

CHINA'S THINK TANK FEVER (II)

QI Dongtao

EAI Background Brief No. 1115

Date of Publication: 24 February 2016

Executive Summary

1. Since 2013 the Chinese government has promoted the development of think tanks through a top-down mobilisation process.
2. Endorsed by Chinese President Xi Jinping, several national policies have been issued to promote a new type of think tanks with Chinese characteristics. The Central Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party leads the think tank development.
3. The Ministry of Education has encouraged Chinese universities to set up think tanks and produce more policy research reports.
4. Local governments have followed central policies to formulate local think tank policies, organise conferences and provide financial aid to promote think tank development.
5. The Chinese business sector, especially private businesses, has little interest in supporting think tanks. A few exceptional cases saw successful Chinese businessmen establish university think tanks with large donations.
6. Chinese universities are the largest producer of think tanks. However, university think tanks face many obstacles which are difficult to overcome.
7. Major Chinese media have played up the think tank fever through improving the coverage of think tank-related topics, enhancing its traditional think tank role and collaborating with universities to establish new think tanks.
8. China's think tank fever involves mainly a title change, without substantial improvement in the think tanks' operational models, their publications' contents and researchers' research and writing style.

