serving the goals of the state's Zionist settler planning. Therefore, these factors are among the most significant components of the work, together with the external encouraging environment, especially in the light of the policy-makers' response and conviction of the importance of these think tanks and the mutual approach to an ideological methodology.

It is notable, however, that the government and academic think tanks are the closest to the policy-makers as they are a part of the government structure. Therefore, they are characterized as being more trustworthy and credible, such as the Knesset Research and Information Centre which was established to meet this need. As for the political party think tanks, the elite with which they are concerned are the party elite. Similarly, they are trying to get closer to the masses who represent their target electoral base by means of the executive and service activities they carry out, such as language teaching programmes. With regard to the independent think tanks, these have a relationship with the ruling elite but not all of them are on an equal footing. This matter is dependent on the internal components that characterize them and gain them credibility. That relationship appears in the contracted government-funded plans and the desire of statesmen to participate in the activities organized by these think tanks. However, judging the influence of those think tanks is difficult to measure and observe due to the complicated nature of the process of policy-making in which many actors participate. Rather, it is difficult to discover what takes place behind closed doors when decisions are being made. This is in addition to the fact that changing ideas does not occur overnight but takes a long time. Nevertheless, any discussion about the absence of a role for think tanks is far from the truth. They are present, productive and close to the process of policy-making. However, it is difficult to accurately observe the extent of their influence.

Notes

1. Think tanks are research institutions that enjoy relative independence from policy-makers, political parties, universities and interest or lobbying groups from which these think tanks differ. They study and analyze issues relating to public policy. They offer advice and consultation in the form of alternative policies which they propose to influence policy-makers through spaces for discussion, in publications of studies and research, or in a summary of policies presented directly to policy-makers. The think tanks assume many functions and roles to influence the process of policy-making. Hence, their role is not limited to proposing alternative policies, but it is also as a strategic repository that provides the government with the necessary human resources and evaluates government policies. This has a positive effect on the process of policy-making. The think tanks also aim to raise public awareness of urgent issues around public policy (El-Din 2014, 22).
2. Agricultural Research Organization. n.d. "Our Vision: Excellence in Research and Development for the Promotion of Agriculture and the Protection of the Environment." http://www.agri.gov.il/download/files/aro_1.pdf/.
3. The Moshe Dayan Centre for Middle Eastern and African Studies. "About Us." http://www.dayan.org/about-us-0/.
4. The Institute for National Security Studies (INSS). http://www.inss.org.il/.
5. The Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace. http://truman.huji.ac.il/.

6. The Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies. http://besacenter.org/.
7. In other words, this paper will exclude those think tanks interested in health policy or science and technology as well as those focused on environmental policy, despite their intersection with the social sciences.
8. European Forum at the Hebrew University. http://www.ef.huji.ac.il/index.shtml/.
9. Jewish-Arab Centre for Peace at Givat Haviva. http://www.givathaviva.org/.
10. Knesset Research and Information Centre. http://www.knesset.gov.il/mmm/eng/index.asp/.
11. The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities. http://www.academy.ac.il/.
12. Council for Higher Education. http://che.org.il/en/?page_id=4293/.
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15. The Cummings Centre for Russian and Eastern European Studies. "About." http://humanities.tau.ac.il/cummings/.
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