

State capture starts right here in the UK

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The [FT has an article this morning](#) on corruption in South Africa in which it is said:

What is it about South Africa that is so toxic? And what, if anything, links these four corporate car wrecks? The answer is to be found in a single term: state capture.

To South Africans, it is a frequent topic of radio phone-ins and even inspired a hip-hop song. Yet outside South Africa, the term, first used by the World Bank in about 2000 to describe how former Soviet economies were being bent to the will of oligarchs, barely registers.

If it does not then it should. As the FT notes:

Transparency International, the anti-corruption watchdog, defines state capture as “a situation where powerful individuals, institutions, companies or groups within or outside a country use corruption to shape a nation’s policies, legal environment and economy to benefit their own private interests”.

As usual, Transparency International is too generous to those engaged in corruption by offering a definition that makes it too easy to restrict consideration of the issue to what might be called the more obvious suspects. The FT actually does better when saying:

State capture is more systematic than plain vanilla (banknote-stuffed envelope) corruption, which seeks to exploit existing opportunities. State capture goes one better by changing personnel, regulations and laws to work in one’s favour.

But they do acknowledge:

As well as eastern Europe, says Transparency International, examples of state capture exist elsewhere, including the US, Singapore and South Korea.

But here the FT is also guilty of complicit involvement. Failing to mention that the UK has a government very largely dedicated to the interests of big business and those who run it, and not mentioning the extensive revolving doors that now characterise the

relationship between UK business and government, means the FT unforgivably fails to note that state capture is happening here on its doorstep in the UK.

Shame on it.