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'XI JINPING LAUNCHES 'YAN'AN STYLE' CAMPAIGN TO CLEANSE CHINA'S SECURITY APPARATUS'

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The national security apparatus is the crown jewel of any country. Authoritarian regimes pay particular attention to them as they help preserve the regime and keep the population compliant and in check. China's communist leaders have, for obvious reasons, been conscious of the importance of the security apparatus. In the backdrop of the increasing criticism since 2017 -- including by senior communist cadres and 'princelings' -- of him personally and his policies, Xi Jinping too has turned his attention to ensuring the loyalty of the security apparatus. He has just this month unleashed a severe year-long 'rectification' campaign throughout China's security system.

2. Acutely conscious that in the previous couple of years a potentially alternate centre of power led by China's security czar and Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC) member Zhou Yongkang had sought to emerge, Chinese President Xi Jinping -- ever since he was appointed to China's top jobs in November 2012 -- retained direct supervision over China's security apparatus by allotting this portfolio to a Politburo (PB), instead of a Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC), member. He also introduced a system whereby each Politburo member submits a report each week directly to Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee (CC) General Secretary Xi Jinping. All key positions in the security apparatus are held by Xi Jinping-loyalists. The security budgets have also risen each year during his regime. A couple of years ago the Public Security Bureau (PSB) budget was higher than China's national defence budget and continues to at least rival that. While nearly half of all departments, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had their budgets cut in 2020, China's central public security budget alone rose by 0.7 per cent and in the current year is 183.272 billion yuan (US\$ 26.2 billion). This PSB budget, incidentally, does not include other security-related expenditure such as on stability maintenance, electronic and technical surveillance, Ministry of State Security (MoSS) etc., or of the provinces.

3. Given the importance of the country's security apparatus -- referred to as the "knife handle" by Party cadres -- China's leaders have tried to ensure that the security system remains loyal to the CCP, and them personally, by appointing loyalists to head them and in key positions. After Mao Zedong's death and ouster of CCP CC General Secretary Hua Guofeng and the Gang of Four in 1979, Deng Xiaoping carried out a clean-up of the security system. Again, after PBSC member Zhou Yongkang was discredited and subsequently arrested in 2012, Xi Jinping's predecessor CCP CC General Secretary Hu Jintao sent 3000 security cadres for 're-education'. This was barely enough in an organisation with more than 1.97 million personnel. In view of

the still continuing campaign to weed out “two-faced” Party and military cadres on charges of violation of Party discipline and corruption, it is apparent that the ‘loyalty’ of many including in the security set-up continues to be doubted.

4. Xi Jinping has undoubtedly been unnerved by the persistent criticism aimed at him since late 2017 when he abolished term limits for senior posts -- including by senior communist cadres and ‘princelings’ -- which intensified with the outbreak of the coronavirus epidemic. He effected important personnel changes in the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) over the past two years replacing a total of 9 ‘leaders’ and additionally established a new security body.

5. On April 21, Xinhua announced that the Politburo had constituted a new security body called the ‘Safe China Construction Coordinating Small Group’ headed by Guo Shengkun, Politburo member and Secretary of the Political and Legal Affairs Commission (PLAC), which is at the apex of China’s security system. All nine members of the Small Group are trusted loyalists of Xi Jinping. Interesting is that this Small Group has a wide ambit and its task of “preventing activities that endanger the political security of the country” would give it sanction to monitor the political and other activities of Party members. The latter is substantive indication that some of the criticism would be known to have originated from senior Party cadres and ‘princelings’.

6. Nonetheless, criticism continues to be voiced. A number of ‘open letters’ criticising Xi Jinping have stayed for days and even months after being posted on the internet and before being deleted by the authorities, suggesting the complicity of elements within the system. Pointing to the importance that Xi Jinping gives to ‘cleaning up’ China’s cyberspace was the participation in the first meeting of the ‘Safe China Construction Coordinating Small Group Task Force’ on June 8 of Lin Rui, Vice Minister of Public Security in charge of cybersecurity. One of Xi Jinping’s trusted allies, having worked for many years in Fujian province where Xi Jinping spent 17 years in the earlier stages of his political career, Lin Rui has a degree in applied computing and is a specialist in cybersecurity and cybercrime prevention. This becomes even more relevant consequent to the important article and accompanying commentary published in the latest issue (2020/14; July 15, 2020) of the flagship Party theoretical fortnightly ‘Qiu Shi’ (Seeking Truth).

7. Qiu Shi announced the publication of a new book of 18 phrases drawn from 7 years of Xi Jinping’s speeches, crediting him with its authorship. The quotations highlight the “absolute” and “leading” position of the CCP in all matters and declare that had it not been for the CCP’s leadership China would not have achieved the successes it has. It includes the warning that one cannot afford to falter even a little bit on the issue of “adherence to the party’s leadership.” The accompanying and especially significant Qiu Shi commentary hinted at the elevation of Xi Jinping’s position in the Chinese communist pantheon with implied comparison with Karl Marx! The commentary refers to “two safeguards”, which unequivocally call for “protecting” the Central Committee which is the “core” of the CCP with Xi Jinping at its “core” and “protecting” Xi Jinping’s position as the “core” of the Central Committee.

8. On July 8, 2020, Chen Yixin, a trusted associate of Xi Jinping and alternate member of the 19th CCP CC and Secretary General of the Political and Legal Affairs Committee (PLAC), launched a 3-month (July to October) pilot programme to prepare for what will be a

penetrating nationwide education and rectification of China's entire security apparatus next year. The campaign will encompass all political-legal institutions including the supervision commissions, courts, procuratorates, police and prisons. Chen Yixin called it "a self-revolution with the blade inward and bone scraping to cure poison". Chen Yixin said "We must drain away the filth and bring in fresh water." He called for a "turbulent and clear-cut Yangqing style "Yan'an Rectification Movement" and "soul-stirring Yangwei-style themed education" to "strive to build a political and legal iron army that the party and people can trust, trust, and can rest assured". He explained that the political and legal team is an important force to defend the leadership of the party and the state power of the people's democratic dictatorship. He said while the system has been increasing its efforts each year to eliminate black sheep, "but the situation remains grim". He said because of this "a self-revolution in the form of scraping the bones and drugs should be carried out. The knife should be inward, the malignant tumour should be completely cut, the black sheep should be eliminated, and the political and legal teams should be absolutely loyal, absolutely pure, and absolutely reliable". He gave particular stress on adherence to 'Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for the New Era', earnestly implementing the important instructions of General Secretary Jinping and achieving the "two safeguards". The campaign will commence at the beginning of 2021 and end in the first quarter of 2022.

9. Taking the cue from Chen Yixin's exhortation, the following day (July 9) China's Ministry of Public Security convened a meeting on mobilisation for the new "Persist in Political Construction of Police, Comprehensively and Strictly Govern Police" education and rectification campaign. Speaking at the meeting State Councilor and Minister of Public Security Zhao Kezhi emphasized implementation of the 'spirit' of Xi Jinping's guidance, the Central Committee's opinions on political construction, and the ministry's work meeting, strengthening the "four consciousnesses," "four confidences," and "two safeguards" and "closely centering on loyalty to the Party", service to the people, fair law enforcement, and strict requirements for discipline. He said that in its campaign, the ministry must focus on leadership at all levels and use "the courage of self-revolution and spirit of rectification (整风的精神)," work to further solidify loyalty, strengthen party leadership, improve its "political ecology," and make its goals for disciplined work style even stricter. Zhao Kezhi called on the ministry to address "impurity" of ideology, politics, organization, and work style, "get rid of bad apples", purify its ranks, and ensure that the ministry's ranks "provide a staunch political guarantee for earnestly carrying out the New Era mission and tasks entrusted by the Party and people well."

10. The rectification campaigns in the PSB and the Procuratorate have been publicised by the People's Daily (July 9 & 10), which also noted the "two safeguards". As indicated in Chen Yixin's speech, the campaign can be anticipated to be thorough and result in the dismissal and arrests of numerous PLAC cadres. It will include ideological indoctrination, criticism and self-criticism, which implies persuading people to report on the wrong doings of others. The campaign appears intended to secure for Xi Jinping full control over the law enforcement system, which is the one pillar of the Party-state where Xi Jinping has never fully consolidated control. The PLAC oversees China's judiciary and law enforcement bodies

11. Underlying the campaigns objectives will be the identification and weeding out of those suspected of loyalty to other leaders thus securing for Xi Jinping full control over the law

enforcement system. Xi Jinping's objectives in launching such a tough campaign at this time when he is under domestic and international pressure, would be to staunch criticism of himself and the CCP appearing in public, which would undermine his authority. It will also be to try and more effectively blunt US efforts to undercut the CCP, as indicated by the reported proposal to deny visas to CCP members.

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