



The Looting Machine: Warlords, Oligarchs, Corporations, Smugglers, and the Theft of Africa's Wealth

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One of Financial Times' Books of the Year, 2015

The trade in oil, gas, gems, metals and rare earth minerals wreaks havoc in Africa. During the years when Brazil, India, China and the other “emerging markets” have transformed their economies, Africa's resource states remained tethered to the bottom of the industrial supply chain. While Africa accounts for about 30 per cent of the world's reserves of hydrocarbons and minerals and 14 per cent of the world's population, its share of global manufacturing stood in 2011 exactly where it stood in 2000: at 1 percent.

In his first book, *The Looting Machine*, Tom Burgis exposes the truth about the African development miracle: for the resource states, it's a mirage. The oil, copper, diamonds, gold and coltan deposits attract a global network of traders, bankers, corporate extractors and investors who combine with venal political cabals to loot the states' value. And the vagaries of resource-dependent economies could pitch Africa's new middle class back into destitution just as quickly as they climbed out of it. The ground beneath their feet is as precarious as a Congolese mine shaft; their prosperity could spill away like crude from a busted pipeline.

This catastrophic social disintegration is not merely a continuation of Africa's past as a colonial victim. The looting now is accelerating as never before. As global demand for Africa's resources rises, a handful of Africans are becoming legitimately rich but the vast majority, like the continent as a whole, is being fleeced. Outsiders tend to think of Africa as a great drain of philanthropy. But look more closely at the resource industry and the relationship between Africa and the rest of the world looks rather different. In 2010, fuel and mineral exports from Africa were worth 333 billion, more than seven times the value of the aid that went in the opposite direction. But who received the money? For every Frenchwoman who dies in childbirth, 100 die in Niger alone, the former French colony whose uranium fuels France's nuclear reactors. In petro-states like Angola three-quarters of government revenue comes from oil. The government is not funded by the people, and as result it is not beholden to them. A score of African countries whose economies depend on resources are rentier states; their people are largely serfs. The resource curse is not merely some unfortunate economic phenomenon, the product of an intangible force. What is happening in Africa's resource states is systematic looting. Like its victims, its beneficiaries have names.

The Looting Machine: Warlords, Oligarchs, Corporations, Smugglers, and the Theft of Africa's Wealth Details

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From Reader Review The Looting Machine: Warlords, Oligarchs, Corporations, Smugglers, and the Theft of Africa's Wealth for online ebook

Ellie Dottie says

The writing was a little dry for my taste, but the content was extremely interesting!

Mal Warwick says

Misconceptions abound in the public perception of corruption in Africa. Tom Burgis' incisive new analysis of corruption on the continent, *The Looting Machine*, dispels these dangerous myths.

For starters, corruption is mistakenly believed to reign supreme in every country on the African continent. (There are 48 nations in Sub-Saharan Africa, with a combined population of more than 800 million.) Of course, it's true that some African countries rank very low on Transparency International's "Corruption Perceptions Index" (CPI) — after all, Somalia merits the very lowest score, with Sudan and South Sudan not far above it — but only Eritrea and Guinea-Bissau rank at all close to them. In between them are many other countries: Middle Eastern, Central Asian, Caribbean, South Asian. And three Sub-Saharan African nations rank in the top third of the 175 countries in the CPI: Lesotho, Namibia, and Rwanda, with Ghana close behind. Ghana scores better than Greece, Italy, and several other European nations.

Second, corruption in Africa is viewed as intractable. It's widely believed that nothing can be done about it. Nonsense! One of the largest and most potent sources of the cash that fuels corruption is foreign aid. Institutions like the World Bank, USAID, and other national and international agencies direct most, if not all, their support to governments. This, despite the obvious evidence on the ground that a huge proportion of this aid goes straight into the pockets of the ruling elites. If foreign aid were doled out more selectively to community-based organizations, local agencies, and NGOs with grassroots operations, the picture might be very different. As things stand, only a trickle of foreign aid gets to the people who need it most: the poor.

Lastly, and most significantly, too many observers characterize African corruption as a uniquely African phenomenon that grows out of ethnic rivalries and the failure of European colonists to establish stable native governments. Those factors, while present, are only part of the story. Equally, if not more, consequential is the role of foreign investment — principally from China, the US, and Western Europe — in exploiting the continent's abundant resources, often paying through the nose for the privilege. Corruption is a two-way street: briber and bribee need each other. And those Western investors include some of the world's biggest US- and European-based multinational corporations — most prominently, Big Oil and the major mining companies. Chinese companies are even worse because they're not constrained by legal restrictions at home. Prominent foreign aid cheerleaders like Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University do the African people no favors by advocating huge increases in official aid, rationalizing that some of it will actually do good. Just ask the first ten Africans you meet on the street in Lagos or Nairobi or Luanda. Unless you happen to run into a member of the privileged elite, you'll get an earful about Western-enabled corruption.

The Looting Machine spotlights this two-way street, with an emphasis on commerce. The role of foreign aid receives little attention. The principal source of corruption in Africa, Burgis contends again and again, is its

wealth of natural resources: oil, gas, gold, diamonds, copper, iron, and many other materials essential to the rich nations' consumer economies. Citing an analysis by McKinsey, he reports that "69 percent of people in extreme poverty live in countries where oil, gas, and minerals play a dominant role in the economy and that average incomes in those countries are overwhelmingly below the global average." This is one of the most tragic consequences of what economists refer to as the "resource curse." Burgis asserts that "An economy based on a central pot of resource revenue is a recipe for 'big man' politics."

It's no accident that the resource curse finds its fullest expression in Africa: the continent accounts for 13 percent of the world's population and just 2 percent of its cumulative gross domestic product, but it is the repository of 15 percent of the planet's crude oil reserves, 40 percent of its gold, and 80 percent of its platinum — and that is probably an underestimate."

The scope of the corruption this cornucopia of resources makes possible is difficult to comprehend. For example, "When the International Monetary Fund examined Angola's national accounts in 2011, it found that between 2007 and 2010 \$32 billion had gone missing." That's billion with a "B." And this, in a country of just 21 million people — a population roughly equivalent to that of Sao Paulo, Seoul, or Mumbai.

If you want to gain perspective on poverty, war, and corruption in Africa, read this book.

The emphasis in *The Looting Machine* is on those countries Burgis knows well: Angola, Nigeria, Congo, with less intensive reporting from several other nations.

Tom Burgis has worked for the Financial Times in Africa since 2006, covering business, politics, corruption, and conflict. On his LinkedIn page, he describes his reporting as encompassing "Oil, mining, terrorism, the arms trade, corporate misconduct, intelligence, money-laundering, the underbelly of the global economy, forgotten warzones, tales of the human soul." He is currently the Investigations Correspondent for the Financial Times, no longer limited to Africa.

Yves Gounin says

L'Afrique, dit-on, va mieux. Tel n'est pas le constat dressé par Tom Burgis au terme du voyage auquel il nous convie dans un continent frappé par la malédiction des ressources naturelles (« resource curse »). L'Afrique subsaharienne possède 15 % des réserves mondiales de pétrole, 40 % des ressources en or, 80 % des ressources en platine ; elle ne représente pourtant que 2 % du PNB mondial. Ses richesses naturelles l'ont paradoxalement appauvrie. Cette causalité contrintuitive s'explique : l'exportation massive de matières premières entraîne la hausse de la monnaie et détériore la compétitivité du secteur manufacturier qui conduit à la désindustrialisation de l'économie, à la mono-spécialisation et accroît la vulnérabilité aux variations des cours internationaux. C'est la maladie hollandaise (« Dutch disease ») ainsi baptisée suite aux effets sur l'économie néerlandaise de la découverte d'immenses réserves de gaz naturel dans le nord du pays à la fin des années 50.

Cette surabondance de ressources naturelles a des effets politiques tout aussi malheureux. Leur vente génère une rente qui est captée par une minorité auto-suffisante. Cette manne lui évite de lever l'impôt, rompant du même coup le lien social entre gouvernants et gouvernés. L'exercice du pouvoir n'a plus pour but la satisfaction du plus grand nombre mais l'enrichissement des gouvernants. C'est la « politique du ventre » de Jean-François Bayard – qu'ignore Tom Burgis – ou la survie des obèses (« Survival of the fattest » – qu'il source. Cet accaparement des richesses explique que les pays frappés par la malédiction des ressources naturelles connaissent une croissance très inégalitaire. Leur PIB croît et leur PIB/habitant aussi ; mais la

pauvreté ne recule pas.

La Guinée équatoriale incarne à la caricature ce biais (p. 212). Le pétrole y représente 75 % de son PIB, 90 % des ressources publiques, 98 % des exportations. Son PIB/habitant a explosé, approchant les 30.000 \$ le rapprochant du niveau de l'Espagne ou de la Nouvelle-Zélande. Pour autant, cette croissance est inégalement répartie. Tandis que le président Obiang (au pouvoir depuis 1979) et sa clique accaparent la rente pétrolière, le reste de la population survit dans la misère. Le pays se classe au 136ème rang mondial de l'index du développement humain du PNUD, derrière le Guatemala où le PIB/habitant n'est que de 5.000 \$.

L'espérance de vie y est de 51 ans seulement, au même niveau qu'en Somalie.

Journaliste d'investigation au Financial Times, successivement basé à Johannesburg, à Lagos et aujourd'hui à Londres, Tom Burgis nous livre le fruit de ses enquêtes. D'Angola au Niger, en passant par la Zambie, la RDC et le Nigeria, la « machine à piller » a bien des ressorts. Elle n'est plus seulement occidentale, la Chine prenant désormais sa part dans le pillage systématique des ressources naturelles. Avec une ténacité obsessionnelle, Tom Burgis traque un de ces entrepreneurs chinois sans foi ni loi, Sam Pa, le mystérieux président de Queensway Group, un conglomerat aux investissements opaques. Les Africains ont aussi leur part de responsabilité que l'auteur dénonce en décrivant les différentes variantes de kleptocraties africaines : « cryptocratie » dans un Angola dominé par le culte du secret, « contractocratie » dans un Nigeria miné par les trafics d'intérêt ...

Au risque de nous perdre dans la description millimétrique de montages financiers d'une incroyable complexité, Tom Burgis donne de la chair à la malédiction des ressources et un visage aux capitaines d'industrie, seigneurs de la guerre et trafiquants qui en sont responsables.

Tariq Mahmood says

The legacy of Cecil Rhodes refuses to wither in the destitute yet mineral rich African continent.

There is little chance for the ordinary people when their governments and ruling cliques are hell bent on enriching themselves. Opinions of people do not matter in resource states where their governments economically rely on external corporations and countries for their sustenance. The only way for the ordinary is to pay tax to their government so that their voice can be heard. Obviously to pay tax they have to be first be making enough money.

Multinational corporations understand this situation very well. Whether its Shell or BP or the many Chinese companies, they are more than willing to get into partnership with any junta or dictator as long as they get rights to mine African resources.

So what can the ordinary do to fight for their resources? I think media and social media might be an avenue. Quick exposures of dodgy deals might help curb these practices? Yes, I know, I am clutching at straws, but there are few other ideas that might work.

How corporations have managed to maintain a soft and benign image despite their money self serving policies over hundreds of years of extortion is still a mystery for me.

Omotola says

I'm not often impressed by books about Africa. Many of them border on banality rife with trite oversimplifications about the continent. However, this one charts a reasonably thorough analysis of a complex web of geopolitical and economic interests and the various powers that control the vast majority of Africa's natural resources.

The characterization of the entities and individuals involved occasionally borders on Lampoonish and the book is largely silent on solutions for moving forward. Beyond that, this book is a great first step for anyone seeking to understand the modern African continent.

Munkoo says

good look into another world far away, with global implications for corporate responsibility and consumer awareness

Richard Derus says

Rating: 4* of five

#ReadingIsResistance to the carefully engineered ignorance of the hideous human costs of living the way we do. My review is live now. PublicAffairs published this excellent modern economic "J'Accuse" and sent me a review copy at my request. Thank you. I think.

Max Nova says

Full review and highlights at <https://books.max-nova.com/looting-machine>

For my 2018 "Year of Crime and Punishment," I've been reading about bank heists, insider trading, contract killing, and identity theft. But all of these pale in comparison to the scale of the financial crimes described in "The Looting Machine". Financial Times reporter Tom Burgis traces the illicit flows of tens of billions of dollars of African natural resource wealth to local dictators, Western corporations and financial elites, and - more recently - massive Chinese enterprises. Noting that "like its victims, its beneficiaries have names," Burgis dives into the specifics in African resource states from Angola to Zimbabwe. He names names and backs up his claims with painstaking on-the-ground investigative reporting. I was shocked by his level of access to the highest levels of African government and industry.

Yet there was only so much of the hidden financial web that Burgis could untangle. He runs into major roadblocks when investigating Chinese companies generally and the shadowy "Queensway Group" in particular. When Burgis isn't able to get the exact details, he still illuminates the general mechanisms by which the resource wealth of African states is funneled into the hidden bank accounts of the political elites. I especially appreciated a concept from an Angola specialist Burgis met:

“cryptocracy” — a system of government in which the levers of power are hidden.

Indeed, parts of the book strongly echoed the main thesis of "Treasure Islands", another book in my "year of

crime" about how banking privacy and offshore tax evasion weaken governance and corrode accountability. Both single out the notorious "Elf Affair" between Omar Bongo in Gabon and Elf, the French oil company. Because the chronically cash-strapped rulers of resource-rich African states can rely on resource royalties from Western and Chinese companies, they're able to fund their regimes without taxing their local populations. This makes rulers unaccountable to their citizens - they don't need their consent to keep the army paid and the government running. They're able to get away with all sorts of blatantly self-serving corruption, like appropriating billions in government revenue and stashing it in personal bank accounts in London. Some of the governing tactics reminded me of the cartel management strategies in Tom Wainwright's fantastic "Narconomics".

Of course, the Western world has been complicit in propping up African dictators for centuries. Oil companies are notorious for this, and Burgis details some of Shell's sketchy operations in the oil-rich Nigerian delta. He also describes how the World Bank and the IMF fund Western companies exploiting African natural resources. But as the World Bank has gotten more squeamish about supporting some of the more repressive regimes in Africa, China has stepped right in. Burgis does an excellent job of tracking the explosion of Chinese investment in Africa and how it continues to support many of the same old toxic governing practices. I had sort of expected the world's two biggest economic powers to be deep into Africa, but Burgis surprised me by also highlighting the role that a handful of Israeli diamond and mining companies play in financing African regimes (and providing military training).

Yet Burgis doesn't lay 100% of the blame on China and the West. He includes a brutal quote from novelist Chinua Achebe:

"The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership."

Burgis goes even further, pushing into territory that must have made his publisher very nervous. He broaches the delicate subject of multiculturalism, noting that ethnic diversity can weaken the civic spirit of a country and leave it vulnerable to exploitation by outsiders:

In resource states ethnicity takes a terrible form. As resource rents beget a ruling class that is not accountable to the people, power is maintained through patronage. Public service is largely abandoned. With no record of service to point to, politics becomes a game of mobilizing one's ethnic brethren. For us to win, they have to lose. The social contract is replaced with a compact of violence.

But while this book contains no shortage of outrageous corruption and desperate poverty, Tom Burgis distinguishes himself by actually providing a reasonable idea for how to begin solving this vital problem:

But what if companies were subject to a duty of care to prevent corruption? Imagine a criminal offense that made a company liable if it proceeded with a transaction without having identified the ultimate beneficiaries of its target or prospective partner and if that transaction were subsequently shown to have enriched officials. The company would be treated before the law as though it had knowingly concocted a corrupt scheme. At a stroke, one of the chief conduits for corruption would be stoppered.

Burgis opened my eyes to a whole set of dynamics that I was completely unaware of. This book was a fantastic addition to my 2018 "year of crime" and I'm excited to read more about government corruption.

Nicole P says

This was fantastic! Informative, enriching and so relevant. Living on the African continent myself, everything described and discussed in this book resonated with me greatly. Tom Burgis hit the nail on the head time and time again, and gives a clear picture of Africa's continuous failings. A great book that leaves a lasting impression.

Ian Vance says

Develops as its central thesis the economic phenomenon called the "Dutch Disease" aka the "resource curse." Why is it that a continent as mineral-rich as Africa contains the poorest, most violent countries in the world? According to the Dutch Disease, the discovery of an abundance of a key resources--oil, coltan, gold, natural gas, etc.--tends to retard the industrial diversity of a nation: the vast majority of economic energy is devoted to the extraction and exportation of said resource. (For a more mainstream-news-prominent example, see Russia's recent tumble due to its reliance on gas/oil exports and the cheapening of crude from Saudi "over"production in order to punish both ISIS's terrorist caliphate and Putin's nationalistic designs).

In Africa, the preponderance of competing ethnic groups all scrambling for a piece of the pie tends to encourage corrupt governments reliant on resource extraction and vast, expensive patronage systems. As these ethnic-dominated governments can only sustain access to resource wealth by remaining perpetually in power, the democratic process becomes a golf-clap farce until "rebel" groups (other ethnic tribes and charismatic warlords) wreck enough havoc to either overthrow a regime or gain sufficient payoffs for keeping particularly chaotic regions under control. And so it goes. Add in IMF/World Bank Structural Adjustment Loans--the money-tap contingent on neoliberal policy, including the selling of national resources to private companies for pennies on the dollar (to be fair, the only entities that can summon the sort of investment capital to extract these resources in the first place)--and a shady organization nicknamed the "88 Queensway Group" which is wholly invested in wheeling and dealing between respectable financial institutions, China, and pariah states, and you've a recipe for the massive quagmire of human suffering and environmental devastation that we yanks tend to glance at on the pages between the latest Kardashian update and blockbuster movie review. Book is very thorough; I imagine the author made serious enemies by bringing some of this stuff to light.

Michael Munyaka says

A thoroughly researched piece of work. A must read for all Africans. It gives context to our lives.

Bastiaan Huesken says

Magnificent.

Claire says

An extremely engaging and disturbing work of investigative journalism, *The Looting Machine* tells the tale of the systematic theft of Africa's natural wealth in the post-colonial world. Burgis is incredibly well-researched and thorough in his investigation of the 'looting machines' which make some of the wealthiest nations in the world, the poorest. This text is informative but engaging- and I've come away from it not only with an understanding of the mechanism of this corruption, but also a real sense of the key players involved. At times it was dense and bleak reading- but on the whole was very enlightening. We are all complicit.

Shawn says

This is an overview of the widespread corruption on the African continent that keeps it impoverished. This book is rather poorly written, concentrating too much upon the specifics of corrupt deals and too little on potential solutions, but it is remarkable in its disclosure of shocking improprieties. The author seems to see himself as a whistle-blower and, to this end, he has accomplished his objective. This book is about why and how abject poverty persists, even though the African nations are in fact fabulously wealthy in terms of mineral resources.

This book reports the shocking statistic that 69% of the people in the world that are in extreme poverty live in countries where oil, gas, and minerals are generating exorbitant sums of money! Africa is the repository of the planet's richest diamond mines, 80% of its platinum, 40% of its gold, 15% of its crude oil, as well as significant sources of copper, iron, bauxite, uranium, tin, tungsten, coltan, and practically every other fruit of volcanic geology! And yet, Africa is home to the planet's poorest people.

Many who consider Africans incapable of governing themselves and innately given to corruption are often ignorant of the extent of exploitation that has persisted in their homeland. Outsiders often think of Africa as a great drain of philanthropy and a continent that guzzles aid to no avail; but much more wealth is taken out of Africa than is provided to it.

When the Colonialists departed Africa, corporate behemoths took their place. In the place of the old empires are hidden networks of multinationals, middlemen, and African potentates. Cargoes of African resources arrive steadily to North America, Europe and China. The disparity between life in the places where Africa's resources are taken and the places where they are consumed is nearly inconceivable.

The Universal Problem of Hoarding

When the International Monetary Fund examined Angola's national accounts in 2011, it found that \$32 billion had simply gone missing! All the while, half or more of Angola's population lives below the international poverty line of \$1.25 a day! But the problem isn't limited to Angola, world accounts similarly do not balance because of missing assets that are hoarded secretly in hidden offshore accounts, the world over! Just as Africa could emerge out of poverty through the cessation of hoarding, so could the world.

The resources of the world are more than adequate for humanity; it is only hoarding, greed, and exploitation that creates poverty in the world. The resources of the world could be increased tenfold, but poverty would

still persist, because it is not the lack of resources, but the hoarding of resources that creates poverty. One example is Nigeria, where exports of crude oil generate revenues of tens of billions of dollars each year, yet the population suffers in extreme poverty.

Hoarding shortens supply and artificially increases demand, pushing prices ever upwards. An example is when big companies sign long-term contracts with African nations just to lock in their supply of an ore, but do not start mining it. Perhaps even flipping the contract for a profit, all the while keeping the resources of the country tied up. When a foreign company succeeds in contracting a lucrative mine or oil venture with an African nation, its stock immediately rises, instantly transferring that wealth to its stockholders, even while the mineral still lies beneath the ground. Africa's resource states watch their oil and minerals sail away for that value to accrue elsewhere.

Economic Retardation

The presence of rich mineral resources has been more of a curse to the African populace than a blessing, because it has retarded the normal processes of agricultural and industrial evolution. Instead of extracting and refining their own resources, the Africans license foreign companies to extract them, which creates a pot of money at the disposal of transitioning state officials who invariably enrich themselves. The social contract between the rulers and the ruled is broken because the ruling class does not need to tax the people to fund the government and thus has no need of the peoples consent.

In a normal capitalistic environment, indigenous entrepreneurs would arise from the populace, and the government would be dependent upon taxation of their prosperity. But when external exploitation occurs, foreign corporations simply pay off whatever resemblance of government manifests itself and then proceed to cart off the resources.

Whatever indigenous strongman (and his cohorts) gains control receives a windfall, at the expense of the people. The foreign mining corporation makes a bundle, the governmental officials make a bundle, but the masses of African people are left suffering in slums. Un-beholden to the people, the resource-fueled regimes spend away the national income on their personal interests and stash what's unspent away in secret offshore accounts.

The major problem is the ability of the rulers of Africa's resource states to govern without the necessity of popular consent; a problem exacerbated by meddling from abroad. Instead of calling their rulers to account, the citizens of resources states are busy angling for a share through corruption and disorganization that, in turn, causes even greater poverty. Where legitimate business cannot thrive, crime flourishes.

Secret Offshore Accounts

Too often, rights to mineral deposits are sold in complete secrecy to an offshore company for a price far below what it is worth. Then all or part of that asset is sold at a profit to big foreign mining companies. The most popular of these secret jurisdictions is the British Virgin Islands.

An example is when the Congo sold rights to a copper prospect to a private company for \$15 million and the company immediately re-sold the same rights for \$75 million, establishing a \$60 million loss for the state and a \$60 million profit for the secret private company. Meanwhile, toddlers with bloated bellies, the signature of malnutrition, totter on the verge of death beneath tattered Congolese flags, flapping from skinny tree trunks. Between 2007 and 2012, just 2.5% of the \$41 billion that the mining industry generated in Congo flowed into the country's meager budget.

Another tactic is when a company establishes a subsidiary in the British Virgin Islands, where the corporation tax is zero, and attributes the majority of its profits to that subsidiary. Or, alternatively, the British Virgin Islands subsidiary makes a huge loan to the mother company, at exorbitant interest, which appears as a tax deduction in the taxing country, but which is interest income in the tax-free country. Or, even more outrageous, the companies manipulate the prices at which they sell goods and services between their subsidiaries to purposefully divert profits into the tax-free environment.

It is a process of separating income from the economic activities that generate that income and shifting that income into non-taxing environments. Through this process, multinationals artificially switch revenues to the non-taxing countries, depriving the governments where their mines or factories are located of the tax revenues to which they are “entitled”. And yet, that word, “entitled”, is the burr under the saddle of every staunch conservative, who nearly always declares that no one is “entitled” to anything, unless they also get themselves into the corruptive fray of enslavement to Mammon. This author reports that the United States alone is losing as much as \$60 billion a year to these sort of offshore tax dodges.

I spoke this weekend with a single mother, schoolteacher, earning \$36,000 annually, with two children in college and another disabled at home. A sour taste of bile arose in my mouth as this single mother reported that the government takes \$800 a month out of her check in taxes! The stark reality is that the full range of the working middle class is getting the screw right along with the masses of Africa, while a minority of the global elite enjoy the cream of the worlds resources and labor.

Taxpayer aid goes to the governments of African countries ostensibly as humanitarian foreign aid to the poor; while in reality purchasing concessions for major corporations, many of which don’t even pay taxes on their profits, sifting them off to secretive tax havens like in the British Virgin Islands. This is, quite simply, effectively subsidizing private oil and mining companies with taxpayer funds.

And all the while chief executives are paid tens of millions of dollars a year, inhabiting a world of corporate jets and dick-swinging machismo. Their thrusts to and fro about Africa are like the raping of an illiterate minor. The author appropriately labels them ‘the looting class’.

Don’t Think You’re Not Involved

We have to be careful not to look at what’s gong on in Africa with condensation, without examining our own contributions to the problem. Anyone who owns stock in the major extractive corporations or is a keen user of the resources are components to the problem. We prefer not to think of the mothers of eastern Congo, the slum dwellers of Luanda, and the miners of Marange as we talk on our phones, fill up our cars, and propose to our lovers. As long as we go on averting our gaze, the looting machines will endure.

Marange Diamond Mine

Marange Diamond Mine

Luanda Slum

Chudja Mine

Proponents include some of the world's biggest companies, among them the blue-chip multinationals in which, if you live in the west and have a pension, your money is almost certainly invested. Shell admitted paying bribes worth \$2 million to Nigerian customs officials between 2004 and 2006. One installment of a \$5 million bribe paid by Kellogg, Brown & Root (KBR) was so bulky when converted to local currency that it had to be loaded onto special vehicles for delivery. At the time, KBR was a subsidiary of Halliburton, whose chief executive, Dick Cheney, departed in 2000 to be George W. Bush's vice president.

Imagine what would happen if the foremost endeavor of our investment objectives became socially oriented. What if the result of corporate social exploitation was an immediate crash in a company's stock price, as socially minded investors shunned the company by selling off shares? And what if the stock of socially minded corporations soared when they did the right thing, even if their profits diminished as a result? What if the goal of investors becomes something other than prostrating themselves to Mammon? Something other than sacrificing basic human decency for profit? Something other than being paid to effectuate pockets of hell on earth?

What if the statistics normally associated with stock symbols included a rating of a corporation's social effectiveness, extent of human exploitation, sufficiency of wages to the most basic of employees, extent of environmental impacts, and on and on? And what if this social index was the primary driver of stock prices? I smile, just to think of it. Because now, as it stands, the whole stock market is a single edifice to Mammon. The absence of social indicators for corporate performance in human issues is a sacrifice of humanity to Mammon. It is a test to the willingness of the investor to ignore the plight of his fellowman for the sake of Mammon. It is, quite simply, earnings before life and profits before social responsibility. There are those who turn enthusiastically to the financial sections of the paper without even a glance toward the human issues glaring on the front page. Mammon looms large, mesmerizing those beholden to her, and extracting ever greater sacrifices, the ultimate of which is the ruin of humanity.

How It Happens

- Cut me in. In exchange for granting mining and exploration rights, African officials require corporations to make their obscure local companies junior partners, whereby they gain secret stakes.
- Inadequate penalties. A long-neglected U.S. statute, the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, is supposed to prohibit a company with operations in the United States from paying or offering money or anything of value to foreign officials to win business. However, on the rare occasions when the Department of Justice brings to light such activities, the companies just admit infringements and pay fines that are miniscule in comparison to their exorbitant profits.
- Defense First. The funds that do make it into the African governmental coffers are used primarily for defense, to maintain the regimes in power. Hence, money cannot make it into the needed areas that will help the people, such as health, education, and infrastructure. For example, of the \$56 million that China paid for its license to mine uranium in Niger, \$47 million was spent on arms to suppress rebels! Crazy!
- African complicity. African's have assisted in the exploitation of their continent by foreign powers since the slave trade. The classical imperial ploy, perfected by the British, is to foster a client elite whose authority would be buttressed by London, provided this elite maintains London's interests. Today, in Africa's resource states, the local potentates are equal partners with the oil executives, the mining magnates, and the globetrotting middlemen.
- Threat of Violence. The people are so traumatized by conflict that they see a vote for any incumbent, no

matter how venal, as the option that carries the smallest risk of a return to hostilities. The regimes leave little to chance, dominating the media, appointing its stooges to run the institutions that conduct elections, co-opting opposition politicians, and intimidating opponents.

- Foreign Workers. The influx of foreign workers for mineral extraction, and their expense accounts, drives up prices to astronomical levels, particularly for electricity, water, and essential imported goods. This is exacerbated by pricey spending from those connected to the corrupt government. These upward price pressures distort everything, from food to real estate, pushing the ability to acquire further and further from the masses.

Some Interesting Thoughts That Emerged from This Reading

- Conquer with goodness. What if we decided to conquer other countries for reasons other than greed and exploitation? What if we conquered to bring order, economic prosperity, peace, and humanity? What if we chose to tend the sheep instead of exploiting them for profit?

- Let's stop being rats. The tragedy is that world resources are developed and rationed as a result of Machiavellian scrambling, infighting, revolution, bribery, and corruption. Certainly, enormous wealth exists for all the world to share, prosper, and grow, so why exist like rats, scrambling over one another to hoard as much wealth as possible?

- Can we take a lesson from China? China has recently made massive investments into Africa, much to the lamentation of the western press. But why, might I ask, shouldn't the African's deal openly with the Chinese? After all, the Africans have next to nothing to show for decades of western imperial domination and postcolonial commercial exploitation! Why not try something different? In recent years, Chinese funding has accounted for two-thirds of Africa's spending on infrastructure, including many hydroelectric dams, mobile phone towers, airports, and tall buildings, the repayments of which occur by the provision of raw natural resources. Thus, instead of currency, which is easy for corrupt officials to hide away, the Chinese ensure some benefit to the masses by actually constructing valuable permanent infrastructure in the country. In contrast, western corporations focus more on acquiring African interests, not African friends. There is a distinct whiff of hypocrisy to western vilification and criticism of China's advance into Africa.

- Stop the economic lunacy. It is nothing less than economic lunacy for Africa to export crude while importing refined petroleum! If we truly want to help Africa, then let's help them build refineries and other factories. We can send them food and water forever or we can help them help themselves. The bigger question is, do we really want to see them help themselves or do we want to keep them in an exploitable position?

- Find one righteous man? We have to ask ourselves, where is the internal motivation of the indigenous man? Where is the unique indigenous leader who, through love of God and country, will pursue local technologies and the means for the country to exploit its own natural resources? Where is the indigenous man who will see that funds are invested in educating the populace and achieving economic gain, as opposed to rotting in clandestine offshore bank accounts? The worldwide problem hinges upon human frailty and its predisposition to succumb to the worship of Mammon.

- The rise of the anti-human. In the absence of man's ability to conduct government with moral justice, there may eventually arise a machine, purportedly programmed with justice, to be bequeathed the power to govern. Man harbors within him a pure moral ideal, but man cannot accomplish the ideal physically. It is an ideal that has been declared and written, but never fully carried out. This ideal may eventually be

programmed into an artificial intelligence, which will seek the same reverence bequeathed to the stone tablets that bore the Commandments, only in infinitely greater detail. It may be proposed that an anti-human machine, indeed an anti-Christ, be granted sovereignty because no righteous man can be found capable of resisting the hypnosis of money. Isn't there but one righteous man? Only Christ! So we must unite behind Christ and ask that His righteousness be imputed to us, so that our societies might emerge from the chaos of disorganization. Future historians of more evolved societies will wring their hands in despair at how our society allowed the greed of the few to wreck havoc in our social systems, environment, and economic dispersion.

- Extinguish misery. The overwhelming concern for ourselves blinds us to the reality that we can mitigate misery in the earth. We must cease being like a concentration camp guard on his way home from Auschwitz, picking up chocolates for his tender offspring waiting at home for Daddy's return. Or like a vulture that picks the eyes of a swollen corpse in a trench before nestling its head against its mate. Or like executives, governmental leaders, and other people who walk past the shackles of the very people who are producing the minerals that make them so fabulously rich, without thinking something is remiss. Extinguishing the misery must become our first aim and certainly must trump the fetish to hoard resources. This realization and its ultimate fruition constitute the unveiling of God's Kingdom in the earth.

Vincent says

Well researched. Well articulated. Excellent investigative work highlighting the plunder of Africa by the west and China and how it is aided and abetted by its leaders.
