THE NEW WAR ON AFRICAN “CORRUPTION”: JUST ANOTHER NEO-COLONIAL ADVENTURE?

Dr William De Maria
UQ Business School
The University of Queensland
AUSTRALIA
b.demaria@business.uq.edu.au

SUMMARY

On 11 March 2005, the Commission on Africa, set up by the British Prime Minister Tony Blair, released its long awaited report. Five days later US President Bush announced he was nominating his controversial deputy Defence Secretary, Paul Wolfowitz, to head the World Bank. These, and other portentous developments, are set to impact heavily on the future of Africa. This paper looks to that future in a very specific way. Offering the limited insights of the outsider, I argue that the new Blair initiative, along with a swathe of other rich country anti-corruption interventions, will continue to succumb to failure unless the conventional wisdom about African “corruption” is abandoned. The central proposition of the paper is that these policies have been on a failure trajectory for some time because they give precedence to Western, not African interests. The paper is set in a context of stabilised, if not escalating neo-colonialism in Africa. The initial stage of predatory exploitation of African resources (human and natural) is being superseded by the less showy but nevertheless more consequential transference of core Western orthodoxies, specifically democracy and trade liberalisation, into African economies and social fabrics. This in turn has required the West to confront African “corruption”. The short history of Western anti-corruption hegemony is explored with a specific interest in identifying the neo-colonialist aspirations embedded in this fundamentally flawed “corruption” reform package.

INTRODUCTION

Once it was a scramble for Africa; now we're told it is the struggle for Africa.
Stella Orakwue, 2002.

They say Sub-Saharan Africa is the place where God comes to cry. It is the poorest region on Earth. The very public statistics speak the tragedy. Life expectancy in this massive region of 703 million people is 46 years, 174 children in every 1000 do not reach their fifth birthday and in 2003, 2.2 million people in the region died from AIDS. In the same year a million people died from Malaria in Africa and 71% of those were children under 5 years. The infection kills an African child every 30 seconds. Thirty three percent of all people in Sub-Saharan Africa are classified as undernourished (World Bank 2003; United Nations 2003; Hertz 2004; Mason 2004; Global Fund. 2004.). In Africa as a whole, more than 30 wars have been fought since 1970 and there are more refugees and displaced persons in Africa than any other continent (Ndulo, 2003, p. 315). In 1970 only one in ten poor people lived in Africa. Today that number is one in two (Tupy, 2004).

“Corruption”, the subject of this paper, is wedded onto this distressing scenario. Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index for 2004 rated 146 countries on a 10 point scale from low “corruption” (Finland 9.7) to high “corruption” (Bangladesh and Haiti 1.3). Of the 30 countries Transparency International (TI) surveyed in Sub-Saharan Africa, only one country (Botswana (6.0)) scored above the mid-range point of 5 (Transparency International 2004). The World Bank Institute (WBI) corruption rankings, based on a larger sample (17 more sub-Saharan countries then TI), showed an even gloomier picture. It found that 36 of
the 47 sub-Saharan countries it surveyed were below the world median score (US General Accounting Office, 2004, p. 6).

While this data has to be treated with great caution, it is a central resource in the emergent Western war on African “corruption”. Why and how is this war being conducted? These are big questions for this paper. I see the West’s anti-“corruption” initiatives remaining true to the hegemonic logic of neo-colonialism. We will find a wealth of evidence for this:

- In the way western conceptions of “corruption” dominate anti-“corruption” policy discourse.
- In the way western conceptions of “corruption” interiorise African problems rather then looking at external factors such as debt, dumping, poor commodity prices, and globalisation lockout (Adedji, 1993; Chabal, 1996, p. 34).
- In the way western anti-“corruption” resources are distributed with high levels of conditionality, designed to re-cast African governance and economy in the image of the West.
- In the way Western initiated “corruption” in Africa, for example in big project bribery, is tolerated whereas host country “corruption” is not.

The paper deals first with the taken-for-granted definition of African “corruption”. The orthodoxy that a trans-cultural position on “corruption” has legal and moral validity, and can be captured in a measurable way, is rejected. “Corruption” is a vexed idea, only making sense after one has delved the deepest parts of cultural experience. Yet the concept is detached from that context, dumbed-down and standardised by the international donor community. A short commentary on Swaziland will note the cultural-boundedness of “corruption” and the issues that arise when exogenous interventions press against African sovereignty. The exploration of “corruption’s” meaning is followed by a synoptic examination of the significant evidence pointing to Western management failure with respect to African “corruption”. Despite comprehensive searches, not one objective study could be found that demonstrates any “positive” Western impact on African “corruption”. Yet this assault on Africa “corruption” could be the next neo-colonial chapter.

“CORRUPTION”: LET THE MEANING WAR BEGIN

On a randomly-picked day (24 September 2004) Africa produced “corruption” headlines such as:

- Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has ordered the suspension of the Managing Director of the National Social Security Fund (Monitor, Kampala).
- Five top officials dealing with tenders in the Namidian Ministry of Works, Transport and Communication have been suspended and police called in to probe allegations of bribery and fraud. (Namidian, Windhoek).
- A five member board has been set up to investigate the disappearance of building materials meant for the construction of the official residence of the Governor for Matabeleland South. (The Herald, Harare).
Are these examples of probable “corruption”? A strange question perhaps; but one flagging that the definition of “corruption” is considered in this paper as problematical, and, as I hope to demonstrate, vulnerable to western control.

“Corruption”, through Western eyes, commonly pertains to matters such as personal conflicts of interest and extracting private benefit from public office (Deininger & Mpuga 2005: 171). It is a concept drawn from the depths of Western outlook. As such it is tempered with sociological naivety. Wrongdoing is usually understood in socially detached ways as the malpractice of individual rogue citizens (although rivers of ink write the counter narrative about the systemic nature of “corruption”). Given that the West lionises values such as individualism (specifically individual responsibility and therefore personal culpability), it is not surprising that police, regulatory, and judicial systems busy themselves investigating, capturing and punishing those who are seen as individualistically aberrant.

Is African “corruption” like this? De Sardan has one response:

Corruption has become, in almost all African countries, a common and routine element of the functioning of the administrative … apparatus, from top to bottom. This being the case, corruption is neither marginal nor sectoralised, or repressed, but is generalized and banalised…Corruption…is as frequently denounced in words as it is practiced in fact (de Sardan, 1999, p. 28).

A copious African bibliography supports de Sardan’s bleak view. Diamond for example takes the view that African “corruption” is not a breach of ethics but a mechanism that serves public order by organising competition into networks of clients and patrons (Diamond, 1987, p. 579). Bates, on another tack, sees the dodging and manoeuvring of African farmers as the life preserving actions of an oppressed group avoiding the deprivations inflicted by government action (Bates, 1981, p. 87). In the same vein, a 2003 study by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime found that “corruption” in South Africa was part of the “national psyche” (UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2003a).

Following that contour, “corruption” can be located embedded deep in cultural formats. Anti-“corruption” can mean one of two things then; eradicating uniquely experienced indigenous phenomenon in indigenously-controlled ways or applying exogenously-hatched schemes independent of local voice. This latter option, clearly the dominant one, will inevitably impact on the international principle of sovereignty which ultimately preserves the right of final consent in such matters to nation states. One can contrarily argue that countries will respond to their own “corruption” issues when; (a) the “corrupt” behaviour is of widespread concern, (b) when the “corruption” presents in an un-alloyed form, not contaminated or confused with other phenomena such as racial conflict and disease, and (c), that there is an equally widespread acceptance that social and economic changes must and will occur in the eradication of the targeted “corruption”. This point is not a bald defence of sovereignty, or a cavalier attitude to “corruption”. Rather it is a warning that if “corruption” is part of the cultural network (albeit for most, a negative part), its eradication will involve deep change which can be attempted through citizen validation or imposed exogenously by Western interests.
Swaziland offers an example of this point. Political parties were banned by royal decree in the Kingdom of Swaziland three decades ago. There are also strong restrictions on freedom of speech and political assembly. In the run-up to the 2003 election King Mswati III, one of the world’s last absolute rulers, casually dismissed the entire government, and chiefs had the power to bar candidates from campaigning in their areas (Economist, 2003, p. 67). Swaziland only has a population of 1 million and almost all are from the same tribe, the Swazi. The king is seen as the head of a big family, and the guardian of cherished traditions. Economically, the country is heavily dependent on South Africa and 70% of Swazis live in chronic poverty and food shortages are widespread (Time, 2005, p. 14). The HIV infection rate of 38% is claimed to be the highest in the world.

This is the complex and disturbing indigenous context that conditions discourse about Swaziland “corruption”. Although there is civil unrest in Swaziland, it does not appear to be focussed on the level of corruption. Thus with condition (a) not yet met, conditions (b) and (c) do not arise. There is, in other words, no serious debate in Swaziland (yet) about the need for fundamental change in central institutions such as King rule and the patriarchal authority system. The next question, and one which gets to the heart of the paper, is whether in the absence of the conditions noted above, Western pressures on Swaziland to be hooked into wider anti-corruption programs are justified?

Western anti-corruption engagements in Africa too often appear oblivious to this argument, preferring to intervene through a portal that proclaims “corruption” a universally nasty issue. “Corruption”, through Western eyes, is, HIV-like, a trans-cultural “disease” that must be surgically removed from all sovereign states. Even the recent Commission on Africa report described “corruption” as a “spreading rot” (p. 32).

This false and simplified rendition hides an enormous amount of conceptual disputation. We cannot agree that “corruption” causes social and economic damage (Mookherjee 1997; Fjeldstad & Tungodden, 2003, p. 1459; Von Alemann, 2004, p. 25; Sachs 2005). Indeed there is a literature that sees “corruption” contributing to market efficiency and political access (Leff, 1979, pp. 325-340; Beenstock 1979). Another line of thinking, advocated by the Nigerian economist, Sam Aluko, distinguishes between productive and unproductive “corruption”. In the former, ill-gotten spoils are retained in the economy for productive ventures. In the latter, spoils are repatriated out of the country (Onyebuchi, 2005). Nor can we agree whether “corruption” is inevitable in early stages of modernisation (Huntington, 1968, pp. 59-71; Alam, 1989). And we certainly don’t agree on the causative power of “corruption”. Mbaku blames “corruption” for African poverty, agricultural dependence, ethnic conflict and the “suffocation” of civil society (2004, p. 48). Yet Gunnell sees the US$230 billion worth of subsidies to American and European farmers each year increasing developing world poverty which in turn leads to “corruption” (2005, p.28). Similarly in their critique of World Bank imposed structural adjustment (SAP) on Nigeria, Tomori & Tomori present evidence which causatively connects SAP to poverty to “corruption” (2004, p.35). In the midst of this discordant chorus is the powerful voice of international donors with their song of universality.
Even if a definition of “corruption” had universal endorsement it would be of limited significance, for chasm-wide disagreements would appear below any calm semantic surface at the operational level where hard resource allocation decisions are made (Von Alemann, 2004, p. 25). On this day-to-day level the colours of “corruption” turn to inescrutable shades of grey, making a united policy stance impossible to attain voluntarily. The subtleties embedded in encouraging a civil servant (bribery?) or employing skilled friends and relatives (nepotism?) spell disaster for the common meaning enterprise. The recent Commission on Africa Report made the same point when it argued for a more culturally-appropriate understanding of patron-client relationships because they reveal something about the “African senses of community” (Commission on Africa, 2005, p. 25). We know for example that attempts by the Tanzanian government to protect its local coffee industry from foreign capture was interpreted through Western eyes as condoning clientalistic and rent-seeking practices, the commonly presented symptoms of “corruption”, when, arguably, all the government was doing was pursuing nationalistic objectives (Ponte, 2004, p. 616). If we are compelled to define “corruption” as deviations from social norms and duties of office, we should also be compelled to ask “whose norms” and “which duties”? (Qizilbash, 2001, p. 273). This discourse happens less then it should.

If the argument that “corruption” has no universal application is plausible, then that point has been missed by bodies such as Transparency International, United Nations, IMF and the World Bank, which see themselves as executing universal mandates predicated on a common trans-national “understanding” of “corruption” Of course on one level this is important as these bodies need a common international language to manage their charters. Yet they privately recognise the impossibility of achieving wide agreement about the meaning of “corruption”. Indeed, the 1997 OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions and the new United Nations Convention Against Corruption do not contain a definition of “corruption” (United Nations 2003b).

While the shared meaning enterprise may have a bleak future, that is obviously not the end of the matter. Clearly one cannot evaporate such a powerful construct as “corruption” from any modern analysis; social, organizational, historical or economic. Nor can one ignore that very bad things happen in the chemistry between power, money and violence in Sub-Saharan Africa. There is a real phenomenon here. We can however choose our research relationship to this polemic concept. In this paper I treat “corruption” (loosely following Von Alemann), not as a uniform, stable, exportable ethical category, but rather as an ephemeral, socially-shaped and disputation-prone collection of issues or ideas about moral standards that should apply to the bearers of public trust and duty (2004, p. 28). At the very least this position validates non-Westernised African voices in the discourses about “corruption” and targets the West’s self-elected mandate to determine the boundaries of this discourse and penetrate African public policy.

A mandate, one must observe, that is now exponentially realized through the free ride given by globalization. Flying the friendly colours of “free” trade, “development” and “one world” progress, globalizing capitalism slips into the harbours of African political consciousness with the same old requirements for expanding and compliant markets. Strong states such as the USA, the more recently emergent conglomerate of the European Union, economic, legal
and accounting multinationals, international private sector lobby groups (such as the Centre for International Private Enterprise) and trans-national aid agencies, all contribute to the dispersal of liberal democratic capitalism to Africa (Brett, 2000, p. 791). None more so then through the anti-“corruption” policies the West is transplanting to Africa.

WEST-LED ANTI-CORRUPTION

This section explores that point through a brief examination of two weapons the West brandishes to fight “corruption”; conditionality and privatisation. Some interlocking points need to be made or re-made at the outset. First, there are huge issues about the definability and measurability of “corruption”, as the paper has already noted. Secondly, Western anti-corruption programming in Africa, such as that conducted by USAID, is rarely done to a strategic plan and evaluations show poor inter-agency coordination and limited and unclear results (Op De Beke, 2000, p. 255; US General Accounting Office, 2004, pp. 3, 31; Doig, Watt & Williams, 2005, p. 69). Thirdly, African anti-corruption programming, as one would expect, given its exogenous conceptualisations, is fad-focused and menu-driven. In other words when Western governments commit anti-corruption resources to Africa they commit similar resources and do similar things. Doig, Watt & Williams recent evaluation of African anti-corruption commissions has referred to the “carpet-bombing” of “corruption” throughout Africa with a model designed specifically for an entirely different set of historical and political contexts on another continent:

Despite the existence of a substantial body of literature that confirms the importance of cultural and social context in understanding the character and causes of corruption…[there is an] unstoppable drive to find a universal solution. The search for this magic bullet has for almost two decades focused on the [Hong Kong] Independent Commission against Corruption (2005, p. 36).

The recent emergence of an internationalised attack on African “corruption” is partly the result of major geo-political shifts by the USA and its Western Europe allies following the end of the Cold War (Williams, 1999, p. 487). The old game of propping up African dictators to prevent the spread of Communism and gain access to cheap natural resources and easy import markets, has given way to a new interest by the big powers in corrupt-free administrations. “Corruption” is now the common weed in the new open market seed beds cultivated by strategically positioned western companies. This post-Cold War interest in African “corruption” has been joined now by global security concerns for the US (Volman, 1999).

While anti-“corruption” has a long history in Africa (Michael, 2004, p. 322), 1996 is a good marker year for the start of Western interest. In that year World Bank president, James Wolfensohn, and IMF managing director, Michael Camdessus controversially announced that from henceforth they would use their donor leverage with African countries to stamp out “corruption” (Op De Beke, 2000, p. 255; New York Times, 11 August 1997). The new internationalisation of the fight against western defined “corruption” began with World Bank interventionist programs in Uganda and Tanzania (Michael, 2004, p. 322). It is now visible in the number of international treaties and conventions on “corruption” that have materialized in the last five years (e.g. Southern African Development Community Protocol on Corruption). It is usual for foreign aid agreements and development contracts to contain specific (western-
“Corruption”, once the concern of moralists, is now confronted by a politics driven by expansionist economic and political interests. Simply put, the new mantra is, “corruption is not good for [First World] trade”. It is seen to distort the cash nexus, requires expensive regulatory regimes, shelters inefficiency and retards competition (Centre for International Private Enterprise, 2003; US General Accounting Office, 2004, p. 4). The solutions are the old Bretton-Woods shibboleths; trade liberalisation and privatisation. Competition from imports is believed to produce efficiencies, cleanse the local market of state-caused un-productivity, and guaranteeing lower commodity prices. World Bank officials are now saying that growth in Africa must be driven by private investment in “corruption” free climates (Deinginger & Mpugu 2005, p. 171).

This powerful prescription sets the policy agenda. “Corruption” is targeted, not so much for the injustices it extracts from ordinary people, but for the structural problems it could cause private investment (Campos, Lien & Pradhan 1999, p. 1065; US General Accounting Office, 2004, p. 4). Critics of this ideology point to the unevenness of Africa-West economic exchanges, the absence of structures to horizontally distribute the wealth benefits of trade liberalisation out to the poorest sectors of African society and monopolistic distortions (Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative, 2002, p. 27).

Kenya: A Victim of Conditionality?

Conditionality is now a powerful force in Western allocations and African states are rarely in a position to resist them (Chabal, 1996, p. 31). The “conditions” are the standard prerequisites for Western commerce to thrive; zero “corruption”, political stability, market friendly governments, efficient production, contract enforcement, large labour pools and low wages. The first to feel World Bank-IMF anti-“corruption” conditionality was Kenya. In 1997, coinciding with a dramatic drop in the proceeds from state privatisations from US$130 million to US$22 million in 1997 (Legovini, 2002, table 40), the IMF suspended $220 million worth of aid to Kenya and called for increased privatization, independence for the state tax collection agency and an anti-corruption authority. Amos Wako, Kenya’s attorney-general, claimed that in that year an IMF team flew to Nairobi and “forced his office to draft the Prevention of Corruption Bill within one week” (New African, 2001). The bill was, according to Wako, cleared by the IMF and rubber-stamped by the Kenyan parliament. The bill saw the birth of the Kenyan Anti-Corruption Authority (KACA).

Donor funding resumed, only to be suspended again in December 2000 when KACA floundered as a result of a constitutional challenge (Human Rights Watch, 2002). The World Bank also suspended some development loans, including US$150 million for a large energy project. Chances of resumption of IMF funding lessened when Parliament failed to pass the IMF-World Bank supported Anti-corruption and Economic Crimes Bill, which would have entrenched KACA in the Kenyan constitution. Opponents of the bill saw a cynical attempt to placate donors. In 2003, following the election of Mwai Kibaki on an anti-corruption
platform, the government named John Githongo as the new KACA chief. However he resigned (or was forced out of office) in February 2005, citing a lack of government commitment to anti-“corruption” as his reason. This stimulated the United States and Germany to suspend all their anti-corruption aid to Kenya and the UK threatened to refuse entry visas to Kenyan’s suspected of “corruption”.

The mid 2005 situation is that “corruption” remains widespread donors are starting to criticise Kibaki’s government for failing to combat it and being slow to implement the economic reforms it promised before it came to power (Mageria, 2005). At stake is US$4.2 billion promised after the Kibaki election, which will not flow until Kenya takes the tough Western medicine’s of conditionality. But are we talking about two opposing conditionalities; one for “corruption” and one for national and resource security?

Rather then walking away, the US can be expected to focus its gaze on Kenya in the immediate future because of Kenya’s strategic geo-political position (Volman, 1999, p. 15). During the Cold War President Moi, who preceded Kibaki, was regarded as a staunch anti-communist ally to the US. With “terrorism” replacing “anti-communism” at the centre of US foreign policy, Kenya once again is being courted as a partner, this time in the context of President George Bush’s 2002 National Security Strategy (Cook & Throup, 2003; USAID, 2005, p. 1). As one of the more stable countries in the Horn of Africa, Kenya will be an important partner to the recently established U.S. sub-regional command in neighbouring Djibouti, where, so far, a large CIA contingent and 1,000 U.S. troops are stationed to attack terrorist cells in Yemen, prevent Al Qaeda operatives from fleeing to the Horn, and protect commercial and military sea lanes. (Cook & Throup, 2003). We can expect a narrowing of focus in U.S.-Kenya alliance to security concerns. Of US$20 million in supplemental funds authorised by the U.S. Congress in October 2002 to strengthen counter terrorist security in Africa, $15 million was earmarked for Kenya. This clearly surmounts any lost anti-“corruption” aid to Kenya.

Empirical evidence that ordinary Africans directly and significantly benefit when their governments accept anti-“corruption” conditionality is not forthcoming. Could this be to do with the standard approaches the West takes to African anti-“corruption”?  

**Fixed Offerings on the Anti-“Corruption” Menu**

Table 1 provides a breakdown of US anti-“corruption” programs in Sub-Saharan Africa for 2001-2002. This is generally the standard Western intervention profile when it comes to anti-corruption. Note needs to be taken of the focus areas, and their relative strengths, particularly the heavy involvement in civil society advocacy. Note also needs to be taken of the fact that these program areas are actually cornerstones of democratic governance articulated in civic school subjects from Bonn to Baltimore (Anderson, 2000, p.250). Further proof that these anti-“corruption” programs come wrapped in the “gift” of liberal-democracy (Doig, 1999; Ndulo, 2003; Alence, 2004).

It is also important to understand that the location of these Sub-Saharan programs geo-politically driven; beyond empirical or rational determination Those countries in which the
United States sponsors (say) legislative reform, are not necessarily the countries that need this reform the most. Michael has recently made the same observation (Michael, 2004, pp. 325-326).

Table 1: U.S. Anticorruption Programs in Sub-Saharan Africa, Fiscal Years 2001-2002

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</tbody>
</table>


_Privatisation_

Any one of these programs in the anti-“corruption” menu can be examined for their deep neo-colonialist footprints. Privatisation is selected mainly because it provides an uncluttered connection to the Western outlook.

…it may be that privatisation offers the only viable prospect of curtailing corruption in [Africa].
We can use Theobald’s statement as an exemplar of dominant off-Africa logics embedded in Western approaches to African “corruption”.

Privatisation forms a major part of the anticorruption agenda for Sub-Saharan Africa. There appears to be four justifications for this. First, privatisation is an integral part of the neo-liberal outlook which pushes worldwide for low-profile governments and large business sectors (Shaw, 2002). Secondly, privatisation is a “supply-side” attack on the “corruption” in government positions (US General Accounting Office, 2004, p. 21). Thirdly, hard to reverse asset sales put beyond doubt the recovery of high-interventionist programs in former socialist countries. Is it coincidence that the five top privatisation countries in Africa (Tanzania, Mozambique, Zambia, Ghana and Kenya) were once socialist administrations? (See table 5 below). Finally assets sales are seen as a way African countries can self-fund the forced mutation of their economies into proto-Western shapes (Paul, 1999, p.3). What is missing from this defence is the growing evidence that privatisation is just another floor for “corruption” to dance on.

Table 2 reformats information from a current World Bank database showing African privatisation 1979-2002. Its purpose is to show that total privatisations of 3487 point to a much larger cross-Africa asset sale than normally thought.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Malawi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>87</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>579</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cape Verde</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>41</td>
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<td>Central African Republic</td>
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<td>Nigeria</td>
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<td>Chad</td>
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<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>Sao Tome &amp; Principe</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cote D’Ivoire</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>72</td>
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<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Gambia</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td>Ghana</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>283</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>Togo</td>
<td>78</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guinea-Bissau</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Privatisations =3487**
Table 3 identifies almost a bell curve shape to Sub-Saharan asset sales with a slow start in the period 1979-1989 and then a frenetic fire sale in the 1989-1998 period. With nothing much of value left to sell the sale downturn period has been ongoing since 1999.

### Table 3: Sub-Saharan Privatisations (x year) 1979-2002*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<td>1979</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1992</td>
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<td>1994</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>559</td>
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<td>1997</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>2002</td>
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</table>


With the qualification that major methodological reservations exist about the TI Corruption Index (see note 2), we can see that privatisation is not producing the results its proponents would like to see. Of the top five Sub-Saharan privatisations in the 1979-2002 period, none showed any real movement up the index towards low “corruption”. What we don’t have is empirical evidence of the specific role privatisation played in keeping these countries near the bottom of the TI “corruption” index.

### Table 4: Five Top Sub-Saharan Privatisations* (x corruption).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Corruption through Privatisation in Ghana

Instead we do have persuasive anecdotal evidence that privatisation leads to the very conditions it was meant to head off. The Ghana experience shows this. It is the only Sub-Saharan African country outside post-apartheid South Africa that has undergone extensive structural adjustments true to the requirements of the World Bank and the IMF (Cheru, 2002, p.1). In 1988 The Ghanaian government began to sell state enterprises. This has resulted to date in the sale of more than 300 of approximately 350 state-owned enterprises. Foreign firms comprised most of the bidders for the larger of these businesses such as the Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority and the Ashanti Goldfields Corporation. The remaining state-owned enterprises such as the Ghana Commercial Bank, Ghana Railways and the Diamond Consolidated Company are now targeted for quick privatisation.

Table 5 compares a selection of total Sub-Saharan privatisations with the same selection of Ghanaian privatisations. The Ghanaian profile differs significantly from the general Sub-Saharan profile in a number of significant ways. Competitive assets sales, if truly competitive, with fair and transparent processes can be a significant hedge against “corruption”. There were twice as many privatisations through competitive asset sales in Ghana than for the whole Sub-Saharan region. This was offset however by a higher proportion of liquidations, share floats and share sales on non-competitive basis. Ghanaian share sales on a non-competitive basis accounted for only 3.4% compared to 26.6% for the Sub-Saharan region.

Table 5: Comparison Ghana X Sub-Saharan Privatisation Types 1979-2002*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Privatisation Type**</th>
<th>Sub-Saharan</th>
<th>% Total (n=3487)</th>
<th>Ghana</th>
<th>% Total (n=233)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asset sales on competitive basis</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asset sales on non-competitive basis</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive tender</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint venture on competitive basis</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lease</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3.7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liquidation</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>56</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management-employee buyout</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Share flotation</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Share sales on competitive basis</td>
<td>931</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share sales on non-competitive basis</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>2.3</td>
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<td>4.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Share sales to existing shareholders with preemptive rights</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>19</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Selected privatisation types.

While no sale specific studies of the 233 Ghanaian privatisations exists, the anecdotal evidence is that Ghana’s Divestiture Implementation Committee, formed under former
president, Jerry Rawlings, became a breeding ground for “corruption”. In 2002 the government stopped the sale of Ghana Telecom to Telecom Malaysia because of concerns about “corruption” and re-nationalised Sabat Motors because of sale irregularities.

While studies show a disturbing pattern of “corruption” in Ghana, most are still loath to add privatisation to the “corruption” causation mix. While the TI surveys (see Table 4 above) show no real position change for Ghana over the three (post-privatisation) reporting periods, their persistent ideological bias towards government-sources of “corruption” gives us a slanted picture of the negative impact of privatisation in Ghana. Similarly the World Bank sponsored Ghana Governance and Corruption Survey is silent about privatisation as it launches yet another withering attack of the government side of “corruption” (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2000). This resistance to expose the “corrupt” flow on effects of privatisation is met to a certain extent by social action groups such as Ground Work, Africa Action, the Bretton Woods Project and Unicorn.

A conclusion open to us on the strength of this material is that privatisation, a central weapon in the West’s engagement with modern African is not proving up to the task of contributing to “corruption” free African governance.

CONCLUSION

African colonialism that emerged from the Berlin Conference was characterised by direct and often ruthless military subjugation of resource-rich countries. Its more sophisticated and vastly more powerful reinvention, neo-colonialism, exerts cultural, religious, social and economic authority without military occupation and diplomatic over-rule. In neo-colonialism we see a super highway fast moving the ideological freight of western market liberalisation, democracy, anti-terrorism and anti-“corruption” into Africa.

This article has argued that the West’s new interest in attacking African “corruption” is true to the logic of neo-colonialism. Transplanted, culturally de-sensitised explanations about wrongdoing are currently circulating in asymmetrical power relations that have come to mark the West’s dealings with Africa’s. The West is not shy to use its overlordship of massive donor funds to stop practices in Africa it considers “corrupt”. IMF suspensions of aid to Kenya, Denmark’s cessation of grants to Sierra Leone and the EU blockage of aid money to Cote D’Ivoire are but recent examples.

Clearly matters are far from settled in the international debate (if that is the right word) over African “corruption”. The paper has led some evidence pointing to the failure of conditionality and privatisation to stem “corruption”. More case-based data is needed to evaluate anti-“corruption” effort, specifically with respect to the challenge laid down in this paper that this effort is menu-bound, tied to Western commercial, and now, security interests, and is itself evocative of “corruption”. Finally the lion’s voice is as important as the hunter’s. We need Africanist dialogue and attendant research about the meaning of “corruption” that is beyond Western capture and in line with African aspirations and values. I fear that in assuming complete trademark control of African “corruption” the West will “invent” it in
much the same as “ethnicity” was “invented” in the colonial period (Ranger, 1996, p. 274). If this happens Afro-pessimism will be a valid response.
REFERENCES


Hertz, N. *IOU: The Debt Threat And Why We Must Defuse It*, Fourth Estate: London.


Time, 2005. Let them eat cake, 28 February.


“West” and “western”, when applied in this paper refers to long established Europe-centred cultures variably formatted now in a range of countries, exemplified by capitalist practices, rule of law, citizenship rights, secular institutions and free elections for responsible governance. Militarily and diplomatically, Western societies have generally been allied with each other to one degree or another since World War II. “Africa” means “Sub-Saharan Africa” in this paper.

Berlin based anti-corruption NGO Transparency International, in conjunction with the Internet Centre for Corruption Research at the University of Passau in Germany, has been publishing the international corruption perception index (CPI) since 1995. The CPI annually rank orders an increasing number of countries in terms of perceptions of corruption. This data is based on (for 2004) 18 surveys of business people and assessments by country analysts from 12 different independent institutions such as the Lausanne Institute for Management Development and the Political and Economic Risk Consultancy. For more on the CPI see http://www.iccg.org/corruption.cpi_2004.html. The CPI is now the subject of methodological controversy (Galtung, 2005). The other major corruption perception index is done by the World Bank Institute (WBI). WBI produced its first corruption index in 1996, and updates it every two years. At the time of writing the 2002 survey was the most recent available. The WBI Index covers twice as many Sub-Saharan counties as the TI Index because it will assess a country on the basis of one survey, whereas the TI Index requires a minimum of three surveys per country. Both TI and WBI indexes assess perceptions rather than actual incidence of “corruption”. Because of the similarities in data sources, there is a high correlation between TI and WBI indexes. As such both these instruments are imprecise. As far as the paper is concerned the biggest failings of these indexes are that they rely on Western definitions of “corruption”, yet claim to be measuring universal phenomena, and the data is based on what respondents perceive to be “corruption”. Country level “corruption” surveys are done from time to time. However it is the TI and WBI indexes which produce the most publicity and influence the flow of anti-corruption resources from the West. African governments are becoming vocal in their condemnation of these indexes.

Two recent examples come to mind. US$2 million were allegedly paid in bribes by Acres International and 11 other international dam-building companies involved in the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. Acres International was blacklisted by the World Bank for three years in 2004. The Bujagali dam project in Uganda is currently being investigated for corruption by the World Bank and four different governments after a British subsidiary of the Norwegian construction company, Veidekke, admitted paying a bribe to a senior Ugandan civil servant (Transparency International, 2005). This is slowly changing. On 16 March 2005, to mark the publication of the Global Corruption Report 2005, Transparency International launched its Minimum Standards for Public Contracting, setting out a blueprint for transparent public procurement.

A “dilution” (if that is the correct word) of African nation state sovereignty is proposed by the African Peer Review Mechanism under the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Some 24 states have so far signed on to this African Union initiative. Countries in the agreement will be regularly reviewed by their peer nations on matters to do with governance, trade and “corruption”.


The ten highest “corruption” countries in the 2002 WBI Corruption Index were; Equatorial Guinea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Somalia, Zimbabwe, Angola, Niger, Cameroon, Sudan and Kenya. Of these only five received anti-“corruption” program assistance from USAID in 2002. These were; Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Angola and Kenya. This suggests that political considerations remain powerful forces in the allocation of anti-“corruption” resources.

At least until China regularises its mounting presence in Africa.

The United States is a major trading partner with sub-Saharan Africa, with trade valued at nearly $24 billion in 2002. US direct investment in the region amounts to $10 billion (Gardiner, 2003).

Although outside the terms of this paper, it is interesting to consider whether America’s interest in a terror-free Africa will actually supplant its current interest in a “corruption”-free Africa.

Currently the UK, Norway, Germany and the Netherlands sponsor, in total, 194 anti-corruption programs in Sub-Saharan Africa (Ulstein Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, 2005). In the fiscal years 2001-2002 the US

11 This initiative includes programs to increase public awareness about “corruption”, decrease public complacency and bolster the capacity of anti-corruption NGOs.

12 In 2001-2002 USAID spent US$23 million on pursuing democratic governance in the developing world. This was the largest component of USAID’s total anti-corruption budget for that year (USAID, 2005, fn 13, p. 29).

13 A typical sale here was the 1995 purchase from the government for US$250,000 of the Juaben Palm Oil Plantation by the Juaben Traditional Council.

14 A typical share sale on non-competitive basis was the sale of African Timber and Ply to a Danish investor in 1995. By 1998 the payments were seriously in arrears. A typical share flotation was the 1994 reduction in government ownership of the Ashanti Goldfields Company Ltd from 55% to 32.8% for US$316 million.