



Seven Sins of Highly Ineffective Government

by [Kaushik Das](#)

I am sure that those who have seen David Fincher's spectacular thriller "Seven" must be aware of the "seven deadly sins" that encapsulates all that is wrong in this world, even though they are not actions in themselves. However, for those unaware, the seven sins are: pride, lust, wrath, sloth, greed, gluttony and envy. Each of these seven deadly sins are normal emotions and everyone experiences them in daily life. The seven deadly sins are actually attitudes, which early Christians listed as the causes of human misbehavior. They are not "sins," but they're the underlying causes of sinful actions.

Thomas Hobbes in his masterpiece Leviathan (1651) justified the importance of the almighty state so as to prevent society from disintegrating into immorality and thus making life miserable for the people. However, this has clearly proved to be an illusion of grandeur. In reality, the state has itself proved to be a predator in the annals of time.

I will seek to establish in this article that these "seven deadly sins" are also the characteristic features of the ineffective governments that we have all around the world.

Let us start with **pride**. Pride is excessive belief in one's own abilities, or in common parlance, ego-tripping. Is it very difficult to identify our present-day governments, swelling with the false pride of delivering the best administration and social security to its citizens? This incorrigible lot demands respect from the citizens, which surely they don't deserve. Wanting the power of respect is clearly a sin of pride.

The government's **lust** for power needs no enlightenment. If we agree to the basic presumption that human beings are rational, that they always act in their self-interest, it is not difficult to draw the logical conclusion that the state also seeks to maximize its self-interest, that of re-election. The incumbent political party will go to any extremes, be it the manipulation of key macro-variables of the economy to create an illusion of high sustainable growth, or satisfying specific interest groups through subsidies to ensure their re-election. Lust is blind to consequences, and it may prove to be fatal for the society. And it is no secret that **power corrupts**.

Wrath can be described as anger, abuse, violence, racial hatred, etc. The modern state has proved to be predatory in nature, indulging in coercion and legal plunder. It restricts individual freedom in the name of paternity. Instead of putting an end to the repulsive legal plunder, it perverts the law through greed and false philanthropy to suit its need. In the words of the famous French legislator Frederic Bastiat: “**No legal plunder: This is the principle of justice, peace, order, stability, and logic.**”

Sloth has kind of become a trademark with the modern state. The indolent attitude of the government enterprises in performing their tasks has resulted in huge losses for the economy. It is apt to comment in this respect that “some people are dissatisfied with free enterprise if it doesn't work **perfectly**, and satisfied with government if it performs at all.”

The sin of **greed** is very close to that of lust for power. But there is a subtle difference. Greed is wanting the power to force someone to do according to your wish. Therefore, greed is the wish to live and prosper at other people's expenses with the least possible pain. This is so characteristic of our modern statist administration, which amasses millions from the citizens to enrich itself, whereas the poor get poorer by the day. The expenditure of one day of holding office in parliament runs in the millions. Though these sessions are completely unproductive, the politicians find it quite comfortable to keep a straight face and declare they are in their earnest to keep the futile Hobbesian dream alive.

Gluttony is an inordinate desire to consume more than that which one requires. Isn't this true of the burgeoning state, which has an insatiable appetite to devour its citizens' money in the most promiscuous way by channeling scarce resources into unproductive means? The state runs huge fiscal deficits each year because it enjoys an unfettered license to fool around with other people's earnings. It does not require much intellectual aptitude to appreciate the simple fact that people seem to care less about things that are not their own. Hence it is intuitive that a person is bound to spend his earnings a lot more carefully than if the state takes this exercise.

The last of the seven sins is **envy**. Envy is the desire for others' traits, status, abilities, or situation. It is not uncommon to find a cold war brewing between different governments of the world. Instead of indulging in constructive discussions and actions like free trade, which results in a win-win situation for all the countries, the governments seem to promulgate retaliatory policies, which hurt all the countries. What's wrong with our statist administration is that they demand a lot of things but are not prepared to take the necessary steps for their attainment.

The psychological killer John Doe's (the character was played by Kevin Spacey in the movie) chilling dialogue at the end of the movie still resonates in the mind of those who have watched this fabulous movie. ***"That's the point. You see a deadly sin on almost every street corner, and in every home, literally. And we tolerate it. Because it's common, it seems trivial, and we tolerate, all day long, morning, noon and night. Not anymore."*** Yet at another place he says ***"Wanting people to pay attention, you can't just tap them on the shoulder. You have to hit them in the head with a sledgehammer. Then, you have their strict attention."***

Similarly, we have tolerated the statist tyranny for a significant period of time. It is high time we rearrange our thoughts and embark on a constructive struggle to pull down the rapacious state before it paves its own path to the inevitable debacle.



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