

Book Review of *State Crime: Governments, Violence and Corruption*

Jana Bufkin
Drury University

State Crime: Governments, Violence and Corruption
By Penny Green and Tony Ward

2004. London: Pluto Press.
ISBN: 0745317855. \$75.00.

Green and Ward (2004) classify state crime as a form of organizational deviance that involves human rights violations and is committed/facilitated by sovereign and proto-states to fulfill an organizational goal(s). Given that there is nothing unique about this conceptualization of state crime, one may initially view the work as a standard, introductory text, with many interesting topics to explore but little depth (see Kauzlarich and Kramer 1998). As the account unfolds, however, Green and Ward alter that opinion. While they emphasize the relationship between the political economy and organizational means selection, attention is also skillfully directed to an integrated theoretical framework that incorporates social psychological factors. The central argument, well demonstrated in an examination of a variety of state crimes, is that no state is immune from violating human rights to achieve its goals.

It is also argued that the type of crime instrumentally selected is strongly influenced by structural conditions. In this vein, the authors begin with a discussion of corruption and two key explanatory concepts, clientelism and patrimonialism. Clientelism refers to an exchange system whereby patrons or public officials provide political favors to clients/constituents. Green and Ward point out that clientelism commonly and effectively operates alongside bureaucratic governments, but can serve as a gateway to clandestine exchanges that result in human rights violations. State-corporate crime, state-organized crime, police crime, and other deviant behaviors may accompany clientelism. Although state violence may surface in countries operating under clientelism, those governed usually consent to the system, making this form of deviance unnecessary. Patrimonialism, however, is more inviting to violent forms of state corruption. Drawing from Weber, this term is used to describe societies in which profit through corruption has become an organizational goal. In these "kleptocracies," where the interests of the nation and ruler are conflated, the door is open for all levels of corruption, including torture, war crimes, state terror, and genocide.

Using case study evidence, Green and Ward maintain that the probability that a state will exhibit patrimonialism

or corrupting clientelism, and thereby engage in specific state crimes, is determined by political and economic factors. More specifically, it is suggested that capitalist states with strong democracies may experience clientelism, but civic involvement in government prohibits the development of patrimonialism and the state use of force it requires. In developing or transitional capitalist democracies, such as Russia and Brazil, the portrait of state crime differs little, but the text devotes special attention to the role of international debt and global financial networks in creating additional incentives to adopt deviant organizational strategies. Of course, these states are considered more susceptible to corruption because civic associations are weak as well.

State-capitalist and predatory states are portrayed as the most egregious violators of human rights. In the former, the state owns and controls the means of production and often utilizes state terror to retain power, e.g. Pol Pot's Cambodia, the former U.S.S.R, and contemporary China. Proto-states and states governed by what Green and Ward label "warlords with international sovereignty" are categorized as the worst of all state offenders, predatory states. Patrimonial, predatory states discussed in the text are typically former colonial protectorates. According to the authors, this is no coincidence. Colonial powers ensured that nations within their sphere of control had military and policing structures, but post-colonial economic policies neither fostered economic development nor encouraged democratic practices. A precarious political economy, coupled with the capacity to use force, has made repression an attractive option for these states. Iraq serves as a prime example of a predatory state, as thoroughly noted in the last chapter of the book, and several predatory states in Africa were discussed.

While these theoretical insights set *State Crime* apart from most introductory texts and may render it more appropriate for upper-division and graduate level courses, the work should also be heralded for its reliance on rich, timely illustrations of the different sub-categories of state crime. Chapters describing state-corporate crime, natural disasters, police crime, state-organized crime, state terror, torture, war crimes, and genocide are provided, and each accomplishes two objectives. They clearly delineate the breadth of each form of organizational deviance and encourage readers to explore issues about state crime that are beyond the scope of the current text. The fifth chapter, for example, addresses police crime, and stories about

police corruption around the world alone intrigue readers.

Critical thinkers, however, are asked to go a step further and consider how structural, organizational, and social psychological conditions intersect to the detriment of economically dispossessed, mentally ill, and substance abusing populations, who must often bear the brunt of police crime. This issue is revisited in discussions of state terror, torture, war crimes, and genocide. The increased vulnerability of marginalized groups is a discussion topic unto itself, but it is also significant in that it directs attention to the socially constructed nature of state crime. Accordingly, the role of societal reactions in defining these acts becomes relevant to the debate. Questions of public tolerance for state crime follow.

The chapter titled "Natural Disasters" is perhaps one of the more impressive because this topic is generally neglected in books exploring governmental deviance (e.g. Rose-Ackerman 1999). In this segment of the text, Green and Ward explore how state corruption, state corporate crime, negligence, state cover-ups, collusion with elites, and war increase vulnerability to disasters, at least for some populations. To illustrate, two case studies are offered, one describing state complicity in famine and the other explaining how intentionally ill-regulated housing codes in 1980s Turkey contributed to the destructiveness of the 1999 Marmara earthquake.

Finally, Green and Ward's coverage of torture deserves mention, because it will not disappoint readers. After delineating the primary perpetrators and victims of torture (police officers and marginalized populations,

respectively) and explaining the ultimate goal of torture, to evoke the fear necessary to suppress opposition, the focus shifts to ways in which states seek to escape culpability. Evidence suggests that states seek to avoid responsibility for torture by simply neutralizations, such as denying the victims. Facilitation of torture receives considerable emphasis as well, with the authors discussing the U.S. involvement extensively. That nation is depicted as the premier world manufacturer, distributor, supplier, and broker of products used in torture. The U.S. Army School of the Americas is indicted for having trained several ruthless Latin American leaders, such as Noreiga in Panama and Somoza in Nicaragua.

Other issues raised in the text could be reviewed to highlight its strengths, but the information provided should suffice to convey the impression that it is a sound work, in terms of style and content. The authors move from topic to topic with ease, grounding each idea in the literature on state crime and case studies. Redundancy is sparse, and it seems there was an eye toward theory at every critical juncture. *State Crime* is recommended for those who understand the complexity of this phenomenon and desire to examine it from an array of angles.

REFERENCES

Kauzlarich, D. and R.C. Kramer. 1998. *Crimes of the American Nuclear State: At Home and Abroad*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Rose-Ackerman, S. 1999. *Corruption and Government: Causes, Consequences and Reform*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.