



Glimmers of Cosmopolitan Criminology

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Abstract

The sheer international variability of crime can make international criminology more interesting and revealing than national criminologies. Crime is a phenomenon that cascades from hot-spot to hot-spot, often across borders, giving it some transnational characteristics and some regional clustering. This article makes a case that sometimes international levers are more potent for national crime prevention than national ones. An inference is that criminology must savour a more cosmopolitan imaginary. Violence and corporate crime are used to discuss the methodological and policy challenges that can be cracked to open up glimmers of hope through international criminology.

Keywords Deepwater Horizon · Arthur Andersen · Cosmopolitanism · International criminology

The International Criminology Lens and the Americas Question

Braithwaite and D’Costa (2018) and Braithwaite (2020a) argue that crime and war are both cascade phenomena. A key cascade is that when violence occurs, this increases the probability of more incidents of violence. The empirical consequence is that violence comes to cluster in space and time. Non-violent forms of crime and war, such as cyber-crime and cyberwar, also tend to cascade, to cascade into each other, and into and from more violent forms of crime and war. This recent work argues for that framework, and traverses the literature on empirical patterns of crime as a cascade phenomenon. It is further developed in forthcoming work (Braithwaite forthcoming). The purpose of this article is not to rehash these arguments and evidence, but to show some ways that international criminology illuminates special cosmopolitan relevance for how to respond to forms of crime that diffuse. It explores some international criminological dynamics of diffusion of prevention in response to cascades of crime.

One way to think about the value of international criminology is to consider regional variation in crime rates and how they relate to tendencies for crime problems to seep

across borders. Contemplate the Mexican literature about how US pressure from its War on Drugs, from the time of President Nixon to the present, has persuaded successive Mexican leaders to see an imperative to decapitate its drug trafficking organizations. Scholars of war increasingly see Mexico’s war on drugs as bearing a family resemblance to the wars between armed groups seen in other drug exporting countries like Afghanistan and Colombia that have been officially classified as suffering civil war during the twenty-first century. Drug wars in Mexico this century account for more killings than the invasion, insurgency and drug wars of Afghanistan (Marc 2016). Systematic quantitative research has shown across the past two decades in Mexico that decapitation strategies to arrest or kill drug cartel leaders made violence much worse as a result of the decapitation (Calderón et al 2015; Dell 2015; Phillips 2015; Ríos 2013; Atesta and Pérez-Dávila 2018; Lessing 2018).

This sophisticated work suggests that spaces that were formerly zones with a certain degree of pacification by a gang leader became battle zones as successor leaders fought over the spoils of succession; larger gangs that oversaw wide zones of relative peace disintegrated into cascades of many smaller warring gangs. El Salvador displays a similar pattern of cartel wars spreading rather than contracting over time in terms of the territory dominated by organized crime gangs (Carcach and Artola 2016). The spread was in a pattern that represents a crime–war–crime cascade from El Salvador to US inter-gang warfare and a US ‘War on Drugs’ back to

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expansion of spaces subject to gang domination across El Salvador (Braithwaite and D'Costa 2018, p. 158).

Such transborder dynamics might be one part of the explanation for Nivette's (2011) result from a meta-analysis of cross-national studies of homicide rates that the strongest predictor is a regional dummy variable for Latin America and the Caribbean. After controlling for this Latin America and Caribbean dummy, inequality between rich and poor became the strongest explanation of homicide rates across Nivette's (2011) data sets. On the one hand, one can suspect that the fundamental driver here is income inequality, which happens to be much higher in Latin America. On the other hand, there is Braithwaite and D'Costa's argument that the most authoritarian leaders in Latin America, who have most embraced the US War on Drugs, and have most attracted US geopolitical support during the half century of that war, have also been the leaders who have most strongly defended and strengthened patterns of inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean. Hence, Braithwaite and D'Costa conceive the drug cartel problems of the Americas and their inequality challenges as intertwined in a geopolitics of domination. The empirical and methodological challenge of disentangling these two top predictors in the Nivette meta-analyses is therefore in part a substantive challenge of geopolitical disentanglement. This at least is the Braithwaite and D'Costa (2018) perspective. It is that cascades of domination are fundamental to understanding why crime and war both tend to cascade so much from country to country to constitute regional clusters of high rates of war deaths and high rates of violent crime, as we also see in hot-spot transmission across borders in South Asia and the Great Lakes Region of Africa. War cascades not only to more regional war, but to more crime, and crime cascades to war. Crime cascades to more crime, hot-spot to hot-spot (Braithwaite 2020a).

Since the return of the long-run crime drop (following the great crime rise of 1960–1992), the USA is no longer a high-crime society, but a rather average one in global terms. Among the societies with the highest GDP per capita, however, it remains the society with both the highest homicide rate and the highest levels of income inequality—compared not only with Europe, but also with Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore. So there are multiple levels at which the Americas, North as well as South, are distinctively unequal and distinctively murderous.

This is manifest at more particularized levels as well. Police forces in some democracies may be more than a hundred times as murderous as others, occasionally a thousand times, with Brazil, El Salvador, Jamaica and the Philippines consistently extreme this century (as were many non-democracies, particularly Syria). The USA is exceptionally bad with over 1000 killed by police use of deadly force in many years, while the UK always has fewer than 10 such deaths (3

in 2019).¹ This is American rather than Anglo-Celtic exceptionalism. Even during the years of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, when the crimes of the Royal Ulster Constabulary were shocking, killings *directly* by British police averaged fewer than 10 per year. The USA has by far the highest number of recorded police killings among developed economies every year (with 1146 in 2019 compared to Canada, which is second on the list, with 36 for its most recent data). I interpret this as a war-fighting imaginary of policing that diffuses a little across to Canada, and much more profoundly across to gang-infested communities of Mexico, El Salvador, Jamaica, Colombia, Brazil and quite a number of other countries in the region. Braithwaite and D'Costa (2018, pp. 566–567) argue that the CIA-sponsored School of the Americas that spread from Panama played no coincidental role in cascading domination, inequality, authoritarianism, war, crime, and particularly disappearing of people by the security sector and torture of citizens across the Americas.²

Political authoritarianism and inequality connected to wars on drugs and decapitation strategies that have been counterproductive are of course only one set of a wider range of possible explanations for exceptionalism that can only be fully understood through combining more complex subnational lenses with transnational ones. Slavery is another transnational candidate, especially considering the fact that homicide comparativism reveals Africa to be the region with the second highest rates (after Latin America and the Caribbean). One temptation is to see what is distinctive about these highest homicide societies and regions is the same as what is distinctive about the USA compared to the lower homicide rates of other developed economies. It is that these high-homicide societies, whether in Latin America, the Caribbean or Africa are societies still recovering from the Atlantic slave trade, still recovering from other forms of inter-generational trauma associated with other kinds of great waves of violence (drug wars, civil wars, Apartheid), still societies with high inequality, and societies with a major armed gang problem among the

¹ Various sources of data inform the numbers in this paragraph, but the evidence is fragmented into large numbers of studies of just one county or a comparison of two. Systematic cross-national comparativism of police killings has a long way to go. We cannot be confident of much beyond the claim that cross-national variation is huge and that the situation is particularly bad in the outliers mentioned above. For now, the most comprehensive set of sources can be accessed by searching data such as the 'Fatal Encounters Data Base' in the 74 footnotes of 'List of killings by law enforcement officers by country' on Wikipedia.

² There was, of course, no US monopoly of excellence in disappearing people. The Russians continue in a long tradition of being good at it. French tactics from the Algerian war were translated into the School of the Americas training manual for Latin America (Aguilar and Kovras 2019).

excluded. On the African side of the Atlantic, so many societies have never fully recovered from colonialism and from the internal conflicts associated with capturing victims and selling them to the Americas as slaves on a massive scale. Nunn (2008) found a robust negative relationship between the number of slaves exported from African countries and contemporary economic devastation.

South Africa is a distinctive case of a society with some of the cities with the highest homicide rates on the planet outside the Americas. It is a society where the sins of enslaving Indigenous peoples were compounded by Apartheid as a distinctive post-slavery form of violent racial domination that bore a functional equivalence to slavery. Most societies on the opposite side of the Atlantic are still recovering from the domination, the flogging, the torture that was slavery. In many parts of Latin America, less so in the USA, Indigenous peoples of the Americas were also flogged into slavery and submission to work in plantation economies. These were the survivors of a trans-continental genocide and inter-generational trauma from which First Nations Americans have never fully recovered. Kindred inter-generational trauma is also palpable among Aboriginal Australians, who are even more overrepresented in prisons than African Americans. Across the great Southern continent, the genocide was so total, however, that black survivors of white invasion remained too tiny a proportion of the Australian population to push up crime and imprisonment rates to US levels.

Braithwaite (2020a) also argues that crime prevention is fertile with potential to cascade. Collective efficacy, one of the best ecological explanations of crime in national criminologies (e.g. Sampson et al. 1997), can cascade from hot spot to hot spot to prevent crime. The most historically important social movement for grassroots collective efficacy was the nonviolence movement. Gandhi was its most important early leader, and Martin Luther King its most influential propagator in the Americas. The evidence is now potent that when struggles against domination are advanced nonviolently, they are more likely to prevail politically, and more likely to leave a legacy of freedom in the aftermath of the struggle to destabilize the old order of domination (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011). Just as violence tends to be a cascade phenomenon across space and time, so is nonviolence. Sadly, however, while violence cascades fast, Braithwaite and D'Costa (2018) and Braithwaite (forthcoming) concluded that nonviolence cascades slowly. Blades, bullets and bombs cascade faster than dialogue, peace agreements, and reconciliation. Does this mean that international criminology always tends to regress to be a specialization of pessimists? No, I declare myself among the pathologically optimistic scholars about the possibilities for our field to help make the world a better place, so readers can take the optimism that follows with a grain of salt.

The Cosmopolitan Lens on Prevention

I make no systematic case here for the effectiveness of a cosmopolitan lens to cascade crime prevention internationally. The optimism that follows is only about the potential for intentionally cascading prevention. Nevertheless, criminology should be open to learning from other fields that have a more cosmopolitan ethos. Public health is an exemplar of excellence in a cosmopolitan imaginary. This is not so much about public health policies in the West, but the public health academy globally. It is an academy that has learnt from the history of epidemics and their control that both disease and health are cascade phenomena. When ebola broke out in repeated African waves, many Western public health scholars nimbly shifted their research agendas to focus on Africa. A number of Western academics and public health workers lost their lives to ebola during that African service. The accomplishments of this international evidence-based prevention were impressive, particularly with the early waves that first evolved along the Ebola River of the Democratic Republic of Congo, a country that for most of this century has been at the very bottom of the Human Development Index and the GDP per capita league table. It was fortunate in early waves that ebola broke out in villages across the heart of Africa that often had only one road or one river in and out. So it was possible to seal off this single transport route to prevent spread of ebola to other African villages, and thence across the globe. Spread was also dampened by a sheer deadliness of the disease that meant that a much higher proportion of spreaders died than with Covid-19.

Sadly, of course, when it came to Covid-19, Africans were not the main spreaders. Europeans and Americans were the most prolific spreaders in the aftermath of the initial explosion in Wuhan, China. Westerners were unwilling to impose on themselves in the early months of 2020 the same strictures that Western public health practitioners persuaded African countries to impose with ebola. Western policymakers proved unwilling to learn from African and Asian experience with other recent epidemics such as SARS. For months, Western political leaders refused to apply evidence-based lessons that East Asian countries followed from the get-go with Covid-19, such as mask wearing. Infected Westerners continued to travel maskless not only from village to village, but from city to city, and country to country, especially during February and March 2020 when the first wave globalized. Because Western political leaders knew that they had not prepared with sufficient PPE even to supply their health workers, some spread phony narratives during March 2020 that it was not a great idea for ordinary citizens to wear masks because they might not use them properly! In Australia, there was

an initial racist policy response of banning flights from China, a country that was successfully containing the virus, while keeping flights open from the USA, United Kingdom, France and Italy, that were a much graver threat to Australia because they were neglecting early containment, contact tracing, mask wearing, and because they had no credible pandemic control plan ready to swing quickly into action. Flights were banned from major Chinese cities with zero infections while flights continued from the Western cities from which most of the infection spread. Fortunately, this error was reversed reasonably quickly in the Australian case.

What a deadly paradox it was that the Eastern hemisphere societies closest to the original outbreak had the lowest death rates and the Western hemisphere the highest death rates. Westerners like to interpret this as about not only Chinese authoritarian control of societies but also the authoritarianism of large countries bordering China with exceptionally low infection rates, such as Vietnam. This was not very persuasive when countries from the Eastern hemisphere that were every bit as democratic as the USA, such as South Korea, Taiwan, New Zealand and Australia also had low infection rates. What distinguished these societies was that because they received more of a fright from previous pandemics, their leaderships were better prepared for pandemic prevention (Braithwaite 2020b).

At the end of the day, however, the heroes of Covid response were a cosmopolitan health academy, epitomised by Dr. Anthony Fauci in the USA (as a counterpoint to his political master, Donald Trump). In the end, the professionals' evidence-based messaging even persuaded Donald Trump to go Asian and wear a mask quite often. Of course, the health research academy did much more; they institutionalized a degree of international collaboration with WHO on gradual global roll-out of Covid tests with fewer and fewer false negatives and lower cost, and then globalization of access to a range of vaccine options for a safer future (against huge political currents of vaccine nationalism). They diffused global diffusion of lessons learned on contact tracing strategies, treatment in ICUs, and much more. So we might conceive of the American Society of Criminology, in creating its new journal, *International Criminology*, as taking a step toward creating future cosmopolitan Faucis of criminology. If I am right that crimes, like viruses, are cascade phenomena, we have an ethical duty as a field to do so. Braithwaite and D'Costa (2018) and Braithwaite (forthcoming) argue that abandoning the war-on-crime model in favour of restorative justice writ large has promise for interrupting the violence of civil wars, gang wars and drug wars in the societies most afflicted by them—from Afghanistan to Colombia. Systematic quantitative evidence at this macro level is being collected, but is lacking for now, and the case study

evidence is qualitatively complex about successes and failures.

Missed Australian Opportunities to Prevent American Corporate Crime

Let me provide Australian examples of missed criminological opportunities to show the way toward a cosmopolitan preventive imagination. The first relates to prevention of BP's 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill across the Gulf of Mexico. The second is the tech wreck (dotcom) Wall Street crash of 2001, more particularly the bankruptcy of Arthur Andersen at that time and of a number of companies Arthur Andersen audited, such as Enron. The third example is a failure of Australian cosmopolitanism to make a contribution to preventing banksters from cascading dirty money globally.

Deepwater Horizon

A criminal penalty of \$1.26 billion was imposed on BP for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill that caused environmental devastation and loss of life in the Gulf of Mexico, plus more than \$28 billion in payments by BP across a combination of civil penalties, civil suits, and voluntary payments in compensation or for clean-up. The preventive opportunity that could have been deployed by a cosmopolitan imagination on the part of Australian law enforcement, however, related to the decisive culpability of BP's contractor, Halliburton Corporation. A cosmopolitan approach to the Timor Sea oil spill, uncappable for 75 days, could have prevented the Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico that repeated this uncappability for 86 days a year later, for the same reason as the Australian spill, at the hands of the same offending contractor, Halliburton.

On 21 August 2009 Australia suffered an off-shore blow-out from a drilling platform in the Timor Sea that could not be capped. The Australian enforcement diagnosis was that the defective concrete base of the oil well installed by Halliburton caused the catastrophic environmental devastation from the spill (Bradshaw 2010; Gold and Casselman 2010). This revelation was not internationalised at the time. The Australian regulator could have insisted, as part of its enforcement response, that Halliburton retain independent engineering consultants to investigate whether dozens of off-shore wells Halliburton had cemented worldwide, including in the Gulf of Mexico, posed like risks across the oceans of the world. The historical record shows that the Australian regulator did not do so and the next year a BP deep-sea drilling base cemented by Halliburton also failed, causing a like environmental catastrophe in the Gulf of Mexico.

Given that Halliburton dominates the world's well cementing business with one other company, the Timor Sea

tragedy might have connected the dots and drawn attention to the magnitude of risk flagged by ‘a 2007 study by three U.S. Minerals Management Service officials [that] found that cementing was a factor in 18 of 39 well blowouts in the Gulf of Mexico over a 14-year period’ (Gold and Caselman 2010). It is a measure of the poverty of our global conversation about how to make business ethics work in contemporary conditions that citizens of the Gulf of Mexico did not protest Australia’s failure to adopt a more cosmopolitan ethic in its contribution to regulating environmental crime.

So a positive side of globalizing tendencies for crises to cascade from one country to another is that when corporate enforcement fails in one country, there are opportunities for ethically entrepreneurial enforcement to cascade from other countries that might be less captured by firms like Halliburton. An Australian regulator requiring Halliburton to make public future problems it is risking in the Gulf of Mexico after those problems have been revealed in the Timor Sea is an example of what this prevention looks like. By opening multiple possible pathways for prevention to work, cosmopolitan prevention makes capture of national policy processes more vulnerable to contestation by foreign voices for justice. These foreign voices can be more difficult for national elites to contain. The idea is that the shadow of the sword of foreign national punishment hanging over corporate offenders might be threatened with a cosmopolitan ethic to prevent comparably catastrophic corporate crimes in other countries. Better still, *many* national regulators can prevent corporate crime in other countries by requiring their offenders to investigate and make public whether problems the firm has caused in their country might also be happening in other countries.

Arthur Andersen, Enron et al.

Braithwaite (forthcoming) argues that the collapse of Enron and other US companies, as well as major Australian corporations audited by Arthur Andersen, might have been prevented by the Australian Taxation Office or other Australian regulators. How? When Arthur Andersen partners came to senior Australian regulatory officials in the 1990s to apologise for the conduct of a ‘rogue partner’ who had allowed serious tax fraud to occur, that was the time to sit in a restorative circle with senior partners of the firm to discuss the culture of compliance and business integrity within Arthur Andersen (Australia). This means stakeholders in an alleged injustice sitting in a circle to discuss who has been harmed, what needs do they have, what can be done to repair that harm, meet those needs, and prevent future harm. It would have been revealed that the ‘rogue partner’ was not a rogue partner at all, but manifested what had become the core culture of Arthur Andersen. The ‘rogue partner’ would have defended themselves by explaining this

was what they were trained and expected to do. This was what head office in Chicago also wanted them to do. Some of their friends within the firm might have supported them in this. Perhaps more importantly, some retired old hand who had mentored the ‘rogue partner’ could, with support from the Australian regulator, be brought into the restorative circle by that partner as a supporter. She might argue in the process of supporting the rogue partner that the compliance culture at Arthur Andersen had changed for the worse (which it definitely had, enforced internationally from its US corporate headquarters). The idea is that this might have triggered agreement in the regulatory circle for a thorough internal investigation into the compliance culture of Arthur Andersen that reached to corporate headquarters in Chicago, conducted by outside counsel.

The model here was what was seen with McCloy’s (1976) internal and international investigation two decades earlier with bribery in Gulf Oil as a prelude to the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act becoming law in the USA and then more globally. McCloy’s Gulf Oil report in turn was an international cascade of bribery self-investigation reports by outside counsel that started when the Lockheed Corporation’s³ accountants refused to certify its books because bribes had been paid in many countries to officials as prominent as Prime Minister Tanaka of Japan. The germinal prevention strategy of Securities and Exchange Commission Director of Enforcement from 1975, Stanley Sporkin, was to persuade most Fortune 500 companies to complete international self-investigation reports, because Sporkin promised and delivered prosecutions of companies that had failed to do this when undisclosed international bribery was subsequently revealed.

Such an Australian-mandated self-investigation by outside counsel might also have caused Arthur Anderson to meet its legal obligations as a gatekeeper to the fraudulent accounting of companies like Australian insurance giant, HIH, and Enron that crashed some years later (in 2001), thanks to Arthur Andersen criminality. This also might have averted the bankruptcy of Arthur Andersen itself as a result of the criminal prosecution targeting its accounting practices at Enron and other US corporations. Tens of thousands of innocent Arthur Andersen employees, not to mention greater numbers in many firms like Enron and HIH, lost their jobs as a result of Andersen’s reckless culture and leadership. This was a cascade of corporate crime that was particularly preventable from Australia because my 1990s Australian

³ Lockheed is Lockheed Martin today, the world’s largest defence contracting corporation. Then in the 1970s, as today, it was in the business of persuading foreign governments to buy Lockheed aircraft. Unfortunately, Lockheed was revealed by the US Securities and Exchange Commission in the 1970s to be securing many of those foreign sales by bribes.

corporate crime research revealed that the global problem was evident to Australian regulators earlier than its visibility in many other countries (Braithwaite 2005).

Because what restorative justice does in this circumstance is pause national criminal punishment in return for a voluntary corporate self-investigation report that recommends effective reforms to prevent future crimes by the organization *globally*, the cosmopolitan regulator does something of far greater moment than a narrowly national prosecution. Corporate leaders in the USA tend to leave an Australian criminal case to its Australian lawyers and management. A worldwide report of outside counsel into patterns of corporate criminality across jurisdictions, triggered in Australia, is a different matter and can cause leaders in the USA to sit up and take notice. Hopefully, the outside counsel would also send a copy of her report to the US Securities and Exchange Commission. The Australian Taxation Office was not the only Australian regulator that had an early warning of the criminal turn in the corporate culture of Arthur Andersen. A hope is that in a future more cosmopolitan regulatory culture this might have forced the hand of US regulators to prevent the catastrophe that was to follow. Of course not every outside counsel is as gifted and gilded with the political aura that John J. McCloy brought to the Gulf Oil case. On the other hand, cases with this global import are opportunities for leaders with the stature of John J. McCloy's to leave another legacy in their retirement years to make the world a better place.

Fisse and Braithwaite (1993) argued that BCCI (Bank of Credit and Commerce International) was another case where regulators in many countries, probably including Australia, could have acted preventively. In many places around the world, criminal cases were launched against the bank for a wide variety of commercial offences. Each of these national cases created an opportunity for regulatory cosmopolitanism. BCCI is remembered by the CIA as the Bank of Crooks and Criminals International (Passas 1997). They should know. The CIA used the London-based bank extensively (Hosenball 1991; Passas 1996). By some measures the seventh largest bank in the world, BCCI had the greatest part of its real banking in London. In the end the bank destabilized the government of Prime Minister John Major, pushing large numbers of British businesses into bankruptcy when \$US15 billion disappeared.

Two of the top four shareholders in BCCI were the former head of Saudi intelligence and the Sheik of Abu Dhabi (UAE). White House staffer Oliver North used BCCI for the Iran-Contra deal. So did Manuel Noriega, Saddam Hussein, Colombian cocaine cartels, Syrian gun runners, Palestinian terrorists, the Afghan opium trade, the Afghan Mujahiddin, and Osama Bin Laden. What the CIA may not have known was that BCCI financed the purchase of illegal US materials for the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission. Or perhaps

when the CIA did get to know this in an era when Pakistan was developing nuclear weapons and refusing to eschew first use of them against India, BCCI was allowed to crash.

Australia should have been alert to the regulatory dangers of BCCI to the global financial system because it had hosted the dirty money predecessor of BCCI, the Nugan Hand Bank, that was also used by the CIA (McCoy et al. 1972; Toohey 2019).⁴ It was much smaller than BCCI, but it caused reputable Australian investors to lose a lot of money when it crashed in 1980. One principal of Nugan Hand, Michael Hand, a former American Green Beret and covert operations expert, disappeared after he and other bank employees were indicted for destruction of bank records. He was later found to be working in the USA under a new identity. The other principal, Frank Nugan, was found with a self-inflicted gunshot to the head on a remote dirt road. The body was surrounded by footprints of other men, leading police to speculate that he had been given an opportunity to shoot himself or suffer a more unpleasant end. A good vehicle of cosmopolitan incapacitation would have been an independent Australian high-level commission into drug money, weapons smuggling and dirty money banks, jointly into Nugan Hand after it collapsed, and BCCI, as its successor in this market in vice, before BCCI reached the peak of its criminality. Commission findings could have caused international regulators to incapacitate BCCI in their countries before the Bank of Crooks and Criminals International did more damage.

Nugan-Hand and BCCI might have been convenient for the CIA, but banks that specialized in dirty money was a deeply dangerous idea that cosmopolitan regulation should have mobilized to end. The sad sequel to their historical contribution is that, four decades on, a larger proportion of the most reputable banks in the world are criminalized in the twenty-first century than was the case in the twentieth century. BCCI showed mainstream banks how much money could be made by moving dirty money around the globe. A lot of the most 'reputable' banks, including some in Australia, were enticed by the lure of those profits. These banks wilfully allowed themselves to be used to improve the efficiency of markets in vice controlled by drug king-pins, weapons traffickers, armed groups, and paedophile rings. Nugan Hand and BCCI also taught 'reputable' banks that a good way to secure impunity from money laundering excess was to be 'useful' to the most powerful national security states, even to its representatives working inside the White House such as Colonel Oliver North, when some of their spookier agents needed to launder money. When mega banks

⁴ Madsen (2016, p. 69) concluded 'BCCI became the CIA's bank of choice for covert money laundering and financial transactions after the collapse of Nugan Hand Merchant Bank'.

with huge reputations are criminalized, they are perceived by great powers as too dangerous and too big to fail. Actually, banks are too big and dangerous not to fail when they refuse to shut down criminality that can run to something as dangerous as the flow of cash to secret nuclear weapons programs.

A low water mark in the integrity of US law enforcement came in 2012 when Obama Administration Attorney General Holder announced that there would be no prosecution of HSBC for money laundering on a massive scale to Mexican drug cartels, Iranian terrorists, and other mega criminals to the tune of trillions of dollars. The reason Holder gave publicly was that some banks were ‘too big to prosecute’. HSBC (formerly the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation), was a British bank, the biggest bank in Europe. It was so well connected with state power that the UK’s Chancellor of the Exchequer engaged in heavy-handed lobbying of the Obama Administration to warn that criminal charges against HSBC could lead to a ‘global financial disaster’ (Coffee 2020, pp. 12, 31). The commanding heights of finance capital can service the biggest crooks, be a trillion dollar recidivist, but still command impunity from the most powerful states. It is interesting to ponder if timely Australian corporate criminal enforcement against Nugan-Hand when it was so puny compared to HSBC could have helped deliver a world of global finance capital today that is less in service of organized crime and national spy networks, and less subject to impunity. International outrage that the UK and US states were conceiving HSBC as too big to fail, too big to jail, and even too big to nail, at least motivated HSBC to volunteer large fines under a 2013 deferred prosecution agreement in the US that accepted responsibility for widespread money laundering (Coffee 2020, pp. 31–32).

Conclusion

Crime problems can cascade around the globe as nasty contagions. Even accepting that, we might consider transforming our field by changing criminology’s storybook (Shearing and Ericson 1991). My argument has been that stories of cosmopolitan prevention might inspire innovation in criminology, just as stories of stopping ebola inspired public health innovation that provided lessons learned for ending the Covid catastrophe. Braithwaite (forthcoming) argues that criminology has tended to have an overly truncated perception of the part it can play in preventing the worst catastrophes that befall the planet, such as the globalization of slavery, financial crises, ecocide and genocide. International criminology that incubates a cosmopolitan imagination holds a key to criminology making that modest contribution alongside other disciplines that can give the world justice as a better future (Froestad and Shearing 2012).

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest We declare that there is no conflict of interest. The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that seem to affect the work reported in this article.

Ethical Approval We declare that we have no human participants, human data, or human tissues.

Informed Consent We do not have any individual person’s data in any form.

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