Xi Jinping's Anti-Corruption Campaign: The Politics of Revenge, by **Steven P. Feldman**. New York: Routledge, 2023. 182 pp. $160.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781032362694.

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Xi Jinping's Anti-Corruption Campaign: The Politics of Revenge, by Steven Feldman, offers a unique, psychology-based perspective on the ongoing Anti-Corruption Campaign under General Secretary Xi Jinping. Central to the author's analysis of the campaign is the concept of *ressentiment*—a term popularized by Friedrich Nietzsche to describe "suppressed feelings of envy and hatred" among powerless individuals toward the powerful. In this book, the author seeks to explore the role of popular sentiments and grievance, not only in Xi's Anti-Corruption Campaign but also within the broader political strategies of the ruling Chinese Communist Party. Specifically, how does *ressentiment* shape citizens' attitude toward the political elite? How does the Chinese regime leverage and manipulate the *ressentiment* of citizens to achieve its political objectives, both in the past and at present?

The book begins with a brief synopsis of Nietzsche's *ressentiment* theory. In Chapter One, the author defines *ressentiment* as the "powerlessness of an underclass" who desires to "seek revenge on the dominant elite" in the existing power hierarchy (p. 1). *Ressentiment* is not only hatred toward the dominant class, but also a "protest against elite values" (p. 2). Driven by *ressentiment*, the oppressed individual's attitude toward elite values is paradoxical. On the one hand, they condemn those values and seek to reevaluate and replace them with a new value system that ensures the equality or even superiority of their status. On the other hand, they *secretly desire* those values, and their hatred is precisely driven by their inability to attain those values and achieve dominant status within the power hierarchy. The *ressentiment* of ordinary citizens, argues the author, was leveraged by Xi to advance his political agenda during the Anti-Corruption Campaign.

Chapter Two provides a concise literature review on the CCP's mass political campaigns in modern Chinese history, including the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries (1950–1953), the Cultural Revolution (1966–1968), the "Strike Hard" Campaign (1983–1985), and various policy initiatives during the Xi era (2012–present). The author contends that throughout those campaigns, the Chinese regime exploited *ressentiment* among the population—their desire for equality and hatred of dominant elites—to rally support for the regime, purge political challengers, and consolidate control. In the author's own words, the CCP "creates the *ressentiment*" to "manipulate[s] the population into supporting them in their endless battles to advance their own political supremacy."

The subsequent chapters of the book then focus on the ongoing Anti-Corruption Campaign, with emphasis given to its relationship with *ressentiment*. In Chapter Three, the author argues that while widespread corruption has caused strong resentment among citizens, the problem is *systematic*, reflecting the over-centralization of power and lack of transparency in Chinese bureaucracy. Corruption, rather than merely a personal moral issue, has also played functional roles in Chinese society, serving as a "test of loyalty" for bureaucrats (p. 47) and as a vehicle for "developing relationships and exchanging favors" (p. 54). Xi's vow to eliminate corruption made him as a "courageous moral hero" in the public eye, because his commitment to "cleaning up powerful groups" resonates with the population's long-standing *ressentiment* (pp. 55–56).

In Chapter Four, the author contemplates the underlying motives for the Anti-Corruption Campaign. The author argues that Xi's campaign is a "psychological palliative" (p. 79) that aims to defuse public grievance against the regime's power abuse and restore the Party's legitimacy. By channeling the citizens' "hatred, *ressentiment*, and desires for revenge" in this "spectacular sport," the campaign "attacks the Party to protect it" (p. 81).

A key feature of the Anti-Corruption Campaign, highlighted by the author in Chapter Five and revisited in Chapter Eight, is its lack of institutionalization and the absence of the rule of law. The regime's approach to eliminating corruption, argues the author, is largely arbitrary and extrajudicial. Rather than strengthen the legal framework and transparency in governance, the campaign primarily relies on measures such as empowering the Party's disciplinary organ (pp. 88–90), mobilizing the masses for reporting abuse (pp. 91–93), imposing harsh penalties (pp. 93–94), and instilling fear and paranoia among the cadre rank (pp. 100–102). The failure to institutionalize anti-corruption measures, the author points out, reflects the inherent tension between a one-party regime and the rule of law: corruption in China is a consequence of unchecked power and the absence of accountability, but the Anti-Corruption Campaign aims to strengthen power rather than weaken it. Apparently, the rule of law contradicts this goal because it would inevitably undermine the Party's monopoly of power.

Nevertheless, as the author argues in Chapters Six and Seven, the Anti-Corruption Campaign carries a *ritualistic* value and bolsters Xi's personal image as a "good emperor" aligned with China's imperial past. The spectacle of high-level crackdown, the author notes, transforms the citizens' *ressentiment* "from the envy and anger to excitement," creating a feeling of empowerment and superiority over humiliated officials (p. 126). This explains why the campaign remains highly popular and satisfying among citizens, despite having little practical impact on their daily lives. Additionally, the campaign further solidifies Xi's legitimacy as a benevolent ruler and distances him from the corrupt behaviors of subordinate officials. In the author's words, "the bureaucracy is bad, the emperor is good, and the emperor will save the people from the selfish cadres" (p. 130).

Overall, the book's efforts to conceptualize the Anti-Corruption Campaign in China from the lens of *ressentiment* are novel and thought-provoking. However, compared to its innovative theoretical framework, the data and evidence presented in the book to support the author's claims are relatively thin. The author conducted most of the semi-structured interviews with Chinese and foreign business executives, academics, and a small number of government officials. However, the author did not have the chance to directly gauge the views of ordinary citizens in China—those who, according to the author, harbor real *ressentiment* against the dominant elite and were "willingly . . . manipulated" by the regime during the campaign (p. 174). Does the prosecution of officials really make them feel less helpless and more empowered? Does the campaign really elevate their support of the regime, and their admiration of Xi as a benevolent, fatherly ruler? The lack of primary sources on the opinions and attitudes of average citizens, unfortunately, undermines the validity of the *ressentiment*-based argument of the book.

In the book, the author occasionally makes strong, broad characterizations about Chinese politics or culture without providing sufficient elaboration or proper contextualization. For example, the author asserts that "the CCP is very low on legitimacy" (p. 71). In fact, whether the CCP regime has legitimacy—and to what extent—has long been a subject of scholarly debate among political scientists. The answer to the question depends on how legitimacy is defined, the level of government under consideration, and the perspective from which legitimacy is assessed. Another example is the author's claim that the campaign is "the product of an ancient dictatorial culture, where the population is inclined to seek out the Good Emperor and a strong father" (p. 106). This claim seems to present an oversimplified picture while ignoring the complexities of Chinese political culture. Those overgeneralized assertions, lacking detail or engagement with existing scholarly literature, do not benefit the author's main arguments.

Lastly, there are a few minor factual inaccuracies in the book, which might be

attributed to potential translation gaps or oversights during the author's interview notetaking.[1] Despite these issues, the book offers novel insights into the Anti-Corruption Campaign and contributes to our understanding of contemporary Chinese politics during the Xi era.

Precarious Protections: Unaccompanied Minors Seeking Asylum in the United States, by **Chiara Galli**. Oakland: University of California Press, 2023. 296 pp. $29.95 paper. ISBN: 9780520391918.

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In almost any setting or circumstance in the United States, minors are considered a vulnerable group deserving heightened protections to ensure their safety and well-being. Migrant minors are no exception. Chiara Galli's *Precarious Protections: Unaccompanied Minors Seeking Asylum in the United States* provides an ethnographic window into how Central American unaccompanied minors experience the U.S. immigration system, exploring the process through which they avail themselves of these protections while simultaneously revealing the process's many flaws. Ultimately, the book shows that the interaction between unaccompanied minors and the U.S. immigration system is one of the most consequential moments in these minors' migration trajectories, and it reveals a constant tension between the minors' lives and experiences and the immigration laws that are supposedly designed to protect them.

At the outset of the book, Galli rightly positions the migration of Central American unaccompanied minors—who are, for the most part, escaping violence and poverty and seeking family reunification—in a historical context. This context includes decades of U.S. intervention in Central America and the development of economic and immigration policies that have affected the economic and social development of Central America while criminalizing human movement. As a result, Galli explains, Central American minors are not simply sitting ducks; instead, they conduct a "strategic management of risk and mobilization of resources to overcome the constraints imposed on them by U.S. immigration policies" (p. 37).

While Galli's contextualization of Central American minor migration is an important read for anyone interested in understanding the historical background to current Latin American migration to the United States, it is in its subsequent chapters that Galli's book shines the most. Chapters Three to Six explain how unaccompanied alien children "interact intensively with the immigration bureaucracy and come of age under the gaze of the state" (p. 212). This involves a "bureaucratic maze," from lawyers to social workers to judges, with whom unaccompanied minors must interact for an extended and sometimes indefinite period of time. Their interactions with each of these players are, in the end, consequential to their asylum cases, which, in turn, affect how they ultimately come to live their lives in the United States.

Chapter Three employs a wide range of concepts and theories from international migration and criminology to explain how children learn about the asylum process in the United States during the initial phases of detention and state processing. These include "(1) apprehension by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) at the U.S.-Mexico border; (2) detention in Office of Refugee

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[1] For example, the author states that "in March 2016, CCTV reported 18 people were arrested in Henan Province under the Anticorruption Campaign, 17 of whom were executed" (p. 93). I am unable to verify the news report containing this information, and the figure of executions seems implausible under the current criminal law in China. For another example, the author quotes a Chinese executive that "he was given the right to vote for the mayor of Beijing, but all three choices were Communist Party members" (p. 152). This statement appears to contradict China's political norms, because the mayor of Beijing is elected by members of municipal People's Congress in *uncontested* elections with only one candidate running for the office. The executive may refer to People's Congress elections, rather than mayoral elections.