

INSIGHT

Poor show

Chang Ping laments that Chinese people still don't know the full facts of the Bo Xilai case, after two trials that betrayed Beijing's pledge for a prosecution that would stand the test of law

During the trial of the Gang of Four in the winter of 1980, Jiang Qing (江青) delivered a two-hour tirade in her own defence, during which she famously described herself as a dog of Mao Zedong (毛澤東). More than 30 years later, another political wife stood accused in a Chinese court of law, one believed to have been similarly corrupted by the power wielded by her husband.

But there were no hysterics from Gu Kailai (谷開來), the wife of former Chongqing (重慶) party secretary Bo Xilai (薄熙來). Handed a suspended death sentence for murder, she appeared calm and said she accepted it.

People disappointed by the scripted proceedings of Gu's trial then placed their hopes for answers in the trial of Wang Lijun (王立軍). After all, this was a man who one day dramatically fled to the US consulate; he may again surprise at the trial with revelations about Bo that the authorities were trying to suppress. So much for that. People at the closed-door trial reported that the former Chongqing police chief appeared pained and determined – like a fallen hero awaiting his fate.

Wang was jailed for 15 years, and he too said he would not appeal. He reportedly told the court: "As for the crimes that the prosecution has charged me with, I understand them, I admit to them and I am repentant for them. For the party organisation, people and relatives that have cared for me, I want to say here, sincerely, I'm very, very sorry, I've let you down."

Once again, a disappointed public found themselves no wiser after the trial. As the court testimony makes clear, one key fact stood out in the description of his downfall from powerful vice-mayor and top crime-buster to beleaguered asylum seeker and prisoner: after he reported to Bo that Gu was suspected of killing someone, he was "angrily rebuked and slapped in the face by the officer".

This was the slap that changed the course of history. Yet, during the two-day trial, Bo's name was not even mentioned; court documents spoke instead of "the Chongqing party committee's main person responsible at the time". This is how we know we've been treated to a show.

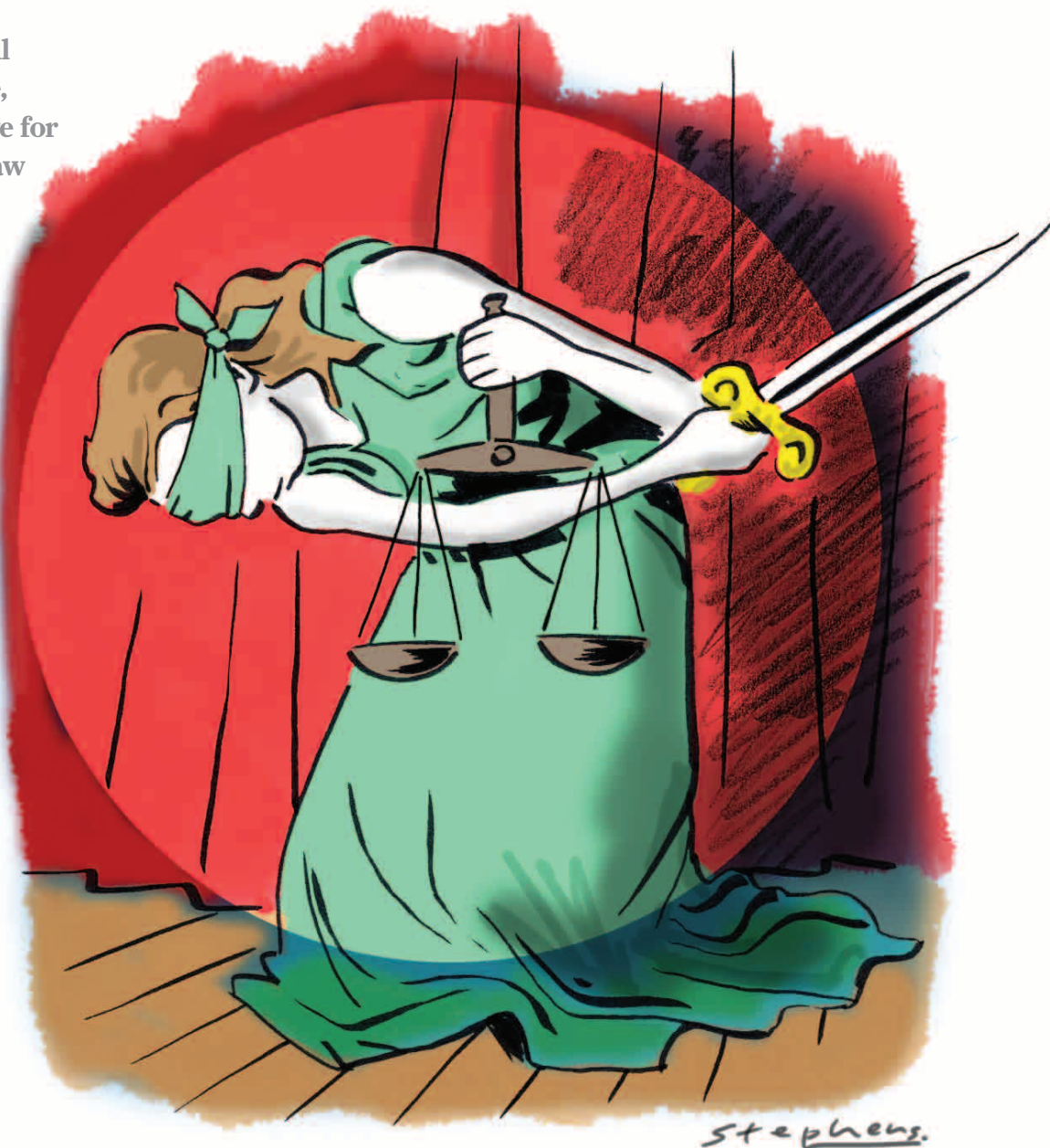
Apart from Gu and Wang, other people convicted for their involvement in the murder of a British businessman and its subsequent cover-up all said they would not appeal. They had been sentenced to between five and 11 years in jail for aiding the murder, and/or for forging, hiding and destroying evidence of the crime. They were Zhang Xiaojun (張曉軍), an aide of

Gu's; Guo Weiguo (郭維國), the deputy chief of Chongqing's Public Security Bureau; Li Yang (李陽), the chief of the bureau's criminal section; Wang Pengfei (王鵬飛), the chief of the bureau's technical detection team; and Wang Zhi (王智), the deputy police chief of Shapingba district.

We can't conclude this was an unjust trial on the sole basis of their decision not to appeal. But given the incomplete court statements, the close co-operation



A Jiang Qing-style rant in court would never be allowed today to mar the proceedings



between all parties involved in the trial and the muzzling of the media, we have reason to believe that under-the-table deals were struck and the trial was no more than a political show.

At the end of the National People's Congress meetings in March, Premier Wen Jiabao (溫家寶) told reporters that the investigation into Wang Lijun's unauthorised visit to the US consulate would be thorough and pledged that its findings would "stand the test of law and history".

Finally, here was a rare opportunity for change, some people thought, and they dared to hope that this outgoing government would seize on it to carry out political and judicial reform. No doubt, today, they feel like they were the ones who were slapped. As it turned out, Wang's indiscretion was only a minor glitch in the secretive power play that is Chinese politics.

A Jiang Qing-style rant in court would never be allowed today to mar the pro-

ceedings; the government has become more skilful in handling this type of trial since the time of the Gang of Four. In those days, Beijing had to deploy all the propaganda tools at its disposal to vilify Jiang – through the media, in books and on stage. Today, all it needs to do is negotiate with the lead characters behind the scenes then make public the "harmonised outcome" through a gagged media. It's all under control.

Many people still believe political reform will happen, arguing that a government confident in its power would be confident in pushing for change. Why should it? Where's the motivation for reform in a time of stability? One answer is: a desire to serve the people wholeheartedly. And that's the idealists talking.

Chang Ping is a current affairs commentator writing on politics, society and culture. This commentary is translated from Chinese

Range of vision

Juliet Bourke suggests four ways companies in Hong Kong can put in practice the stock exchange's smart, ambitious call for board diversity

Impressive – that's the first word that springs to mind when reading the Hong Kong stock exchange's consultation paper on board diversity. Then comes "thoughtful" and "smart". Why? The topic of board diversity is not new, and indeed one could say that the HKEx proposal is a little overdue. But it appears to have adopted a more patient approach: watching, analysing and then cherry-picking – and this will reap much bigger rewards for Chinese businesses.

Far from playing follow the leader, which would have meant introducing gender quotas as Norway did in 2005, or even "measurable [gender] objectives" as introduced by Australia in 2010, with only a passing reference to diversity of skills, HKEx has firmly focused on "diversity of perspectives". This focus represents the most advanced thinking about the value of diversity, particularly for boards which provide the crucible of strategic thinking and need to avoid the bias of groupthink.

But here's the rub. While this may be the smartest approach, it is also the most challenging. To some degree, it is easier to focus on gender diversity; all a board has to do is "find" the right woman for the job when the next vacancy arises. A focus on diversity of thinking takes a board right back to basics and asks, "Do we really have the right people in the room to ensure we will generate robust ideas?" "How did we all get here anyway?" and "How does visible diversity relate to diversity of thinking?"

To answer these questions, there's no doubt that Hong Kong boards, just like the HKEx, will now spend time reviewing the effectiveness of the global company initiatives to promote diversity of thinking, and will cherry-pick the best of the best. To accelerate this journey, here are a few ideas.

Step one: reframe the conversation about the nature of diversity. Diverse thinking is driven by an individual's background, experience and professional training – and a boardroom of people who all look and act the same triggers the question for board members (and shareholders): do they all think the same way, too? From this angle, visible differences such as age and race may provide a simple indicator for different experiences and, diversity of perspective.

Step two: communicate the value of diversity in terms of high performance. Through this, boards will build a sense of urgency and engagement. Until now, diversity has been communicated as something nice to do, but in this new world, diversity of thinking is the essence of success.

Step three: build leaders' capability and accountability. This is all about understanding our unconscious biases, and creating an inclusive environment. There's little value in creating a diverse board if only some people get to contribute.

Step 4: fuel the pipeline. This is about re-evaluating the processes and practices to ensure a diverse talent pool is selected, developed and rewarded – so they can be ready to join the board.

The stock exchange is leading businesses down an exciting path of transformation. But change takes time. Smart businesses will jump on board quickly, get ahead of the pack and reap the rewards.

Juliet Bourke is national leader for diversity and inclusion in human capital at Deloitte Australia. This article is part of a series on women and gender issues, developed in collaboration with The Women's Foundation

New towns just part of a grand plan for integration of Hong Kong and Shenzhen

Some 6,000 people attended last weekend's public forum in Sheung Shui to discuss the development of three new towns in the northeastern New Territories.

As expected, the opposing sides clashed verbally – with groups of villagers, environmentalists and social activists waving banners and chanting slogans – and scuffles broke out.

Scandal-hit Secretary for Development Paul Chan Mo-po was thick-skinned enough to attend the session to answer questions from the public. To be honest, the event was more like a propaganda show than a public consultation. Chan obviously had difficulty dealing with the hecklers, but his message was loud and clear: the government is determined to go ahead with the development plan.

The so-called consultation forum was merely a public relations exercise to dress up the issue before Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying presents it to the Executive Council for approval.

But it's not just Leung who is pushing ahead with this plan; it's Chief Secretary Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor. Understandably, the central government won't rely on Leung to implement any important policies because of his lack of public administrative experience. Lam no doubt is the perfect choice to handle thorny issues like this one because of her combative style. After all, she is the one who went on a duty visit to Beijing, not Leung.

Lam has defended the plan, saying it's a development initiative to address the serious

Albert Cheng says the government should look first at developing some of the 2,100 hectares of vacant land to help meet our housing shortage



housing shortage currently, as well as our future needs. She said it was extremely urgent to develop new towns to cope with rapidly rising demand and to ensure the city's sustainable development. What rubbish.

If the plan is really aimed at addressing the city's housing demand, why not allocate land

The plan for northeastern New Territories seems to echo that for Tin Shui Wai

closer to the city to build more public and private housing? In Hong Kong, Kowloon and some other parts of the New Territories, we have some 2,100 hectares of vacant land available for residential development, though about half of that is said to be designated for village houses. Some of the rest could be used for public housing.

Residential development cannot be a standalone project. It has to be matched by parallel development that includes facilities and services to support the new town. Tin Shui Wai is a tragic example of what not to do: it is so isolated that it has

become difficult for it to prosper as a new town.

The government's plan for the northeastern New Territories seems to echo what it did with Tin Shui Wai. Does it really want to create another "City of Sadness"?

Of course, Lam is trying to package the entire project so that it appears as a grand plan that includes developing six new pillar industries, alongside the development project, to provide job opportunities for future residents. Again, it only further exposes the fact that it is actually a plan to incorporate Hong Kong into the overall development of Shenzhen.

Increasingly in recent years, this has been the plan – pairing up both cities as one in terms of long-term planning. The latest northeast plan is only a small piece of the jigsaw puzzle.

In the 12th five-year plan, the central government has affirmed the importance of improving collaboration between Hong Kong and Shenzhen for their long-term development. It's official that Hong Kong has been incorporated into this joint development with Shenzhen.

The One Country Two Systems Research Institute has been acting as Leung's private think tank over the years, working on the transition and final integration of both cities. Part of the grand plan involves repositioning Hong Kong and its intricate relationship with

Shenzhen and the Pearl River Delta development.

Leung has long advocated this integration and supported the idea of expanding the Shenzhen border southwards.

In an interview back in 2008, when he was an executive councillor, he not only supported the idea of allowing mainlanders to visit the Hong Kong-Shenzhen special border zone visa-free to promote tourism, but also backed the idea of allowing them to work and study there under certain restrictions. This area would be managed under Hong Kong law.

It is clear that the plan in the northeastern New Territories is just the prologue to a long-term full integration of the two cities.

Lam has managed to gain Beijing's trust because she is willing to go as far as it takes to get things done. Simply put, she is ruthless. She knows how to divide and conquer opponents over controversial issues such as those involving property and land development. She often tries to use financial rewards as bait to divide her opponents and recruit supporters.

We shouldn't be fooled. She is a wolf in sheep's clothing. People should stand united to stop her from selling out Hong Kong and our future with this northeastern New Territories development plan.

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How China will reshape East Asian politics for a new era

Lau Nai-keung explains the factors working in Beijing's favour

When former chief executive Tung Chee-hwa came out to discuss the health of China's leader-in-waiting Xi Jinping (習近平), it served as a reminder that the 18th national congress of the Communist Party is drawing near.

Yet for months now on the evening news, though we get several minutes' coverage every day on the US election, this important home event receives little attention on television, either in Chinese or English. This is the Hong Kong-style cosmopolitanism we inherited from the colonial era, which is still going strong 15 years after the handover.

To a lot of people, China is now in a mess both internally and externally, and having a lot of difficulty getting out of it. Some even harbour hopes that it may not, and that its three-decade-long success will soon come to an end, perhaps accompanied by chaos and disaster. Such observations and speculation do not stand up to examination.

Now that the US is facing renewed troubles in the Middle East as a result of an anti-Muslim movie, its Asia strategy is heading towards the dustbin. As a result, the provocative Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda will sooner or later have to beat a humble retreat from his aggressive position on the Diaoyu Islands.

The next few years will mark a new era in regional politics in East Asia. China will gradually gain effective control of the disputed islands and Japan will

have to fade from the scene, whether it likes it or not.

The South China Sea will no longer be an issue, after China recovers the sovereignty of various rocks and islands one by one, either through peaceful means or by force. But with a tradition of a somewhat benign paternal attitude, China will refrain from bullying its neighbours despite the American absence. Instead, it will continue to push for peace and co-development in the region, if only to distinguish itself from Western hegemony.

With pressure from the US and Japan mitigated and no sustainable threats on the horizon, China's incoming leaders can afford to concentrate their efforts on tackling internal issues. There are several factors working in their favour.

To start with, the ruling Communist Party does not have to go through elections to remain in power, and therefore does not have to dish out various overstretched promises to please the people. These are luxuries not accorded to democratically elected politicians on a perpetual campaign.

For example, it can rally the resources of the entire country to converge on tackling real issues, and not performing cosmetic patch-ups. A lot of problems that are seemingly insurmountable in the West have been successfully resolved this way. For example, the medical insurance scheme covering almost all rural areas of the country was implemented within a very short time frame.

China can afford to plan for the long term because the party is always in power. This is evident in the decades of restraints on military expenditure to concentrate on infrastructure investment to spur economic growth.

On top of all this, China enjoys the most enviable position of still maintaining an extraordinarily high growth rate and low public debt. Don't take the loud grumblings about an economic slowdown at face value; a "low" 8 per cent growth is high by any other standard.

As for public debt, according to the International Monetary Fund, China's stood at 25.8 per cent of gross domestic product last year, which is lower even than Hong Kong's 33.9 per cent. Compare this with America's level of 102.9 per cent.

Yet, despite all this, development in China is experiencing a serious bottleneck and there are great challenges facing the new leadership and threatening stability.

It has to formulate a revolutionary strategy to achieve a breakthrough, and any new policy measures will inevitably include Hong Kong, as the country's most important international gateway. The winds of change can be felt in many quarters, and the new situation will become more apparent late next month.

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