

We've got as far as having fig leaves

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The [FT includes an all too familiar tale](#) of recently looted Nigerian wealth having to be traced through US courts to assist recovery processes this morning. The piece rightly condemns the all too apparent ease with which such abuse still takes place in Nigeria. But it adds the following telling comment:

Part of the difficulty is in proving criminal intent in Nigeria where top officials have huge powers to award oil contracts, however detrimental they might be to the interests of the nation. Another part of the problem is in the west. The US and European countries have adopted many laws with which to wage war on global corruption. But a law is only as good as the resources and commitment devoted to carrying it out. On both counts, western efforts look Janus-faced – giving the appearance of propriety while in reality encouraging the opposite.

What the FT describes is a process described by my friend [Prof Atul Shah](#) as 'constructive non-compliance'. Things look good on paper in a system that's constructively non-compliant. It's just nothing actually happens. And in this case that means that our banks keep laundering the money, and so the corruption continues.

One day, maybe, we'll actually impose our laws. Right now we've got as far as having fig leaves. And that's not good enough.

Which leads to the obvious question any three year old could and would ask. That, of course is 'Why?' Why is our politics happy with this? Answers on the bank of a £20 note in a plain envelope please to those who direct policy on this issue.