

Why Nothing Works

identifying and quantifying the Goat Rodeo governance antipattern

When a stream of revenue large enough to finance an armed group cannot be extracted by any legitimate nonviolent enterprise the businessmen who arise in this niche are by their very nature violent and illicit Warlord Entrepreneurs.

It would be easy to dismiss these actors as phenomena of the edges, like cracks in neglected sidewalks, but they are really phenomena of *failure*, and failure is everywhere once you let yourself see it. In a stable, competitive environment business eats the lunch of prospective WEs. Vast capital assets and human resources will always win against the comparatively small and disorganized WE businesses. But things fall apart, the center cannot hold, and there a certain somebody does business where the State, IBM and Wal-Mart have all failed.

What fails? Some say rule of law. Others, property rights, or the State itself. I say it is *accountability* that fails: when nobody is willing to go to the wall for what is right, the failure that counts has started. The gap between *no profit for business* and *loss of State legitimacy* is filled with corrupt authorities. A WE's *customers* were first turned away by regular service providers, then alienated from the State. The WE is always last.

America's past Warlord Entrepreneurs are lionized. The Mafia and Vegas, their town, provided a service: *vice*. Once *vice* included alcohol, but now it is just drugs and prostitution. For Vegas to exist, the State has to turn a blind eye to warlord ops, not just for a few years, but for decades. In this crisis, a failure of values, comes the inevitable transfer of legitimacy from the State to Big Joe the Ukranian who genuinely cares about your problem as he is *personally responsible* for your money, and for the *merchandise*. He will take personal responsibility for outcomes, unlike all other actors involved in the situation, who hide behind job titles, policies and badges. Dragons grow in this gap.

The little man who fixes visas grows teeth and becomes the criminal logistics magnate of a war-torn city. His protection racket works because *this is not Iowa* and his men are *accountable*. Five AK47 and an old Toyota become *civilization's darned needle* holding together enough to let life go on just one more day. Everybody knows its wrong, but in these times, what else to do? The WE delivers when nobody else can.

We lost our legitimacy at the **Goat Rodeo**. Again and again chains of command and responsibility are abrogated in complex shared governance arrangements that produce no responsible parties when failure comes. From no-fault divorce through to Kyoto/Copenhagen/Cancun and the Millennium Development Goals we plead that none of us are responsible, because all of us are. WEs eat this for breakfast.

		goals	
		same	different
players	same	cartel	competition
	different	cooperation	goat rodeo*

I	a divorce
II	a commune
III	a dying industry
IV	a toxic watershed
V	NATO / EU
VI	UN
VII	the bank crisis
VII	a pandemic
IX	climate, MDGs
X	nanobio regulation

A Goat Rodeo occurs when a group sets out to solve a problem, but has different goals and different kinds of players. Lacking a shared competitive framework or genuinely shared goals, the situation inevitably devolves into failure. The size of the failure can be estimated using the scale on the right. To prevent Goat Rodeos, permit only a single class of players to participate, or fix the goal and bar all others.