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The seminar, "Corruption, Protest and Militancy," jointly sponsored by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, The Justice and Security Research Programme, and the World Peace Foundation, was held 25 – 27 June , 2015 at St. George's House, Windsor, UK.

This note is organized around prominent themes that emerged throughout the seminar.

Corruption, Protest and Militancy

Seminar Note
25 - 27 June, 2015
St. George's House
Windsor, UK

OVERVIEW

The seminar, 'corruption, protest and militancy' brought together twenty specialists—academics and practitioners—all of whom had been concerned with issues of corruption, especially as it relates to conflict, popular protest and the emergence of militant political movements, for two days of discussion on a series of case studies and related cross-cutting issues. The seminar was an opportunity for a confidential and in-depth reflection on these issues, in the wake of Sarah Chayes's seminal book *Thieves of State*, published earlier this year, and the ongoing work of the Justice and Security Research Programme into the contending logics of the 'political marketplace' and 'moral populism' in Africa.

The moment was propitious: the issue of corruption, including its security dimensions and as it relates to the efficacy of international interventions in conflict-prone countries, has gained unprecedented public profile and political traction. The seminar differed sharply from most occasions on which the issue of corruption is addressed, in that it took a profoundly political, global and comparative perspective, and delved beyond the narrowly economic frameworks and tools that are typically used in analyzing the issue and proposing policy responses.

The seminar was organized around four case study sessions, plus a general introduction and conclusion. The case studies were Afghanistan, Nigeria, north-east Africa (Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda), and Ukraine. Many other cases including Bosnia, Greece, Iraq, Russia, Syria, Thailand—as well as the United Kingdom and the United States—were brought into the discussion.

This briefing is organized around key themes that emerged from the discussion, drawing on examples from each of the sessions. The themes are: understanding corruption; the causal interconnections between corruption and conflict; the role of networks; the impact of globalization; political finance and the 'political marketplace'; state-building and state destruction; protest, militancy and moral populism as reactions to severe corruption and associated grievances and humiliation; and the Western tendency to seek 'good guys' and 'bad guys' to support or sanction, respectively, rather than understanding and interacting with the systems and principles at play.

The seminar did not specifically focus on policy actions or recommendations. Nonetheless some broad conclusions and policy directions are drawn out at the close.

Understanding Corruption

After a long period in which corruption garnered little public or political interest—it was considered an occasional blemish on a fundamentally sound system—corruption is becoming a topic of high-level interest. Although we do not expect a senior politician such as UK Prime Minister David Cameron, to be thorough or disinterested in his concern about corruption he has put the issue on the international agenda in an unprecedented way. A window of opportunity may have opened to take it forward.

Paradoxically, though the significance of corruption as a driver of major world events has been under-appreciated, and though the very word often evokes shrugs in policy or business circles, when considered closely, it proves to be an unusually powerful word. In English and most other languages, it carries a double meaning, suggesting an intertwining of moral and material connotations. There is a clear common understanding across cultures of what it signifies—which behaviours are unacceptable: 'corruption' translates well.

Still, perhaps because of its very evocativeness, the word can sometimes be used too generally or ambiguously. This seminar emphasized the need for clarity, and highlighted two main aspects:

1) Corruption is not a victimless crime. It is theft, stealing, or robbery, and it inflicts real harm on people, societies and the planet. Moreover, an important element of the injury it does is moral as well as material: that is, victims are outraged in their sense of justice and human dignity, as well as severely burdened economically. It is the insult embedded in many acts of corruption that often drives victims to extreme responses.

2) In most of the countries with which we are concerned, corruption is not an ad hoc activity that takes place on the margins of government. Rather, it is the successful work of a sophisticated organization or cartel that is often horizontally as well as vertically integrated. In many countries, in other words, it is not evidence of a state that is failing, but rather a criminal organization that is succeeding. One or more kleptocratic networks may have government institutions as their wholly-owned instruments; they may have repurposed the elements of state function (or those of several states), too often with international connivance or even support. One participant spoke of 'the criminal organization that we call the government in Nigeria'.

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Common recognition and abhorrence of corruption does not rule out local variability in how it is interacted with and defined. Different societies have different conceptions of public goods, and of the line between what is acceptable and unacceptable. For example, Nigerian societies' conception of public goods have been anchored in the personal integrity and justice of the ruler, and spiritual authority. Modern forms of public office were introduced by British colonial rulers, with the consequence that the post-colonial government that has followed in the footsteps of the colonial state, may be seen as something alien and a legitimate target for theft.

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Corruption and Conflict: Causal Interconnections

The links between corruption and conflict are not simple: it is not as though one of them always causes the other in a straightforward way. Rather, both occur within social and political contexts, and can influence each other's development in complex ways.

Corruption can hasten the outbreak of conflict. Populations, outraged at having systematically to pay bribes for public services they believe they are owed, or at insulting abuses perpetrated with impunity by those they expect to uphold the law, or at instances of 'grand corruption' that come to their attention, may be pushed to extreme responses. A small quantum of bad practice can do a large amount of damage. Those responses may take the form of revolutionary demands for political change, as in Ukraine or the Arab Spring countries (including Syria, initially). Or they may include violent action, often framed within a religious narrative (as in Afghanistan, Iraq, or Nigeria).

These scenarios beg a question: what is the 'kind' or 'level' of corruption that pushes people over the edge? One conclusion emphasized the juncture when a patronage system that includes significant redistribution of public or private goods transforms into a predatory system, focused on extraction. This insight dovetailed with consideration of globalization. Beginning in the 1980s, technical, regulatory, and ideological shifts encouraged the amassing and transferring of personal wealth, which may have prompted such a transformation in many countries.

When combined with other factors, such as police violence, repression, or conflicts over identity or political interests, corruption may be one factor among many that sparks open conflict. Elsewhere, corrupt networks may violently compete for resources. Or a kleptocratic political system can collapse into conflict when its leaders can no longer afford the political payoffs needed to keep it running—the war in South Sudan is an example.

The causality vector can also point in the opposite direction. Political and especially armed conflict can generate and intensify corruption. No sooner has conflict erupted, for whatever reason, than it brings in powerful transnational conflict financing networks, ranging from arms dealers to money launderers. Civil wars and insurgencies create artificial scarcities and choke points, which in turn create opportunities for corrupt profiteering, especially by field commanders. Any protracted conflict generates enduring local profiteering networks, whose members have a vested interest in continuing the conflict (albeit often at a low level). Moreover these networks' power and political business practices continue after the end of the conflict, poisoning post-conflict transition.

Conflict—and the political organization necessary to sustain belligerents—can also have far-reaching societal repercussions. One of these is the increased salience of political mobilization around 'moral populist' causes including exclusionary identities.

How Networks Come to Dominate

All the cases discussed have in common that networks of corrupt, usually merciless and sometimes militarized political leaders rise to positions of power and wealth, structure themselves to maximize returns, deal with one another on a highly instrumental basis, and are remarkably resilient, maintaining their structures and operating procedures even following the end of a conflict or after a purportedly revolutionary transition.

In Syria, the current conflict has seen the rise of a war economy dominated by profiteering networks. In Nigeria, the army has gained an enormous budgetary increase due to the conflict with Boko Haram, and for this among other reasons has had little interest in it ending. In Bosnia, one of the most profound and enduring outcomes of the war was systemic corruption, because of the way in which the networks constructed during the conflict were embedded in the post-Dayton political system.

Afghanistan offers one of the most striking cases of horizontally integrated corrupt networks. One participant detailed the operation of a widely-connected profoundly corrupt financial network, involved with both the government and the Taliban insurgency. It was the largest Afghan finance house. It had stakes not only in banking but also in telecommunications, civil aviation, agriculture, mining, and construction—and had its security guards trained by the Ministry of Interior alongside the national police. It was essentially untouchable, because it was protected both by the president, whose campaign it had largely financed, and the top echelons of competing corruption networks, which were also benefitting from its practices. Indeed, the Karzai network—which included several such enterprises—also incorporated leaders of the Taliban insurgency itself.

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Afghanistan's conflict networks changed dramatically from local warlordism coalesced around control of border crossings and local trade routes in the 1980s and early 1990s, to a transnational conglomerate, able to move several billion dollars out of the country on behalf of kleptocratic leaders. Prominent among those kleptocrats were returning diaspora members, who used their positions in government to accumulate funds to invest abroad, in Dubai, North America and Europe. These individuals often enjoyed the trust of Western governmental patrons.

Indeed, the international intervention is arguably what catalyzed the metastasis of Afghan networks: international community money, alongside a decision not to emphasize accountability and good governance practices—either in intervening or local structures.

Even while evidence of corruption and its negative impact on international objectives mounted, various elements of the international community still found it convenient to work with, rather than against, such corrupt networks. Military officers often gave in to force-protection considerations, or, like most of their civilian counterparts from multiple countries, framed their mission in terms of 'supporting a democratically-elected government', thus discouraging any challenge to that government. Intelligence services, finally, focused almost obsessively on the need to find, capture, or kill 'targets,' and were willing to pay for collaboration in that effort, no matter what the downstream consequences.

As a result, when efforts to arrest or prosecute egregiously corrupt actors were launched, they faced not only the opposition of the Afghan government, but also sabotage by the CIA and ultimately a collapse of support on the part of U.S. political leaders.

Ukraine was the locus of strong and corrupt transnational oligarchic networks before the uprising and the current conflict. The new government and the war have led to changes in the identities of the oligarchs at the top of some structures, but not yet to any fundamental change in the basic fact that these networks are in charge.

The conflict has also created new corrupt networks. Utilizing the necessary economic ties that link communities across the battle lines, both at local level and at a higher level, commanders and politicians have forged local and higher-level conflict networks. Economic life in both government-controlled and insurgent-controlled areas requires that commodities are traded or transported across the frontline. This necessity gives frontline commanders opportunities for profit, and a material interest both in working together and in managing the conflict in such a way as to protect those commercial interests. These links also allow intelligence to pass, to the advantage of those on the defensive. The combination of these factors serves to create a more stable conflict—both hindering dramatic escalation (which would undermine business practices) but also inhibiting resolution.

Democratization in Ukraine has thus far had little impact on such networks. Five presidents have come and gone in recent years, meanwhile local leaders such as judges continue their activities unhindered, implying that they remain the real powerbrokers at the grassroots. Western policy makers have sponsored advisory groups and even pushed for the appointment of specific ministers—some of whom are not even Ukrainian nationals—who are inevitably not fully aware of what is going on in the country. Moreover, irrespective of their motivations in entering politics, politicians need funds to start and run political parties, which makes them reliant on oligarchs.

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However, within this system, there are efforts to push back. A sophisticated civil society is engaged in the reform process, significant new legislation has been adopted, oversight mechanisms created, and some corrupt institutions targeted. Transparency mechanisms are the first to have been strengthened. Ukraine's newly elected leaders are carefully choosing their fights: first they pick on relatively small corrupt groups and individuals, to show their toughness and build up a base, before confronting the bigger rivals. However, there is still a significant gap between advisory bodies, which allow for civil society participation, and ultimate decision-making bodies, which largely remain opaque. Because of the above care in picking battles, moreover, reform efforts have so far affected elements of the political economy least critical to current government leaders.

Globalization has favoured the development of global corruption and conflict networks. In the case of Ukraine, the kleptocratic network has been integrated across the border with Russia. Illicit arms dealers and money launderers are critical external nodes in other networks, and global hubs for secret financial transactions—such as Dubai—are playing important roles.

Equally important are those networks directly generated by U.S. and European security policy. Such is the level of professional activity and business profit now associated with the war on terror that it is impossible

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Humanitarian agencies are also part of such networks, and once again seem to be driven by incentive structures demanding expenditures. In Africa at least, humanitarians learned some hard lessons in the 1990s about their complex and compromised role. Some of the veterans may be much more thoughtful and careful now, but a new generation operating in current conflict zones needs to re-learn much of this wisdom. A clear gap exists between trenchant writing on the subject and changes in donor agency policy.

Political Financing and the Political Marketplace

One of the themes of the discussion was that in many countries, politics is increasingly run on business models, while commerce pervades politics. The concept and framework of the 'political marketplace' refers to the way that politics is often conducted as the transaction of political service for material reward (including license), while also serving as a metaphor for the monetization and bargaining that increasingly constitute political activity.

In all the cases discussed, the aim of corrupt practices involved both personal enrichment (inside the country and abroad) and the funding of political machines, especially just before electoral exercises. This is an important distinction: using public office for individual enrichment is simple corruption, while using public office to reward (or expand) a political base using patronage is an exercise in political business management. Because political patronage spending demands concealment, where it is practiced, it also generates opportunities for simple theft, and a synergy between the two. In Nigeria, for example, elections are an exercise in competitive patronage, and are extremely expensive. In such a situation, politics is not about policies, but about who is in power and who is out. The main objective of gaining power is to gain control of the huge rents available, and those who have financed electoral campaigns require a return on their investment.

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This draws our attention to how corruption straddles the boundary between legality and illegality: in some countries, some varieties of influence peddling and providing political funds to secure specific benefits, in ways that are offensive to moral sensibilities, are perfectly legal. The United States, for example, has seen a distinct narrowing of the legal definition of corruption, which ignores most activities associated with the political marketplace, and only sanctions what can be strictly defined as 'quid pro quo bribery.' By contrast, donor policies towards other (poorer) countries tend to draw the line more strictly, so that (for example) using public office as a means to provide social security for one's dependents is unlawful.

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Another distinction of interest is the way in which not only governmental but also hybrid, parallel or informal governance structures provide a mixture of private and public goods. A government ministry and a municipality run on 'machine politics' principles, may deliver personal enrichment, factional consolidation, and public goods such as security and infrastructure. Warlords and insurgents may also do the same thing. Indeed, in some countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, groups conventionally labeled as 'non-state armed groups' may provide more reliable and less abusive public order than governmental actors, and may indeed explicitly adopt the symbols of state authority in doing so. Once politics is primarily a matter of paying for loyalty or political services, the legitimacy of the purchasers becomes less important, even immaterial—the only question is whether they can pay.

The Impact of Globalization

One of the main themes of the workshop was the way in which the world has changed in the past three decades more quickly and fundamentally than the policy measures and intellectual tools that we have for responding. What we call globalization has involved a mind-boggling increase in finance in comparison to the real economy. This is experienced in everyday life in that the income of the rich derives from assets (property, finance, art, etc.) while the 99% depend on income at much lower levels from work.

The same is true of state finance and political funds. Most governments nowadays derive their income from rent rather than taxation (external assistance, oil revenues, or financial services). Thus the U.K., for example, is increasingly dependent on the City of London rather than taxation derived from manufacturing. We know from studies of oil states, that rentier systems are typically clientelistic or patronage-based systems prone to corruption. International policies of structural adjustment have had the effect of increasing dependence on rent in many cases. The self-reinforcing logic of a global neo-liberal economic recipe and corrupt national networks is typified by the current crisis over Greece.

Alongside these structural changes has come a change in public ethos. While Communist and Socialist systems certainly embodied significant corruption and hypocrisy, they did put a cap on the ability of elites to amass riches for personal consumption, and they required governments to provide a certain minimum of public goods. With the collapse of these systems came a triumphalist exaltation of money and personal enrichment, which removed constraints from developing country leaders.

The combination of these technical and ideological transformations may explain an apparent rise in predation by political elites. Where rents are so spectacular that there is plenty to go around, predation may be unnecessary. Some rentier states in the Gulf, for example, are relatively stable because rent is sufficient to meet the needs of political financing, and buy-offs of the population. Elsewhere, to compete in the new race to wealth, elites reduce public goods, pillage the treasury, and engage in various types of predation. States prone to corruption-related conflict may be those where predation outstrips rent-seeking (and redistributing) activities, such that the balance between rent and predation is increasingly unsustainable.

Linked to these wider tendencies, a fundamental change over the last 30 years has been the globalization of politics—not just the formal globalization of licit businesses and intergovernmental institutions, but the shadow globalization of illicit financial flows and transnational political payments.

Analysis of the recent economic history of Africa highlights this evolution. Contrary to the received wisdom of econometricians and international economic policymakers, Africa has not suffered a chronic and sustained growth deficit. Rather, Africa grew at a rate commensurate with the rest of the world up to the mid-1970s. It then experienced an exceptionally severe and sustained bust in the 1980s, into the early 1990s. Since then, Africa has undergone a sustained boom, growing at least as fast as the global average.

In the 1980s, economic policymakers, deliberately or inadvertently, insisted on austerity measures that pushed African countries to a point at which state finances were no longer sufficient to sustain basic governance. But most governments did survive: by abandoning the provision of public goods and instead focusing exclusively on funding their own political machinery—on occasions by licensing their supporters to plunder others. Many Africa governments—Somalia and Sudan are examples—were profoundly corrupt and criminalized by the mid-1980s. The consequence of this form of governance was that when African countries rebounded, they came back not as re-constituted old-style states, but instead as political business ventures, thoroughly privatized and integrated into the international financial, security, criminal order.

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In contemporary times, political transitions have often tended to lead to the weakening of institutions and the monetization of political life. This has been painfully evident in the aftermath of the Arab Spring: authoritarian states did not make the transition to institutionalized democracies, but rather to turbulent contested orders, in which political finance and identity politics are dominant factors. Well before 2011, the Arab world's governing elites had already integrated kleptocracy into their ruling strategies, and consequently they had everything to lose by democratic revolution. This difference may explain their relatively greater determination in resisting the transformation than the Soviet era elites displayed.

For, the former Soviet Bloc had a different experience in 1989. The outgoing Communist rulers were ready to exchange their political supremacy—with its attendant economic constraints under Communist ideology—for economic opportunity. They understood the 'market' to mean the black market, and grasped the opportunity to get rich.

The globalization of finance, and the attendant ideological changes, has led to extreme inequality and freedom of action among members of the global economic elite. It has also led to global political financing, both licit and illicit, which is emerging as a major issue that drives corruption. Bans on foreign financing of political campaigns can be worked around, and much of the activity is perfectly legal.

Illicit financial flows are, however, attracting increasing international policy concern, including secrecy jurisdictions, tax havens, and locations for opaque global finance such as Dubai. Since the financial crisis of 2008, OECD countries have begun tackling some elements of illicit financial flows, out of concern for the erosion of tax base and profit shifting to low-tax jurisdictions. Such increased exchange of financial intelligence is a step in the right direction, but still falls far short of addressing the fundamental dysfunctions.

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Increasingly, moreover, global political finance is being appropriated into the hands of a narrow elite, whose members are able to dominate flows of money for political campaigning, media ownership, patronage. The narrowing of the acceptable public discourse and political choice, whereby certain policies on taxation, monetary control or redistribution are dismissed as infeasible, demonstrates the hegemonic influence of neo-liberalism in the hands of this corporate financial elite. The exultation of amassing personal wealth, ranging from the opulence of developed countries especially the United States, to the prosperity gospel that is so influential in West Africa (which entails the belief that anyone who is wealthy must be blessed by God) represents a shift toward money as the universal yardstick for measuring human excellence.

Resistance, Militancy and Moral Populism

Logics of resistance to corruption, the monetization of politics and repression include popular protest movements and religious militant movements. They typically frame their demands around a cluster of causes, of which justice—critique of corruption—is often a significant one. Others include demands for dignity rather than humiliation, self-rule or self-determination rather than alien occupation, and rights to land and to culture and language. But a focus on corruption is warranted as, despite the words of many revolutionaries and militants, it has too often been neglected.

'Moral populism' is the invocation of simplified moral narratives as a political agenda, including appeal to imagined and moralized common identities. It is both a tool of those in positions of authority that they can use to mobilize popular support and claim legitimacy, and also an instrument for subalterns to claim authority, as a critique of those in power, and to make sense of their predicament. It typically invokes ethnicity, religious affiliation and spiritual power. Moral populists may also draw upon ethno-nationalism, but typically, the classic tools for nation-building such as national media, educational systems and representative institutions have been replaced by more plural, situational and shifting mechanisms of identity.

In Ukraine, corruption was one issue among others that brought people out to protest against the government. The Maidan protests were anti-oligarchic, concerned with high-level corruption. They were also in favour of bringing the country closer to the West and further from Russia—both for cultural

reasons and because Western practices seemed to offer better chances of accountable governance. They represented a de-sacralization of authority, and perhaps their most enduring outcome may be an irreversible increase of transparency in government. To date, Ukraine—like the Arab Spring before it—shows how popular protest is good at dismantling an existing system but not so good at constructing an alternative.

The narrative of the insurgents in eastern Ukraine is also unexpectedly radical: it is a leaderless movement in which people are trying to present a real political alternative that harks back to forms of more equitable society. The Ukrainian crisis is portrayed in the West as an identity conflict, but in fact the belligerents on both sides are largely from eastern Ukraine, with similar identities (as always, complex and multiple), with

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their immediate loyalties determined by local factors. Unfamiliar to many Western observers is an anti-oligarchic militancy among eastern Ukrainians as well as their western counterparts.

Many recent conflicts begin with democratic or pro-social justice movements that articulate universal values, but are hijacked often via the manipulation of push-button issues. In the Balkans, the deliberate use of sectarianism became a way of suppressing movements that espoused cosmopolitan values. Democracy, which had initially been the handmaiden to sectarian mobilization, became its victim. In Syria, the Assad regime portrayed the conflict as sectarian (and its opponents as terrorists), and fomented polarization by targeting non-violent democratic leaders and releasing jihadis from prison. These developments were reinforced by ethnic narratives imposed from the West.

Moreover, violence itself can construct sectarian narratives even where these did not formerly exist or were only one element in political life. We need to be careful of the labels that groups adopt: they often rename themselves depending on who is ready to provide them with funds. When Saudis and Qataris offer financing, for example, they may identify themselves as 'Islamic'; when it is the U.S., their name shifts to 'democratic.' In South Sudan, a purely political conflict became ethnic as the contending leaders (none of whom has democratic credentials or programmes) turned to tribal mobilization as the quickest and cheapest way or organizing their forces.

A demand for justice and a critique of corruption is a central element of the political and moral narrative of certain militant groups. The reference is to financial corruption and its materialistic excesses as well as the abuses with impunity by officials that attend it. By first attacking police stations, Nigeria's Boko Haram tapped a deep well of indignation as well as hope for a more principled order. Some see its emergence in about 2005 as partly the result of disaffection with an earlier shari'a law movement whose proponents thought an indigenous legal system based on Islamic rules would automatically deliver social justice. But, as one participant put it, 'they forgot that God does not come down from heaven to implement the law, people implement it.' Boko Haram's radicalism is seen by some as a reaction to that disappointment.

But Boko Haram did not succeed in establishing a dominant narrative. Many Muslims in northern Nigeria believe that the application of shari'a penalties in the absence of the other, positive elements of an Islamic disposition is unjust. And, while they recognize that the school system is often an intake valve into the corrupt governing system, most people do not see western education in and of itself as evil. In response, Boko Haram has taken to assassinating Muslim scholars who criticize it, and laying waste to whole villages—further distancing itself from its foundational moral critique.

In the case of the Afghan Taliban, it is clear that the anti-corruption narrative played a significant role in the movement's resurgence, only three to four years after much of the population bid it good riddance. It remains largely a protest movement: security, justice and the non-corrupt levying of taxes are virtually the only public goods it provides. These are potent nonetheless, and the Taliban have a more effective model of organization than the Afghan government, operating on a small fraction (one tenth) of the latter's income.

However, militant organizations typically behave in an abusive and corrupt manner themselves, notwithstanding their propaganda. The Taliban have become associated with abuses including conscription (and allowing the better off to buy their way out of conscription), ransoming captives, and commanders taking several wives. The actual practices of the Taliban, like Boko Haram, often lose them local sympathy—especially in regions where an ethnic distinction or a history of mass atrocities predisposes populations to oppose them. The 'bring back our girls' protests in Nigeria mobilized vast numbers to oppose both Boko Haram and the government that had done so little to protect the people from its depredations.

Across the countries discussed, participants recognized cogent local critiques of corruption and abuse of power. Local people have invoked the spirits of the dead, local custom, and humour, to critique their oppressors, including their would-be-liberators-turned-oppressors. However, powerless people are reluctant to resist unless there is an indication that they will obtain success, or at least support and protection, and prefer to be quiet and invisible if they can—even at the cost of participating in practices they abhor on ethical grounds.

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Some local groups in Afghanistan have created enclaves that are self-governing, but it is questionable whether they can survive the dual pressures of the government and the Taliban. In Nigeria, there are also examples of communities withdrawing as a form of protest, and setting up autonomous self-governing non-violent localities. (Indeed, Boko Haram started out as a variant of this.) However these initiatives have been dismantled by the government, sometimes using force.

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Christian leaders have recognized their power and legitimacy to challenge the ruling order, for example in South Sudan, but have rarely done so, preferring to work within the dominant system. Christian churches in Africa have succumbed to the phenomenon of 'competitive conservatism', shifting to the right in response to the assertive agenda setting of Pentecostal preachers and those who espouse the prosperity gospel.

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Church leaders have also been traders in the political market, seeking wealth and influence through proximity to the political authorities, and have adopted forms of moral populism, such as campaigns against alleged witches and anti-homosexual campaigns.

In Uganda and other central African countries, moral populism is also manifest in an idiom of witchcraft, sorcery and vampirism. The metaphor of the vampire—which sucks the blood of humans or the resources from society—resonates with the extractive nature of the globalized economy and corrupt local collusion with it. Vampirism is also manifest in local moral populist practice, for example in northern Uganda, where public authorities conduct 'elections' to determine, in the view of a majority of the population, the identities of witches, sorcerers and vampires.

A particularly significant manifestation of these tendencies was Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement in the late 1980s in Uganda, which was a manifestation of a deeply-felt need for moral cleansing. It mutated into the Lord's Resistance Army led by Joseph Kony. In turn, the reaction of the Ugandan government and the international community reaction to the LRA insurgency was also a form of selective-vision moral populism. Demonizing Kony and the LRA legitimated an extremely abusive counter-insurgency in northern Uganda, in which the Ugandan army killed and displaced many more people than the LRA (albeit less graphically), and were abetted by international humanitarian agencies and solidarity campaigning groups.

This tendency to turn to militant puritanical religion is not exclusively a contemporary phenomenon. The Protestant Reformation was another remarkable example of populations turning to militant puritanical religion in the face of acute public corruption. Of course, today's jihadis differ in important respects: they tend to mobilize in short-term ways, and have thus far failed to build durable, consensus-based institutions. They tend to succumb themselves to corruption and moral populist appeals. Today's religious militants reflect and feed upon the hunger for reform, but they have not as yet offered viable solutions.

'Good Guys' and 'Bad Guys' vs. Systemic Reform

Confronted with complicated realities that require hard work to understand, and even harder work to grapple with, western policymakers have too often resorted to categorizing their interlocutors into 'good guys' (whom we support) and 'bad guys' (whom we try to catch or eliminate). International policy has placed much mistaken faith in this approach, while local people wonder, how could Westerners be so stupid, and conclude that there must be a sophisticated conspiracy at work—a cast of mind that can be described as 'occidentalism'.

Participants agreed that we should resist the search for 'good guys': virtue is to be supported but all are fallible. Any individual placed in a position of power within an incentive structure that selects for destructive behaviour will be compelled to respond to the demands of that system. If that individual is additionally provided with a sense of impunity by the international community he or she will almost always succumb to corruption and abuse.

Western interventions typically disrupt the local ecology of governance and service delivery and rarely succeed in doing no harm. At the most basic level, international intervenors recruit key members of society into junior (but better paid) positions in their organizations, while also promoting junior locals to very powerful positions. Thus a headmaster may become a driver, while a driver may be promoted to a minister.

It was the consensus of participants that Western governments would do better to focus on basic principles, and the establishment of institutional safeguards for oversight and public participation, rather than backing chosen intermediaries with a blank cheque.

By the same token, the notion that removing individual offenders—corrupt or abusive—will solve the major problem is equally faulty. Our language tends towards the stigmatization of offenders, so that the 'bad guy' syndrome may be even harder to eradicate than the 'good guy' problem. In extremis, we tend to demonize certain individuals and place them beyond the pale (such as Joseph Kony or Usama bin Laden), and—whatever the justification for condemning these people—we overlook the reality that our friends who are fighting against these demons are no less responsible for grievous abuses. This can facilitate internationals, including humanitarian agencies, becoming handmaidens to extremely destructive military campaigns. Examples include the counter-insurgency against the LRA and the U.S. readiness to allow a famine to proceed in Somalia, rather than tolerate relief agencies conducting operations in a manner that would bring them into contact with al-Shabaab.

> *…we tend to demonize certain individuals and place them beyond the pale…and overlook the reality that our friends who are fighting against these demons are no less responsible for grievous abuses.*

Nonetheless, an effort to change incentive structures necessarily includes repercussions for criminals, even if they hold public office, and working to protect and enable public-spirited political actors. Some individuals in society retain authority by means of personal integrity and maintaining a reputation for being

incorruptible. Recognizing these people's actions, and finding the appropriate ways of supporting them, requires a long-term engagement with the society in question. Also, we must not overlook the possibility of redemption. Even the worst violators can do the right thing, or can reform.

Conclusions

The participants in the workshop had no common conclusions or recommendations. Nonetheless, some clear points stand out.

The first of these is that we should not fear complexity, but we should also develop a simple enough narrative to compete with others: the art is to translate complex ideas into programmes and explanations for them that are both real and realizable.

Another is that today's international policy tools—including many intellectual tools—are not fit for purpose. Most, for example, are premised on 'us' doing things for 'them'—failing to acknowledge that there is no prospect of an impact until we change 'our' systems.

A commonly-shared sentiment was that foreign policy establishments in the U.K. and U.S. have great difficulties in even understanding the problem. To some extent, the complexity of the problem is to blame. But foreign policy professionals also tend to interact only (at best) with their counterparts, thus remaining sealed off from critiques emanating from ordinary people. They are also increasingly relying on contractors, both for direct engagement with the population and for project implementation. These contractors often have vested interests of their own, and can't be counted on to provide unbiased information.

A word of caution was voiced: official adoption of an anti-corruption agenda at a high level could become a means of salvaging or promoting other agendas—for example building states that are 'honest' but authoritarian, or legitimizing military intervention.

Among the final observations contributed were the following:

- Stop trying to fight ideas with bullets.
- The effort to combat corruption cannot be limited to discrete investigations or marginalized and stovepiped units within bureaucracies, but must be mainstreamed across modes of engagement with relevant countries. We should mainstream corruption within foreign, security, and development policymaking: it concerns us all.
- Focus on practices and structures rather than profiles of individuals, enable individuals to redeem themselves.
- Take elections seriously. Not matter how flawed a tool, elections give people a chance to express themselves nonviolently. Work to ensure that this political exercise is fair and free throughout the process.

- Prioritise peacemaking. Violence fuels, distorts and deepens dysfunction, while increasing suffering. But beware of peace deals that are merely elite bargains in disguise.
- Know your partner. Cultivate knowledge from multiple sources; avoid the tendency to rely on a limited number of convenient interlocutors.
- Question fairy stories. If it's 'too good to be true,' it probably isn't true. Without being overly complicated, it is necessary to move beyond 'good guys' versus 'bad guys'.
- Spend wisely. Adding funds to dysfunction amplifies the problems. Aid is only as effective as is the strength of its purpose.
- Refresh the moral purpose. Cynicism leads to shortcuts, and invariably entrenches corruption. Reaffirm hope, tempered by realism, as the guiding principle.
- Tackle corruption as an immediate priority. Understand the political and economic conditions that facilitate corruption.