

Not Guns, Germs, and Steel, but Deceit, Bribery, and Local Collaborators.

One very astute Papua New Guinean asked Prof Jared Diamond: ‘Why the ‘white man’ has so much cargo (material goods) and we have so little?’ The answer to that direct question took several years to accomplish and resulted in the much celebrated work – “Guns, Germs, and Steel - The Fates of Human Societies.” (Pub. 1997, 1999 by W. W. Norton and Co. NY.) In that work, Professor Jared Diamond (UCLA) postulated that the Europeans conquered the New World and Africa with “Guns, Germs, and Steel” – that is, better weaponry (e.g. guns, swords, cannons), introduced new deadly diseases (e.g. smallpox, cholera, syphilis), and new superior technology (e.g. agriculture, cattle, horses, wagons, carts, trains, ships, etc.).

In the third world, e.g., in Guyana our people may well ask a similar question: “Why are the foreign companies (Forestry and Mining) so rich and we remaining poor and or getting poorer?” The answer is somewhat analogous to that of Prof Jared Diamond. In today’s world, the third world and their resources are being taken from the local inhabitants not forcefully by “guns, germs and steel,” but more cleverly by the employment of “Deceit, Bribery, and local Collaborators.”

I shall now outline the general modus operandi (gathered from the experiences of Africa, Asia, and Latin America) through which the corrupt and dishonourable Companies operate to exploit the resources (e.g. Forestry - timber, non timber forestry products, biopharmaceuticals; mineral resources – gold, diamonds, bauxite, sand, etc; and people - cheap labour (avoidance of international labour and environmental regulations and or conventions); etc.) of the host country - e.g. Guyana. It is necessary that we understand how the predators or corrupt companies operate, since according to the rules of war – to be forewarned is to be forearmed. From the Guyanese and the experience of other poor countries we learn some general principles and methods of the predatory companies.

(1) **Deceit:** The ‘invaders’ make outlandish promises of providing:(1) Education and job (Higher skills) training for the locals; (2) Jobs (high paying) for local workers; (3) Foreign investments in infrastructures (factories, roads, harbours, towns) so that local resources can be utilised for the benefit of locals; (4) Wealth creation for the country and local inhabitants; (5) Better health care for the locals in the vicinity of the company’s operations; (6) Freedom from poverty since workers are now gainfully employed; (7) Modernization of the local economy; (8) Income to pay for social, health, and education programs; (9) Efficient Harvesting of the resources in an environmentally friendly and sustainable way; (10) Happy people (have jobs, houses, discretionary incomes for luxury items - cars, SUVs, etc.) in the country; and (11) Last but not least, a lot of happy and rich politicians and officials of the ruling party in Govt..

In fact the companies tell the locals (or more correctly their representatives) exactly what they want to hear – ‘tell them lies, sweet little lies’, knowing that like parasites they intend to suck the host country’s blood dry.

(2) **Bribery:** The local, Govt., and Civic officials are seduced (wined, dined, and given generous ‘gifts’) to grant generous concessions totally in favour of the predators – some officials may really believe that what they are giving up are really in the best short and/or long term interests of the country. Of course these concessions are not made without the official host representative(s) receiving some form of rewards/incentives – financial or material. The foreign companies have deep pockets, hence their contributions can: be deposited in foreign accounts; pay overseas university and college tuition fees for children and relatives of local officials; pay for holidays; sponsor trips abroad; make donations to ruling party coffers, functions; etc..

In addition the negotiating/bargaining skills of the locals are not up to international standards; hence the deals are totally skewed in favour of the international company - with their highly skilled and higher priced negotiators. These overseas negotiators may flatter the locals by telling then that they drive a hard bargain! The foreign companies can even promise the local negotiator(s) lucrative employment after the

contract with them is signed, or should they ever need employment. What is also ridiculous is that the foreign companies would negotiate contracts that put the foreign companies above or exempt from the local laws (taxes, duties, environmental) of the land. The companies are treated as a state within the host country! These deals are more often negotiated in secret and never subject to public and/or parliamentary scrutiny when being made.

(3) **Collaborators:** These are the local officials and/or employees who thrive to demonstrate their loyalties to their new found personal benefactor(s). These seduced locals are the most vociferous defenders of the alleged virtues of their “Foreign Gods.” They make very good local allies and do not want to see their own personal financial or socio-economic status questioned and or compromised. So emotionally strong and loyal are these collaborators in defence of their masters and masters’ interests that we are reminded of the late Shiva’s Naipaul’s words: “Never come between a man and his slave the slave will kill you first.” Yes, some would even cheat, and physically threaten and or endanger any of their fellow citizens who opposed their actions to demonstrate their loyalty and worth to their glorious and righteous “God”.

These local collaborators have access to the highest state and Govt officials of the country. These collaborators are even so arrogant that they assign to themselves the right to speak on behalf of the local relevant State and Govt officials. These company and state officials and politicians all make up the conduit through which financial incentives and favours flow in one direction or another. Hopefully when they enjoy their ‘30 pieces of silver’ or their ill-gotten gains, they remember the biblical exhortation to do good deeds – ‘visiting the iniquities of the fathers even unto the third and fourth generation.’

It must be pointed out that not all foreign companies are disreputable and not all local companies are honourable. Dishonourable companies have a way of finding out who are the State and Govt officials who really wield the real power, and sooner or later are able to purchase illegal influence that will be useful to their business interests. The first thing these hired guns want to know is who is in charge; secondly how can they be introduced; thirdly, what is the price to purchase influence or how many people will have to be bought; and lastly, what is the ongoing price for favours. Disreputable companies thrive on local corruption and therefore promote the corruption of the local Govt and party officials.

If we examine any of the forestry (e.g. Barama) and mining (e.g. OMAI) deals that have been ongoing in the local press, we cannot fail to see what has been and still is going on – our resources are enjoyed by those who practised the employment of ‘deceit, bribery, and local collaborators’ – leading to our further impoverishment, deprivation, hopelessness, and theft of our children’s future. The faults for our inhuman conditions lie with the betrayal of those in our midst whom we trust to administer our affairs, and in ourselves in that we stand idly by and watch our robbery and humiliation. It is time to break the chains.

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