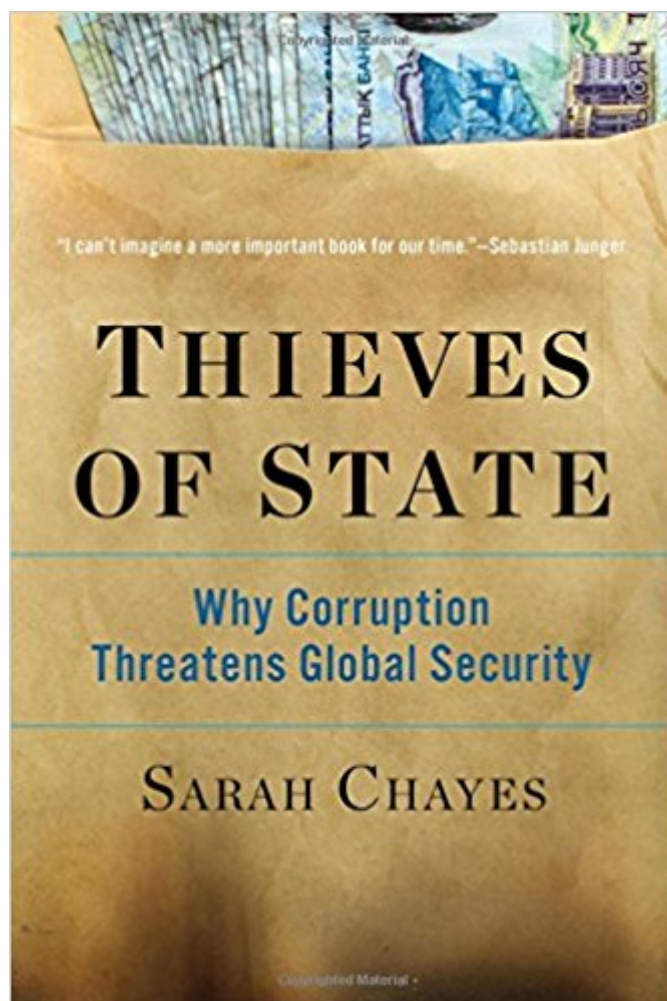


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Thieves Of State: Why Corruption Threatens Global Security



Synopsis

Winner of the 2015 Los Angeles Times Book Prize for Current Interest. "I can't imagine a more important book for our time." —Sebastian Junger

The world is blowing up. Every day a new blaze seems to ignite: the bloody implosion of Iraq and Syria; the East-West standoff in Ukraine; abducted schoolgirls in Nigeria. Is there some thread tying these frightening international security crises together? In a riveting account that weaves history with fast-moving reportage and insider accounts from the Afghanistan war, Sarah Chayes identifies the unexpected link: corruption. Since the late 1990s, corruption has reached such an extent that some governments resemble glorified criminal gangs, bent solely on their own enrichment. These kleptocrats drive indignant populations to extremes—ranging from revolution to militant puritanical religion. Chayes plunges readers into some of the most venal environments on earth and examines what emerges: Afghans returning to the Taliban, Egyptians overthrowing the Mubarak government (but also redesigning Al-Qaeda), and Nigerians embracing both radical evangelical Christianity and the Islamist terror group Boko Haram. In many such places, rigid moral codes are put forth as an antidote to the collapse of public integrity. The pattern, moreover, pervades history. Through deep archival research, Chayes reveals that canonical political thinkers such as John Locke and Machiavelli, as well as the great medieval Islamic statesman Nizam al-Mulk, all named corruption as a threat to the realm. In a thrilling argument connecting the Protestant Reformation to the Arab Spring, *Thieves of State* presents a powerful new way to understand global extremism. And it makes a compelling case that we must confront corruption, for it is a cause—not a result—of global instability.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“Makes a strong case that acute corruption causes not only social breakdown but also violent extremism. . . . An important book that should be required reading for officials in foreign service, and for those working in commerce or the military. The story will interest the nonspecialist reader too.” - Giles Foden, New York Times Book Review

“Should be required reading.” - Thomas Friedman

“[A] fascinating story. . . . [T]he central revelation in *Thieves of the State*: at a certain point, systemic corruption became not just a lamentable by-product of the war but an accelerant of conflict . . . Chayes argues, convincingly, [that state-sanctioned larceny is] a threat not just to Afghanistan’s national security but to that of the United States.” - Patrick Radden Keefe, New Yorker

“[Chayes] tells the story of what happened in Afghanistan brilliantly, and compares her experience there with the current corruption in Egypt, Russia and the dismal rest . . . [a] page-turner.” - Deirdre N. McCloskey, Wall Street Journal

“Essential.” - G. John Ikenberry, Foreign Affairs

“Informative, thought-provoking, very interesting and concisely written. . . . Through personal experience and her own research, Chayes makes a simple yet profound argument.” - Taylor Dibbert, Huffington Post

“A revolutionary book. Sarah Chayes weaves together history, adventure, political analysis, personal experience, culture, and religion in a shimmering and compelling tapestry.” - Anne-Marie Slaughter

“A vivid, ground-level view on how pervasive corruption undermines U.S. foreign policy and breeds insurgency. *Thieves of State* provides critical lessons that all policymakers should heed.” - Francis Fukuyama

“Sarah Chayes brilliantly illuminates a topic no one wants talk about but we must. Corruption is an insidious force that is causing some of the most dangerous challenges our world is facing. It has to be at the core of America’s strategies, engagements and relationships for the twenty-first century.” - Admiral (ret.) Mike Mullen, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Dear readers: Thanks very much for visiting this page, and for your interest in *Thieves of State*. I wrote this book to address a dumbfounding impasse: the inability of senior U.S. officials to make the connection between acute and abusive corruption and dramatic global upheavals, from the rise of violent extremism to the revolutions of the Arab Spring or Ukraine. What *Thieves of*

State does is take you with me, so you can experience for yourself not just the abuse and humiliation of everyday corruption in many countries, but also the inner workings of the U.S. government as it reached a decision not to address the problem. We'll also take a fascinating historical detour, for history has much to teach us about how people have grappled with these issues - and about how similar their responses have been across time and culture. We'll detail hard-nosed options for different approaches, and we'll take a glance in the mirror. It is an unusual book: no dry, expository policy-wonk analysis, rather a riveting story that will keep you engaged. But you'll also find plenty of thought-provoking, even sometimes provocative, analysis. I hope that you like it, and that you will let me know your thoughts either way. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

It is very easy to get depressed while reading Ms. Chayes book. Well intentioned donors and individuals need to be very careful when operating in predatory states like Afghanistan, Angola, Nigeria, etc. in that they can certainly exacerbate things. She does outline a series of extensive recommendations at the end of her book on how to Do No Harm. What she doesn't talk too much about is how resilient people are in such societies and how they are able to cope and survive. Some migrate, but most sit tight and cope with the predatory nature of institutions surrounding them. One highly theoretical solution not mentioned is Economist Paul Romer's concept of Charter Cities run by a consortium of nations. These Charter Cities would be established in predatory countries and facilitate getting government out of the way of private enterprise and letting them create needed economic activity and create jobs. Charter Cities are underway in Honduras and India and worth tracking.

I believe Thieves of State is a must-read for anyone concerned about promoting peace and civility in communities, nations, and the world. Sarah Chayes compellingly discusses how the corrupt practices of governments and authorities spawn violent reactionary movements that undermine the security and stability of societies. Chayes's voice is strong and confident, her prose is taut, fact-rich, and colorful, sometimes passionate but never indulgent. The book is intelligent and well-researched and refreshingly accessible, with a strong narrative current to draw the reader along. More than that, this is an important book, one with the potential to alter the discussion and--one may hope--the U. S. government's approach to diplomacy and national security issues. Chayes, a former NPR correspondent, lived in Afghanistan for a decade; a trained historian, she is not only a thoughtful, penetrating observer, but a talented story

teller, and many of her stories are disturbing. Imagine, for example, living in a country where the conduct of simple business--obtaining a license, paying a utility bill--requires you to first bribe a bureaucrat or series of functionaries simply to accomplish your objective. Injustices unremedied, with no channel for redress, sow the frustration and desperation that may ultimately erupt in violence. Although Chayes cites examples of national corruption (Egypt, Uzbekistan, Tunisia, Nigeria) and the responses it provokes, a reader may also consider what happens at the individual or local level when a person's or community's sense of fairness is continually, unapologetically offended. Reading this book has changed the way I see the world and my role in it as an unwitting contributor to its miseries, or more hopefully, to its peace.

Very good at describing how in Afghanistan the two presidents' administrations (which includes the CIA) have supported corrupt heads of state and this has created top down corruption as each level down the food chain has to pass a portion of their proceeds from extortion or fraud or theft up to their bosses - not unlike the mafia. Where the book falls short is from the author's time overseas and as a result being disconnected from government and corporate corruption in the United States and how it has played a role in these regimes. The USA and the CIA supported the taliban and the CIA employed Osama bin Laden and the bin Laden family in turn has employed GH Bush after he left office. The head of Halliburton, Dick Cheney, moved from the private sector to be the vice president while retaining his stock in Halliburton. Not coincidentally the value of Halliburton stock increased dramatically thanks to the billions of dollars of no-bid contracts they received for Afghanistan and Iraq from the Bush-Cheney government. Reagan got financial support from Rumsfeld (who became a member of Reagan's transition team) and in return on Reagan's first day in office he appointed a new head of the FDA who promptly gave approval for aspartame, a dangerous food additive that had been blocked by FDA scientists, and Donald Rumsfeld as the CEO of Searle became a multi-millionaire as a result. The author does not realize how pervasive corruption is in all levels of government in the USA. Local governments allow privatization of public lands, public water systems and public hospitals and mass transportation systems and the decisions are made by elected officials who need large campaign donations to get into and remain in office. A US senator can be purchased for as little as \$20,000 in campaign contributions. The process has become streamlined with the billionaires funding of ALEC, an organization that actually writes the laws for the officials to enact and make into the laws of the land.

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