

# Current Interpretation of "The Four Comprehensives" Basic Situation, Main Problems and Suggestions

Fudan Media and Opinion Research Center

To understand the basic situation on how different sectors of the society interpret the strategic blueprint, main characteristic and existing problems of “The Four Comprehensives”, Fudan Media and Opinion Research Center, together with the school Party Committee Publicity Department, has held a focus discussion in May, 2015. Attendants include Tong Bing, professor at the School of Journalism, Xiao Wei, professor of Department of Marxism, Zheng Changzhong, professor at the School of International Relations and Public Affairs, and Wu Xinwen, associate professor at the School of Philosophy, etc.

In the discussion, experts expressed their opinions on the interpretation of “The Four Comprehensives”, including the deviation of interpretation, scientificity of the approach, fields that are not interpreted thoroughly, errors in the process of interpretation as well as policy recommendation to promote the scientific and accurate interpretation.

## *1. Existing problems in the interpretation of “The Four Comprehensives” by different sectors*

It was agreed that, the overall direction of the interpretation of “The Four Comprehensives” is right, but there still remains some deviation and problems.

Firstly, there are lacks of interpretation that has internal relations and internal logic of “The Four Comprehensives” right now. Professor Tong pointed out that currently theorists have not clarified the dialectical logic relationship among “The Four Comprehensives”. “Comprehensively building a moderately prosperous society” is the goal; “comprehensively deepening reform” is the approach; “comprehensively implementing the rule of law” is the path; “comprehensively strengthening Party discipline” is the key as well as the essential guarantee. Now lacks the feature articles to clarify clearly these relations and logic to the whole party and the whole nation.

Professor Xiao also pointed out that “The Four Comprehensives” has its own logic. However, the current interpretation has no focus but just evenly interpret four isolated aspects. This seems well-rounded, but lacks the interpretation of inner relations and logic.

Secondly, currently, some interpretation is too vague and general, lacks quantitative indicators and has limited driving effect on practical work. Professor Tong also pointed out that “Comprehensively building a moderately prosperous society” is the goal, and there is only seven years before the achievement of this goal. In horizontal comparison, in terms of education and healthcare, we still have distance compared with countries such as Russia and India. What to do and how to do in the next few years are not yet clearly interpreted clearly.

In terms of “comprehensively deepening reform”, there is no specific direction or indicators of the reform for each sector and each battle line. For example, if there is not specific and standards for qualification in the journalism reform and the integration of media, some units might easily muddle through and there might appear some fake news.

In terms of “comprehensively implementing the rule of law”, there should be relatively specific requirements for how to implement the law. However, currently in the press, there remains unknown when the press law can be issued and its content as well as its extension.

In terms of “strict rule over the party”, specific answers are needed for the basic situation of corruption, the amount of “tigers” and “flies”, and the specific goal.

Overall, in terms of “The Four Comprehensives”, there is not enough interpretation of how different sectors should act. For many parts, all sectors are not well aware of it.

Thirdly, some interpretation extols this theory too much. Professor Wu held that the new administration has only taken office for two years and it has not yet come to the stage of a new systematic theoretical system. “The Four Comprehensives” is a conclusion of history and present, so it is improper that some interpretation extols it too much. “Marxism” and “Chinese System” is some big frameworks, and “The Four Comprehensives” is only a part of it. We should put “The Four Comprehensives” under these large theoretical framework to understand.

Fourthly, there are problems that some interpretations are lopsided and do not interpret the four as a whole. Professor Wu held that, many people explain “The Four Comprehensives” separately, rather than regard them as a whole. For example, some people focus on “comprehensively deepening reform”, others focus on “comprehensively implementing the rule of law”. Such interpretation has the tendency of partiality.

In the past practical work, we might focus more on a point or a general direction. However, in the current stage, the economic reform has conducted more than thirty years, and the national governance is fully under way. Therefore, the previous partial tendency should be avoided, not only one aspect should be strengthened, but all four aspects should be balanced.

Fifthly, some of current interpretation of the “Four Comprehensives” is quite rigid and superficial. Prof. Xiao Wei held the opinion that current understanding and interpretation of “The Four Comprehensives” still focus on its slogan. However, it is difficult to make people understand the real meaning of “The Four Comprehensives” only by simple and rigid publicity.

Meanwhile, Prof. Xiao also pointed out that although the way of interpretation and publicity are much better than before, which was mainly large-scale movement-style propaganda. Both the publicity system and public opinion system still put their emphasis on how to reflect the present situation from a positive side. However, a much wider diversity of voices are not reflected, which makes it hard for all society to have a deep understanding of “The Four Comprehensives”.

Prof. Zheng Changzhong argued that, currently there are too much “hard interpretation” of “The Four Comprehensives”. The interpretation discourse can be used at anytime throughout the history, and vast interpretation fails to understand “The Four Comprehensives” from the perspective of history. Such kind of slogan-style interpretation is both meaningless and superficial.

Sixthly, the current interpretation of some key issues of “The Four Comprehensives”, such as “sustainability”, “guiding role for dealing international affairs” and “transformation of governing style” is not deep enough.

Prof. Xiao Wei held the opinion that, in the current interpretation of “The Four Comprehensives”, the explanation of its sustainability is still lacking. Especially, it is necessary to further explain how this strategic layout will still sustain after new leadership is elected.

At the same time, Prof. Xia Wei pointed out that, “The Four Comprehensives” mainly focus on how to solve domestic issues, rather than how to deal the relation of China with the world. In the context of globalization, the link of domestic and international issues is increasingly closer. Nowadays, the influence of China in the world is continuously growing, so it is necessary for the interpretation of how to use “The Four Comprehensives” to understand China’s international liability and influence.

Furthermore, Prof. Xiao also pointed that, currently, we are faced with the problem of how the leadership of CPC can be turned into the will of the state. Nowadays, we hold the principle of rule by law, and we also hope to turn the will of CPC into the will of the state. However, if the current governing style, which is mainly party-governing style, cannot be completely changed, it is hard to reassure people’s worry that whether “The Four Comprehensives” can be implemented and whether it can solve the problems China is facing.

## ***2. Countermeasures and Suggestions on How to Correctly Interpret “The Four Comprehensives”***

Firstly, it is urgent to publish a series of special articles to provide deep interpretation of the internal relation of “The Four Comprehensives”. Prof. Tong Bin pointed out that, currently, a series of articles should be published to discuss the internal logic of “The Four Comprehensives” and the its rich connotation, which can make the strategic function of “The Four Comprehensives” clear to the whole party and the public.

Secondly, combined with the wording of “The Four Comprehensives”. A series of quantitative criteria and supervisory methods should be issued. Prof. Tong pointed out that, after “The Four Comprehensives” was put forward, the Central Committee of CPC should make it more detailed and practical, so a series of detailed policies, guidelines, quantified system, supervisory indicators and practical methods must be issued to effectively implement relevant work.

Thirdly, history must be studied again for the interpretation of “The Four Comprehensives” from the perspective of history. Prof. Zheng Changzhong held the opinion that, “The Four Comprehensives” is the overall summary and arrangement after the 18th CPC National Congress. As a result, it should be deeply interpreted in a special historical context, rather than mere discourse interpretation.

Fourthly, during the publicity and explanation to the public, the curiosity of people must be stimulated first, and it is the time to guide people to understand “The Four Comprehensives” rationally. Prof. Zheng pointed out that, in order to make “The Four Comprehensives” deeply embedded into the mass, people’s curiosity must be stimulated in the first place. For example, it is useful to firstly talk about why “The Four Comprehensives” should be put forward, so that the public will find it interesting to know and understand “The Four Comprehensives”. After that, the public should be guided to think over the connotation and logic of “The Four Comprehensives” in a rational way.

Fifthly, it is necessary to have a clear position of “The Four Comprehensives”. Prof. Wu Xinwen suggested that, high-level leaders should take the chance of some meetings to make some clarification, to make it clear that “The Four Comprehensives” does not replace the socialist road with Chinese characteristic, which was put forward before, which will respond some doubt in the society, for example, whether “The Four Comprehensives” will be put into textbooks. Besides, the official should also put forward some principles to make a clear positioning of “The Four Comprehensives”, so that people from the grassroots level won’t misunderstand it.

Sixthly, “The Four Comprehensives” should be interpreted in a wide vision and from different subjects. Prof. Wu pointed out that, the interpretation of “The Four Comprehensives” should be combined with President Xi’s address in different occasions, and it should not be interpreted in a narrow and isolated way. Meanwhile, it should be interpreted from different subjects, not only experts in the field of party building can interpret it, but those from other academic background can also participate in its interpretation.

Seventhly, the interpretation of “The Four Comprehensives” should be more completed. For example, the principle that “some should be changed

while others not” should be clarified when elaborating the meaning of “comprehensive reform and opening up”, and the interpretation of “comprehensively administer the party by law” should be combined with both hardness and softness. Prof. Wu pointed out that, when interpreting “The Four Comprehensives”, some people only emphasize “change” and “decentralize”. However, a completed interpretation of “comprehensive deepening reform and opening up” means both “centralize” and “decentralize”, and “some should be changed while others not”. During the process of reform and opening up, good system and practice should be maintained, so some should be changed, while others should be insisted.

In the respect of “comprehensively strict rule over the party”, not only anti-corruption but also the education and leadership of the party should be emphasized. Besides rigid inspection methods, education of party cadres is also important. In a word, it is necessary to couple hardness with softness.

Eighthly, attention should pay on reflecting a wider diversity of voices and how to better use new media during the interpretation and publicity of “The Four Comprehensives”. Prof. Xiao Wei argued that, the Public Opinion and Publicity System should further free their mind, focus on the collection of different voices and report these voices to the leadership. Meanwhile, the use of new media should be strengthened and the way of publicity should be innovated, so that the effect of publicity of “The Four Comprehensives” will be enhanced.

*Translated by Qian Jing*