

# Views

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### AFTER TOULOUSE

President Sarkozy deserves credit in calling for public solidarity, but he must now change his tone in the campaign.

Mohammed Merah, the man who claimed responsibility for killing three French soldiers, a rabbi and three young children at a Jewish school, was killed in a shootout with French security forces in Toulouse on Thursday. But his murderous rampage is likely to fuel further anxiety over the threat of homegrown terrorism.

President Nicolas Sarkozy deserves credit in calling for public solidarity, saying that “we must be united” and that “we must yield neither to easy falsehoods nor to vengeance.” He can help that cause by changing his tone in the presidential election campaign, where immigration and religion had become divisive themes. Just last week, he had sought to woo anti-Muslim voters from his rival on the extreme right, Marine Le Pen of the National Front.

Mr. Merah, a French citizen of Algerian descent, was a violent thug and self-proclaimed Al Qaeda sympathizer. Police officials said they had been monitoring him for several years, following trips to Pakistan and Afghanistan where he said he had trained with terror groups.

The first killing, of a French paratrooper in Toulouse, took place on March 11. The next attack, four days later, killed two more paratroopers in a nearby town. And four days after that came the killings of the rabbi and three young children. Officials are investigating whether Mr. Merah acted alone, as well as gathering more details about his past.

In response to these killings, Mr. Sarkozy has proposed tightening some laws, but his approach seems far too broad. He would make it a crime to repeatedly view Web sites that advocate terrorism and would take action against French residents who travel abroad for training or “indoctrination” by terror groups.

It is not clear how such rules would be carried out, or if they can be without curtailing the rights of law-abiding people.

France is home to five million to six million Muslims, almost a tenth of the population, and a half-million Jews, Europe’s largest Jewish community. Both faiths have suffered prejudice and persecution. As Mr. Sarkozy has stressed, the killings in Toulouse must not be used by politicians to divide the nation along religious lines.

Mr. Merah, who had a long record of petty crimes and had served time in prison, where French officials said he started down the path toward radicalization, called his murders of the paratroopers a protest against the Afghan war and his murders at the Jewish school vengeance for the deaths of Palestinian children.

Call them what they were: Depraved acts of slaughter and an attack on the whole French people.

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## Hong Kong’s messy election campaign

**DEMOCRACY AND CHINA I**  
Mudslinging and a mocking media have upset the usual scripted election process controlled by Beijing. Will this help or hinder the cause of reform?

Christine Loh

**HONG KONG** For weeks now, Hong Kong has been captivated by the boisterous, no-holds-barred campaign for its next leader, and to an outsider it may even appear to be a normal, democratic contest.

The two main candidates’ positions have been publicly dissected and they’ve thrashed each other in highly viewed televised debates. The city’s press has done a good job of digging up dirt on the candidates, fueling public interest (or at least mockery) in the campaign that culminates Sunday.

But here is where the comparison to normal elections ends. Fifteen years after Hong Kong and its seven million citizens were handed by the British over to the Chinese, the chief executive — a fitting title for the leader of so wealthy and business-oriented a city — is still chosen by 1,200 electors (for various reasons, only 1,193 people on the committee are eligible to vote in this election). And the selection process for the electors was designed to ensure that Beijing’s pick gets the top post.

Still, the unusually fierce combat among the candidates, and a public fed up with having too little say in public affairs, have upended the usual script. Both of Beijing’s “acceptable” candidates have so much muck on their faces that their credibility has been severely damaged. And China’s rulers do not like leaders with credibility problems.

A couple of months ago, the election appeared to be on autopilot. Henry Tang, the son of a Shanghai textile tycoon and a veteran of Hong Kong politics, was widely expected to coast to victory with Beijing’s blessing. Tang’s main challenger, Leung Chun-ying, a real-estate surveyor running on a more

populist platform, was also considered acceptable to Beijing. But Tang was preferred by Hong Kong’s wealthy tycoons, thus relegating Leung to the second slot in the scripted contest. (There is a third candidate, a legitimate democrat, but he has no chance.) Leung scored higher than Tang in popularity polls, but Tang was seen to be Beijing’s man. Until the press got a look at his basement.

Tang, who had admitted to marriage infidelity last year, was never popular, but he took a dramatic slide in public opinion when the media discovered that he had added a huge basement to one of his upscale family properties without the proper permits and without paying real-estate taxes. The story dominated the media for days, with a celebrated picture of news photographers on cranes above Tang’s compound.

The basement was described as a lavish complex, complete with movie theater and wine cellar. In a city with one of the world’s highest wealth gaps, the news didn’t go over well. Leung’s popularity rose along with Beijing’s discomfort over Tang.

Meanwhile, Leung has had his own problems. He was accused of having a conflict of interest while acting as a competition judge for a government-backed cultural development project a decade ago, for which he is currently under questioning at a special legislative inquiry that will go on until after election day. His campaign team members have been accused of consorting with an alleged gangster.

While Leung harps on about Tang’s infidelity and his illegal basement, Tang plays up the longstanding public suspicion that Leung may be an underground member of the Chinese Communist Party and claims that Leung is a hardliner who will be more than willing to ignore Hong Kong’s liberal traditions.

The word is that Leung is now Beijing’s pick; Tang’s credibility is just too damaged. Pro-Beijing newspapers are praising Leung while mainland officials are courting Hong Kong election-committee members on Leung’s behalf. Some of the rich voters on the election committee appear to be unhappy at being told how to vote this time — some

have even publicly threatened to abstain from voting — yet in all likelihood the frenzy will dissipate as we close in on the Sunday vote.

But the bruising battles and free-wheeling nature of the debating have emboldened the public and revived loud demands from Hong Kongers for direct elections. The radio waves and the Internet have been bursting with frustrated citizens demanding this. They don’t want to see Beijing working behind the scenes; they want credible candidates and they want to elect them directly.

This should surprise no one. One public survey after another over two decades has shown that the people prefer to elect their political leaders directly. After years of muttering in favor of reform, and amid occasional bursts of public protests, Beijing indicated in 2007 that Hong Kongers may be able to directly elect their chief executive in 2017 — though with the caveat that there will be a nomination process to filter out undesirable candidates (read: ones that Beijing feels uncomfortable with.)

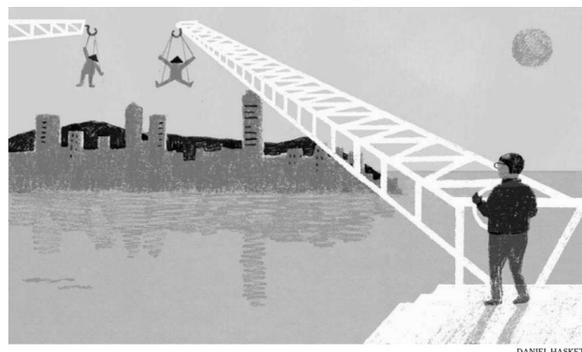
But this campaign has demonstrated to Beijing that the pressures for direct elections are greater than it suspected. The question is whether the 2012 election campaign will prove to slow or to expedite democratic reform in Hong Kong.

The fear is that the lesson China’s leaders take from this campaign is that democracy is too messy for their liking. So it’s possible we’ll see more control from Beijing in the next election for a chief executive five years from now.

The other possibility is that Beijing will see the obvious: The current system is unsustainable and we will continue to say so loudly. And no one, least of all China’s leaders, likes disharmony.

Democracy is clearly a safer bet — even for Beijing.

CHRISTINE LOH is chief executive of Civic Exchange, a Hong-Kong based think tank.



DANIEL HASKETT

## How China’s next leader will guide

**DEMOCRACY AND CHINA II**  
Xi Jinping and his fellow members on the Politburo’s Standing Committee will move forward with reform step by pragmatic step.

Robert Lawrence Kuhn

**NEW YORK** Some have taken the extraordinary dismissal of Bo Xilai, the controversial Politburo member and party secretary from Chongqing, as a sign that the transition of power in China is in trouble. On the contrary, it shows that the process has matured and is working as it needs to.

Vice President Xi Jinping, who is slated to be approved as general secretary of the Communist Party in the fall and as president the following March, will be the first leader not chosen peremptorily by China’s prior leaders. Rather, he was selected through a broader polling of party officials. While neither transparent nor anonymous, the process is a big advance in China’s long march toward “intraparty democracy.”

China is an oligarchy, not a dictatorship, and ultimate authority will not be vested individually with Xi, but collectively with the Politburo’s Standing Committee, which has nine members. Everything in China reports to one of these nine. Xi will be first among equals, but equals the nine are, and together they have the final say on policy.

This explains the intense focus on the firing of Bo, because it was assumed he would become a member of the standing committee in the leadership shuffle. Media savvy, Bo had built a name for himself promoting the “Chongqing model,” a leftist-populist mixture of strong state, Maoist paeans (“Red songs”), crack-down on crime, equality over productivity and redistribution of wealth.

It was never that simple. Even had he reached his peak, Bo would not have ranked in the standing committee’s top half. Moreover, some of his purported backers did not share his leftist views.

Elite politics in China is not simplistic and one-dimensional. Loyalties run on personal relationships as well as political philosophies, and coalitions wax and wane around specific issues.

While many people praised Bo for jailing corrupt officials (even for executing them) and for reversing garish economic disparity, many officials worried about the revival of political mass movements and the potential for chaos. The Cultural Revolution, China’s decade-long descent into ideological madness that crushed millions, hovers like an unexercised demon.

Following the bizarre “visit” last month to a U.S. consulate by Wang Lijun, Chongqing’s vice mayor and Bo Xilai’s righthand man in the fight against crime, Bo was fired. Irrespective of Bo’s ultimate fate, the political fallout is unambiguous: The leftist-statist “Chongqing model” has collapsed. This will become clear as standing committee slots are secured by reformers. Of the committee’s nine members, all will have run large geographic regions and/or ministries, and six or seven will have led at least two provinces or major municipalities. All will have worked with Western business chiefs and other important foreign leaders.

Like his colleagues, Xi is not given to radical change. Not incidentally, following the Bo tumult, Xi called for “purity” among officials and admonished senior comrades not to “seek fame and fortune.” Major decisions, he wrote, “should be decided according to collective wisdom and strict procedure.”

Xi has run every level of government: village, county, city, province. He led three dynamic regions — Fujian and Zhejiang provinces, and Shanghai — that were by population, economic vitality and social complexity the equivalent of three European nations.

Xi differs from his colleagues by the

travails of his youth: His revolutionary hero father, Xi Zhongxun, was purged and humiliated by Mao Zedong for 16 years. As a teenager Xi Jinping was packed off to a poor, remote mountain village where he spent six years chopping hay, reaping wheat and herding sheep. He lived in a cave house.

Xi was strengthened by the harsh experience. Although a “princeling” — the offspring of a political leader — Xi is known for a common man’s touch. He has said, “Many of my practical ideas stem from my life during that period,

which influenced me every minute, even today. To truly understand common folk and society is fundamental.”

Characteristically cautious, Xi told me when I met him in 2006, “We should not overestimate our accomplishments or indulge ourselves in our achievements.”

Xi urged China to see “the gap between where we are and where we have to go.” To learn the best practices from abroad to adapt at home, Xi has visited 47 countries.

Xi advised me that “to understand our dedication to revitalize our country, one should appreciate the pride Chinese people take in our ancient civilization.” We “made great contributions to world civilization and enjoyed long-term prosperity,” he said, “then suffered national weakness, oppression, humiliation. Our deep self-motivation is rooted in our patriotism and pride.”

One could see this determined mindset during Xi’s trip last month to America, for which my colleague Adam Zhu and I prepared with Xi’s senior staff. Known for his disdain of “empty talk,” Xi chided his staff: “Don’t tell me what

you think I want to hear. Tell me what you really think.” Reflecting his view that engaging the world is not just a matter of meeting other leaders, Xi’s U.S. visit had a clear tripartite structure: diplomacy in Washington, people in Iowa, and business in Los Angeles. Throughout the trip, Xi was a man at ease — initiating spirited conversations, offering firm handshakes. He was having a grand time.

Xi’s motto is: “Be proud, not complacent. Motivated, not pompous. Pragmatic, not erratic.” Comfortable with authority, Xi manifests none of the air of a high official impressed by his own status. Of course, Xi upholds the primacy of the party. Yet, recognizing China’s “earth-shaking change,” he advises officials to embrace even greater change — to “emancipate our minds and overcome the attitude of being satisfied with the status quo, the inertia of conservative and complacent thinking, the fear of difficulties, and timid thinking.”

Although some would have Xi quicken reform, political as well as economic, he will likely move slowly. Stability will continue to be China’s touchstone. One challenge for Xi is high expectations. A senior aide confided, “Xi is ready, but it won’t be easy.”

Where exactly Xi and his fellow members on the standing committee will take China is not obvious. What is clear is that they will move forward with reform step by pragmatic step, not backward to Maoist nostalgia or cult of personality populism.

ROBERT LAWRENCE KUHN, an international corporate strategist and investment banker, is a longtime adviser to China’s leaders. He is the author of “How China’s Leaders Think” and “The Man Who Changed China,” a biography of former President Jiang Zemin.

GLOBAL VIEWPOINT/TRIBUNE MEDIA SERVICES

## Loner, loser, killer

Olivier Roy

The murderous attack on a Jewish school, and before that on French soldiers, has brought a strong emotional reaction in France. Once again, the specter of disenfranchised and radicalized young French Muslims hovers over the destitute neighborhoods of France’s cities. Fifty years after the end of the war in Algeria, a new kind of civil war seems to be raging.

A closer look, however, shows that the picture is rather different. First, the 23-year-old perpetrator of these acts of terror, Mohammed Merah, was a loner and a loser. Far from embodying a growing radicalization among the youth, he stood at the mar-

gins not only of French society but also of the Muslim community.

Merah was not known for his piety: He did not belong to any religious congregation; he did not belong to any radical group or even to a local Islamic movement. A petty delinquent, psychologically fragile, he tried to enlist in the French Foreign Legion and then left for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Merah found in Al Qaeda a narrative of solitary heroism and a way, after months of watching videos on the Internet, to achieve short-term notoriety and find a place in the real world. In this sense, he was far closer to Anders Behring Breivik, who went on a killing spree in Norway last July in the name of a hatred of Muslims. People like these are difficult to spot precisely because they do not belong to a network of militant cells.

Yet the crimes of such men are often misconstrued as symbolizing different problems. Whereas non-Muslim lone terrorists like Breivik tend to be called mentally ill, Muslim lone terrorists like Merah are seen as embodying “Muslim wrath.” This is to miss an essential point.

Consider Merah’s attack on the French soldiers. If his killings at the Jewish school in Toulouse were a terrible reflection of the kind of anti-Semitism typically promoted by Al Qaeda, his attack on French soldiers — specifically Muslim ones — was novel and revealing of something else. He saw the soldiers as traitors: French

Muslims fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan. The gap he perceived between himself and them reveals the gap between the few Muslims who become so marginalized as to murder and the many more who find ways to integrate.

The disenfranchised youth who are supposedly vulnerable to terrorism are also a reservoir of potential army recruits. For every Qaeda sympathizer there are thousands of Muslims who don the French Army uniform and fight under the French flag — including, of course, in Afghanistan. They are loyal and also willing to die on the battlefield. Ten years ago there were reports of Muslim soldiers refusing to fight against fellow Muslims in Afghanistan; one case was documented. But most soldiers did their duty. It suffices to look at the list of the dead or to watch videos of military funerals to confirm this. Yet the

fact is seldom acknowledged because it does not fit with the usual perception of Muslims as dissidents.

In fact the growing presence of Muslim recruits in the army (including elite paratrooper units) is a sign of the growing integration of Muslims in France. (The parallel with the United States is interesting: The integration of African-Americans in the army preceded the movement for the integration of the entire society.)

The poor “banlieues” are still destitute and will remain so, and they will host their shares of juvenile delinquency, radicalism and violence. But they are not the place where the face of French Islam is being shaped.

The changing patterns are evident among the growing Muslim middle classes: people who leave the ghettos, enroll their children in Catholic

schools (there are only a few Muslim schools in France) and are filling the ranks of doctors, local journalists, teachers and municipal councilors.

The discrepancy between the media narratives — Al Qaeda is the vanguard of the disenfranchised Muslims living in France — and the social reality — Muslim terrorists are as isolated and mentally imbalanced as non-Muslim terrorists — fuels distrust and tensions among the majority of French Muslims. They keep a low profile, not only because they don’t want to attract attention, but also because they want to live their faith quite privately.

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