

The lesser of two evils?

Corruption negatively affects people from the womb, fertility fraud, to beyond the tomb, funeral fraud.

The United States of America's (USA) government has used the media to create the image of super-gangster criminal groups that are multi-national organisations of crime. Such analysis is inadequate because it conceals the structural defects of the USA's approach to organised crime. It is also deceptive of the harm that corporate gangsters execute, for example, the premature deaths of millions of citizens over decades due to the tobacco and asbestos industries. By comparison, the deaths of citizens due to organised crime is relatively small (Woodiwiss). The most influential media houses have created distorted perceptions about organised crime as evil as opposed to the more acceptable and sophisticated but more deadly corporate criminals abusing the weaknesses of the capitalistic system. For example the fraud of Standards and Poor (credit rating agency), Parmalat (cheese) and the Lehman Brothers (banking), that ranges from overvaluing of assets to enticing consumers into unsustainable debt. Homeowners lost their homes, government bailed out banks and bankers received multi-million dollar bonuses.

At home, we have examples such as Ramatex and some tannery companies that dumped toxic waste in rivers connected to the ground water of Windhoek. In South Africa, companies such as Sappi, Sasol, ArcelorMittal and Exxaro were guilty of environmental offences between 2008 and 2014. Some of the most common offences include air pollution, unauthorised disposal of hazardous waste, and the contamination of soil, ground and water.

The wolf in sheep's skin

The USA supported dictators in developing countries that benefitted USA corporations and banks. For example, they supported Suharto in Indonesia, Marcos of the Philippines, Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire and numerous other dictators over many years.

These dictators were some of the most corrupt in history. They squandered the resources of their countries and invested the money in banks in developed countries such as the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) and banks in Switzerland. These institutions have known where the stolen money came from and how these dictators impoverished their citizens. The International Monetary Fund and



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the World Bank were also aware about human rights abuses in these countries.

Instead of addressing these problems, Western governments "acted like gangster sharks" (Woodiwiss) by indebting some developing countries and providing loans based on overoptimistic repayment assumptions. When these countries default, Western governments such as the USA accepted payment in terms of resources such as oil, took control of such resources and in the process indebted these countries further (Perkins).

The client list of the BCCI included mentioned dictators as well as Saddam Hussein of Iraq, Manuel Noriega of Panama, Samuel Doc of Liberia and numerous Persian Gulf oil sheikhs. The BCCI expanded into the USA and from the 1980's, its American network served drugs and arms dealers, and money launderers.

Most analysts agreed that the BCCI fraud did not happen in a vacuum. It happened because of the regulatory failure and negligence of government agencies and auditors to prevent, detect and act upon criminal activity. Since the collapse of the BCCI, most of the money rescued has gone to USA government agencies (Woodiwiss). A 1999 USA' Senate investigation revealed that 350 of Citibank's customers were senior government officials or they were relatives, including natural successors to Suharto, Marcos and Mobutu (Woodiwiss).

It is possible to conclude that comparing the diseases of organised crime and corporatocracy that the latter is the more sophisticated evil of the two, but much more deadly. We need to be much more concerned about corporatocracy than about organised crime and the mafia.

References

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the republican 23 October 2015