

Book Review: Global Corruption: Money, Power and Ethics in the Modern World

by Blog Admin

May 13, 2013

*Corruption has played a pivotal role in sustaining appallingly high levels of poverty in many developing countries, particularly in relation to the deficient provision of basic services such as education and healthcare. In **Global Corruption**, **Laurence Cockcroft** attempts to identify the main drivers of corruption worldwide and analyse current efforts to control them. The author's experience and knowledge make this book an informative and highly readable guide to corruption operating at all levels of global society, finds **Ainsley Elbra**.*



Global Corruption: Money, Power and Ethics in the Modern World. Laurence Cockcroft. I.B. Tauris. August 2012.

Find this book:

Global Corruption provides a fascinating insight into the wide ranging instances of corruption operating at all levels of global society. Author and co-founder of [Transparency International Laurence Cockcroft](#) draws on his vast experience in combating political corruption through his use of broad anecdotal evidence to bring together a solid account of the manner in which corruption occurs, its effects and victims, and efforts aimed at reducing or eliminating opportunities for corruption. The book is highly engaging and the reader is constantly reminded of the sheer size and scope of the problem through Cockcroft's ability to chronicle corruption as it has occurred around the world. Decades of experience in uncovering and dealing with corruption are neatly included in this work, a feature that is unquestionably the book's strength.

The book is organised in a logical manner, taking the reader through basic definitions of corruption, how corruption occurs, who its victims and perpetrators are, and what is being done about it. Interestingly, the book includes a chapter devoted to the opportunities for corruption that have arisen out of the huge pools of money being directed at the issue of climate change.

The chapter highlighting the victims of corruption is particularly pertinent; after all this is the reason the topic receives such attention. Beginning with a fictitious account of a family beset by problems of corruption, Cockcroft guides the reader through the multi-faceted effects of corruption, including how persistent graft can turn victims into perpetrators. Furthermore, the chapter highlights the self-reinforcing nature of corruption, whereby 'tea money' or bribes paid to secure business dealings lead to an inescapable circle of complicity and misdeeds. Cockcroft links endemic corruption to the failures of countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, outlining where progress in fields such as education, the provision of food, aid, and health care are stymied by the constant need to pay bribes. Overall, the author notes that while the direct costs of graft are significant, it is the indirect costs which lead to stunted growth in the overall economy that is most wide-reaching. The author argues that while Africa, as a continent, has suffered from corruption usually accompanied by slow economic growth (compared to regions such as East Asia, which has paired high levels of corruption with strong economic growth), the endemic graft causes tensions between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' – almost always marginalising the poor in society.

**GLOBAL
CORRUPTION**
Money, Power and Ethics in the Modern World



Laurence Cockcroft

I.B. TAURIS

kindle edition

amazon

In addition to addressing the victims of corruption the author devotes a chapter to detailing the key roadblocks which prevent anti-corruption measures such as the [EITI](#) and [Kimberley Process](#) from succeeding, and organisations like Transparency International from being entirely effective. Drawing on the work of some of the most ardent campaigners against off-shore tax havens, including [Nicholas Shaxson](#), Cockcroft details the murky business of shadow economies and money laundering along with countries where Western strategic interests outweigh efforts at curbing corrupt practices. Cockcroft cites figures which suggest shadow economies, about half the size of the formal economy, exist alongside the formal economies of countries such as Tanzania, Russia, and Zimbabwe. Cockcroft goes on to detail grand looting by leaders and ministers, and the extent to which off shore accounting or money laundering is supported and perpetuated by Western governments. The most interesting part of this chapter however, relates to the link between geopolitics and efforts, or a lack thereof, to curb corruption. Using Sudan, Turkmenistan, Iraq, and Afghanistan as contemporary examples, the author highlights a number of instances where Western governments have ignored, been complicit in or even encouraged corrupt practices in order to achieve strategic goals.

One of the most striking stories to emerge in this chapter examines the large sums of money being made available for rebuilding and reconstruction in Iraq. In one illustrative example, Cockcroft describes how the Development Fund for Iraq was once provided with \$11 billion to disburse in a period of 6 weeks – in order to avoid handing it over to another development agency. This kind of behaviour, with far reaching implications, is the subject of harsh criticism by Cockcroft, who argues that Western governments are thereby fuelling this circle of waste. This behaviour, combined with the continued tolerance of (or implicit support) of tax havens in places such as British dependencies in the Caribbean and Delaware in the United States, suggests a hollow rhetoric from Western governments who are quick to publicly condemn corruption as it occurs elsewhere in the world, while that which takes place on their watch is ignored.

Cockcroft's vast experience and ability to recollect instances of corruption globally, at all levels of society, lends serious weight to this book's contribution. Challenging standard assumptions that corruption and graft occur only in places of destitution or under certain cultural norms, the author instead guides the reader through a far more nuanced picture of where and when corruption occurs. While Cockcroft's book is filled with telling evidence it isn't until the final chapter that he outlines his four conditions by which he believes corruption could be seriously combated. This surely is the author's strength and it would be preferable, this reviewer feels, to see these conditions or approaches introduced earlier in the book, and referred to throughout. Notwithstanding, the author's experience and knowledge make this book an informative and highly readable guide to corruption operating at all levels of global society.

Ainsley Elbra is completing her PhD in International Relations at the University of Sydney. Her research focuses on the role of private governance in Africa's extractive industries. More specifically, her work examines whether private governance initiatives, such as the EITI, assist in alleviating outcomes commonly associated with the resource curse. Prior to commencing her PhD she worked as a corporate banker responsible for a portfolio of Pacific-Island based clients and mining firms. She tweets at [@ainsleyelbra](#). [Read more reviews by Ainsley](#).