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### **XI JINPING'S 'FOUR COMPREHENSIVES'**

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China's President Xi Jinping came to power in March 2013 and since then he has been regarded as a strong leader. In fact, straws in the wind hint that after Deng Xiaoping, China is again entering an era of strongman rule.<sup>i</sup> While, in the international fora, Xi has come up with an idea of reviving the ancient Silk Route with Central Asia and constructing Maritime Silk Road with Southeast Asia under the framework of Silk Road Economic Belt Initiative, he has been giving numerous proposals on the domestic front as well. Seemingly, during his decade-long tenure, what Xi intends to undertake is the task of embarking on a journey of political and economic reforms and modernisation in China. It is in this context that Xi published a book titled *The Governance of China* which claims to contribute to interpreting the concepts and principles of governance of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership and help the international community to learn more about and better understand China's ideas, its path of development, and its domestic and foreign policies and its responses to international concerns about China.<sup>ii</sup>

There have been debates in the scholarly circle as to whether Xi follows the ideology of Mao Zedong or the footsteps of Deng Xiaoping. One may argue that he is borrowing the thoughts from all his predecessors. Recently, Xi Jinping has proposed to adopt "Four Comprehensives" to govern China. Xi's "Four Comprehensives", somewhat dissimilar yet influenced by Zhou Enlai's "Four Modernisation", Deng's political thought and Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents", include:<sup>iii</sup>

- Comprehensively build a moderately prosperous society;
- Comprehensively deepen reform;
- Comprehensively govern the nation according to law; and
- Comprehensively be strict in governing the Chinese Communist Party



## Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS)

Forum for National Security Studies (FNSS)

It is important to note that while the first two points have been talked about several times, the last two points have not been debated enough in China's political arena. In fact, the last point, which is 'to strictly govern the CCP', is quite controversial, given that CCP is the sole governing party of the country. The Four Comprehensives have been emphasised in the wake of the apparent slowdown of the Chinese economy. It is reported that "Chinese Premier Li Keqiang will be presenting the report which is expected to include an expected cut to China's growth target from 7.5 per cent to about 7 per cent, the first cut since 2012 when the government cut its growth target from its longstanding target annual goal of 8 per cent. And the last year's growth of 7.4 per cent was China's slowest rate of economic expansion in 24 years".<sup>iv</sup> In such a situation, it becomes important for China to introduce new economic as well as political reforms so as to regain its double digit growth rate.

Xi is a strong proponent of rule of law in China. "Ruling China through the Rule of Law" was, in fact, the central theme in the 4<sup>th</sup> plenary session of the CCP in October 2014. Though the proposal to emphasise on the rule of law was introduced amidst 'Occupy Central' (it was a series of pro-democracy protests against CCP's electoral policy in Hong Kong which began in September and ended in December 2014), it does not seem to have any democratic connotation. It is believed that Xi is pushing for such legal reforms just to improve the CCP's internal governance as also the orderly governance of the Chinese society as a whole. In essence, the rule of law is promoted so as to refrain the party officials from misusing power.

The last comprehensive is directly linked to Xi's anti-corruption drive. Of all Xi's moves, his anti-corruption campaign is the most controversial and gaining attention from all walks of life in China. Wang Qishan, the chief of Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) and one of the seven Politburo Standing Committee members, is heading Xi's anti-corruption campaign. The official catchphrase of this campaign, as stated by Xi himself in 2013, was that "it was just as important to go after the "flies", or low-level officials, as it was to tackle the "tigers", or top-level officials, in the battle against graft". According to an opinion piece on *China-US Focus* portal, "till now more than 182,000 party officials have been interrogated and as many as 30 leaders have been arrested. Interestingly, at



## Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS)

Forum for National Security Studies (FNSS)

least five of those arrested were members of the 18<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the CCP”.<sup>v</sup> Around 70 officials were executed in 2014 alone. The most controversial investigation, on the grounds of corruption charges, has been that of Zhou Yongkang who was a member of the 17<sup>th</sup> Politburo Standing Committee. He also served as a secretary of the Political and Legislative Affairs Committee of the Party’s Central Committee from 2007 to 2012. However, there have been rumours in the Chinese corridors of power that Xi’s anti-corruption campaign is nothing more than an attempt to push away his opponents and keep his allies closer. May be, that is the reason why he is not hesitant to promote his close friends to top official positions.

Since November 2013, all of Xi’s slogans, including the Four Comprehensives, are a part of his larger goal of turning the ‘Chinese Dream’ into a reality which is aimed at ‘building a prosperous society’ and ‘achieving national rejuvenation’. While he is being applauded for his audacious moves, it may be argued that most of his number-oriented slogans are nothing more than image-building exercises. However, in a situation when lack of transparency still looms large over China’s political theatre, it remains to be seen whether it is just propaganda to garner support or a genuine attempt to eradicate social and political evils from the Chinese society.

***(Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Centre for Air Power Studies [CAPS])***

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<sup>i</sup> Jaime Flor Cruz, “Xi Jinping’s Success So Far: Taking Control by Following Deng Xiaoping”, *CNN*, Auguts 29, 2014, at <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/08/29/world/asia/jaime-floracruz-china-xi-jinping-deng-xiaoping/>, accessed on February 28, 2014.

<sup>ii</sup> Xi Jinping, *The Governance of China* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2014).

<sup>iii</sup> “Xi’s “Four Comprehensives” Promote the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation”, *People’s Daily*, February 28, 2015, at <http://en.people.cn/n/2015/0227/c98649-8854735.html>, accessed on February 28, 2015.



## Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS)

Forum for National Security Studies (FNSS)

<sup>iv</sup> Philip Wen, "China's President Xi Jinping Presents China by the Numbers, Again", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, March 1, 2015, at <http://www.smh.com.au/world/chinas-president-xi-jinping-presents-china-by-the-numbers-again-20150301-13rw0p.html> , accessed on March 1, 2015.

<sup>v</sup> Cheng Li and Ryan McEleven, "Debunking Misconceptions about Xi Jinping's Anti-Corruption Campaign", *China-US Focus*, July 17, 2014, at <http://www.chinausfocus.com/political-social-development/debunking-misconceptions-about-xi-jinpings-anti-corruption-campaign/>, accessed on March 1, 2015.

