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Xi Jinping's Anti-corruption Campaign: The Politics of Revenge.
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One of the activities most closely associated with Xi Jinping 习近平, Chinese leader since 2012, has been the almost perpetual anticorruption purges that have been undertaken under his leadership. These started soon after he came into office, with blows against major figures such as former Politburo member Zhou Yongkang 周永康, and the previous Party secretary of Chongqing, Bo Xilai 薄熙来. The cleanup spread to the military, then into state-owned enterprises, down to provincial-level organisations, and even into the state security apparatus, which until then had been almost untouchable.

Steven Feldman had the opportunity in 2016 to stay for a year in China and interview various figures who were observers of the campaign then unfolding. Some of these were Chinese academics, others senior personnel in either Chinese or foreign companies. He also had the chance to speak to some officials, though he admits that the numbers here were small.

This latter fact is not surprising. As Feldman makes clear in his opening argument, officials were the core target for Xi's campaign, which while it was directed at corruption and misuse of public office for private gain, was also fundamentally about power. In this emerging setup, Feldman describes how Xi came into a situation that succeeded the ten years of "inactivity" by his predecessor Hu Jintao 胡锦涛, where the Party's legitimacy (never strong at the best of times) was being daily undermined by the poor behaviour, greed, and selfishness of various personal networks and broader factions.

In this description, the aim of the anticorruption campaign was to channel what Feldman describes, using the work of, amongst others, Friedrich Nietzsche, as "ressentiment" from the powerless and those lower down the hierarchy in Chinese society, towards the almighty officialdom that had been able to act with impunity over the previous few years. The structure of the Xi leadership was to present the key figure as a paternalistic moral source of certainty, something like a Communist Confucian saviour, using the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, the chief graft busters, to address the anger

and frustration of ordinary people in China by taking aim at corrupt officials and bringing them down.

Feldman is good at describing the performative aspects of the Xi anticorruption campaigns. The public were told that the Party was going after its own "tigers and flies," both the high and the low, in ways that had never been seen before. But most eyes were inevitably focussing on the tigers, and getting vicarious pleasure out of seeing the once untouchable reduced to humiliation and loss of all power.

There were many deeper issues for the Party, however, that remained untouched by the drama of what was happening on the surface. In a system where officials are very poorly paid, and where the law is the servant of the Party-state's aims rather than an external force that holds it to any sort of account, corruption is almost unavoidable. This gave much of what the Xi campaigns achieved an arbitrary nature. Almost anyone could have been ensnared. The ones that were caught were often people with defined objections to the conduct of Xi's rule, or to his even being in this position in the first place. Inevitably, any who chose to articulate or act on this opposition received swift and decisive treatment.

The campaigns once they were in full swing did cause a freezing up of the decision-making system. Corruption before had, as another scholar in this area, Andrew Wedeman, made clear, managed to occur in China even when there was high growth. Indeed, there were those that argued that the shortcuts, loopholes, and compromises that corruption offered at least meant an impossibly complex, Kafkaesque system did provide some ways of working with it. The disappearance of these circuit breakers meant that for businesses and others, officials became risk averse, often refusing to act because of terror that they were making themselves open to claims of acting improperly. Fear, as Feldman several times makes clear, is a major means by which the Party exercises control. And when the anticorruption people came, no one knew who might be nabbed, and why. Everyone, just by working in the system, was complicit.

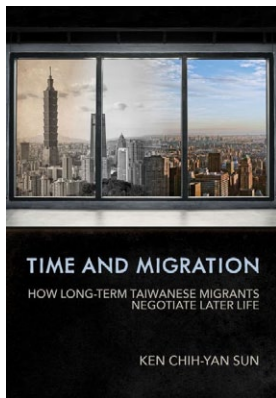
In his chapter on the rule of law in China, Feldman asserts that the anticorruption campaigns were an attempt to operate as a kind of legal instrument, even despite the fact that they were much more fundamentally a political tool, and one intimately related to the nature of Xi's leadership, and the overall purpose designed for it. One of the strengths of his analysis here is to desist from the claim made by so many others that the Xi leadership is about the sole figure of Xi and his hunger for power and personal aggrandisement (see for example Shirk 2018). As Feldman makes clear, there were generic, structural reasons for why a one-person centred leadership structure was needed, not less the fact that in Maoist fashion this offered an opportunity to bypass the Party itself in appealing to the people. The irony is that the very man who sits at the top of the Communist Party is able to magically talk directly to the public in his leadership persona of the faults, and the need to clear them up, of the entity he is in charge of. His campaigns have even recruited the public to report on and denounce officials. This is a remarkable achievement of circularity!

This is a book written in a succinct, clipped fashion. Throughout, it makes salient points. One of the most interesting was the idea that the Communist Party does not have morality, but it has ideology. This answered a question I had had for years about what the moral values of the Party were. Feldman is also very clear finally

on just how far trying to run China along these lines will prove unsustainable simply because in the end it will never be able to address the question it is meant to answer – the Party's very weak legitimacy. His field research was undertaken during a moment when Xi was a relatively new, popular leader domestically. In the last six years, however, the economic downturn from both the continuing impact of anticorruption campaigns, and the pandemic from 2020, has raised more questions for the centralising style that Xi has adopted. This book therefore is best characterised as a study of how these campaigns could be understood at their peak, and what the intentions behind them were then. In addressing this, it does a very good job indeed.

References

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***Time and Migration:
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 Migrants Negotiate Later Life.***
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Experiences of ageing among long-term migrants in Western countries have long remained invisible in both migration and ageing studies. Migration scholarship initially tended to focus on younger migrants, and later on, on recently arrived elderly migrants.¹ Ageing studies remain on their part dominated by social engineering approaches, tending to consider older persons from the sole lens of vulnerability and often failing to grasp their intimate experiences from an emic perspective. This lack of grounded research is particularly salient as far as ageing migrants are concerned, and within studies of ageing among Chinese societies.

Ken Sun's book therefore offers a timely addition to existing scholarship. Sun analyses the experiences of ageing among the Taiwanese who migrated to the US in the 1960s and 1970s, and settled there most of their adult life. Now in their sixties and

seventies, and as the authoritarian Taiwan they left has since transformed into a democratic welfare state with an affordable web of care services, these senior migrants grapple with unprecedented questions regarding the life they want for themselves as ageing Taiwanese-Americans and retired parents of "American children." Sun shows how these individuals from various social and ethnic backgrounds actively make sense of this new phase in their life course by navigating between structural contexts and cultural repertoires and through the rereading of their migratory experience. Thanks to qualitative data collected in New York, Boston, and Taiwan between 2009 and 2013 – including 115 interviews with long-term senior migrants in the US and senior returned migrants in Taiwan – Sun argues that experiences of ageing among long-term migrants can be better understood through a time lens. While long-term migration shapes the ways "senior immigrants desire, define, and seek 'aging well'" (p. 8), the passage of time "also [changes] places" (p. 11) and affects the connections migrants cultivate with their home and host countries along their life course.

The book is composed of six chapters. The first one broadly analyses the "economies of belonging," the changing "goals, visions, and priorities" these Taiwanese migrants have set for themselves "across time and borders" (p. 22) – from their youth under Martial Law and the influence of American culture in Taiwan, to the reevaluation of their relationships with their host and home countries in their later years. While some decide to stay in the US (to enjoy the familial and social ties they have developed there or because they have grown estranged from their homeland), others choose to move back to enjoy a specific ageing lifestyle, seek or provide care, or participate in the betterment of their home country.

Chapters Two to Four examine the ways long-term migration affects older Taiwanese migrants' understandings of family relationships with their "American children" (Chapter Two), spouse (Chapter Three), and as grandparents (Chapter Four). Among other findings, Sun shows that having themselves "left" their ageing parents to migrate, and since the betterment of their children's opportunities constituted a core reason for migration, these ageing Taiwanese migrants find themselves in a place where they cannot expect their children to take care of them, and where doing so "would defeat the purpose for migrating" (p. 59). Most therefore wish to avoid being a burden to their family, and sometimes move back to Taiwan or resort to institutional care to preserve a distant intimacy. Migration, Sun shows, also reconfigures spousal relationships across time and borders. While leaving Taiwan empowered many women (including by pulling them away from the scrutiny of their families) and redefined couples' power dynamics, experiences of retirement or deteriorating health also contribute to reshaping gender roles. Older migrant men tend to be increasingly "aware of their wives as companions and caregivers" (p. 95) and are sometimes pushed to soften their attitudes toward their wives or children – at least in private, as co-ethnics' gossip encourage maintaining gender-conforming roles in public.

The last two chapters examine often neglected aspects of ageing: support social networks and perceptions of social rights.

1. As far as migrants from East Asia are concerned, this trend is well illustrated in Nicole Dejong Newendorp's recent ethnography (2020) of mainland Chinese and Hong Kong seniors' migration to the United States to rejoin their families.