IDS

EVIDENCE REPORT
No 72

Addressing and Mitigating Violence

Getting Real About an Illicit 'External Stressor':
Transnational Cocaine Trafficking through
West Africa

Markus Schultze-Kraft

June 2014

GETTING REAL ABOUT AN ILLICIT 'EXTERNAL STRESSOR': TRANSNATIONAL COCAINE TRAFFICKING THROUGH WEST AFRICA

Markus Schultze-Kraft

June 2014

Contents

Tables

Acknowledgements

Executive summary

Concerns over West Africa's increasingly prominent role as transhipment point of South American cocaine en route to Europe are mounting. Gathering pace in the mid-2000s, large-scale drug trafficking has been associated with recent episodes of political instability and violence in Guinea-Bissau, Guinea and Mali. It is also perceived as a serious threat to democratic institutions, governance and development in other, more stable countries of the region, such as Ghana; and as potentially contributing to reversing the hard-won end to the armed conflicts that ravaged Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire in the 1990s and 2000s.

Yet it is crucial to recognise that cocaine trafficking through West Africa has thus far not resulted in levels of violence comparable to those witnessed in several Latin American drug source and transit countries. The big policy challenge for West Africa is therefore not to curb the flow of cocaine through the region in order to reduce trafficking-related violence, but to effectively tackle the negative impacts – both existing and potential – of the illegal trade on governance and development in the region's weak, unstable and impoverished states. Conventional drug control strategies, oriented towards law enforcement, are not well suited to help with this. Bold new policy responses are called for.

These concerns mirror heightened awareness within the international development community about the negative effects of what the World Bank's *World Development Report 2011* calls 'external stresses' on development, poverty reduction, governance and security in countries in Africa and other regions affected by state fragility and violence. External stresses – military invasion, external support for domestic rebels, cross-border conflict spillovers, illicit trafficking, international terrorism and criminal networks, and price shocks – are believed to combine with internal ones – low income levels, youth unemployment, corruption, and human rights abuses – resulting in elevated levels of 'stress' and 'new' forms of violence. Mitigating the negative effects of external stresses requires, in the World Bank's analysis, the affected countries to build 'buffering institutions' at the national level and enhance cooperation with their regional neighbours.

This report interrogates the stressor framework and applies it to the case of transnational cocaine trafficking through West Africa. The key innovation presented is that internal and external stresses should not be conceptualised as separate but actually as *relating to and reinforcing one another* for they are interconnected through transnational actors and processes that are part of broader globalising dynamics. In the case of illicit drug trafficking, such as the prohibited trade in cocaine, these dynamics should be understood as manifestations of 'illicit globalisation'. While there is a need for a much better empirical understanding of how transnational criminal networks operate in West Africa and what impact trafficking has on the region's states and governance, the problem at hand is arguably of a different order of magnitude than involvement in other illicit trades, which have been a constant for a long time in West Africa.

The interplay between internal and external factors may not only result in exacerbating the existing weaknesses but can actually lead to the emergence of (a) a qualitatively different set of challenges for West African states due to the transnational nature of drug trafficking understood as forming part of broader processes of (illicit) globalisation; and (b) new political equilibriums and settlements, which are, however, likely to be unstable, exclusionary and – sometimes – violence-prone. Externally designed and funded strategies to curb the flow of illicit drugs through West Africa are not taking these realities into account sufficiently. Focused on the overarching goal of reducing the availability of cocaine in Europe by shutting

down the trafficking routes through the region, they ignore the political economy of drug trafficking in countries such as Guinea-Bissau, Ghana or Mali. Not only does this undercut the programmes' chances of 'success', it can also contribute to increasing the likelihood of political instability and governance failure.

It is critical to recognise that establishing stronger national institutions and strengthening regional cooperation should not be equated primarily with enhancing law enforcement, drug interdiction and judicial capacities. Broader political, economic and governance reforms are called for. The major task at hand is to devise strategies that effectively enable and support West Africa's states to manage the opportunities afforded to them by, and the pressures resulting from, processes of illicit globalisation in such a way that the incentives for national elites and their patronage-dependent constituencies to engage in trafficking are reduced; and the incentives to build more accountable, legitimate and effective public institutions are increased. This requires action at the global, regional and national levels.

1   Introduction

In the past ten years, concerns have risen over West Africa's increasingly prominent role as a transhipment point of South American cocaine en route to Europe. Large-scale drug trafficking has been associated with recent episodes of political instability and violence in Guinea-Bissau, Guinea and Mali and is also perceived as a serious threat to democratic institutions, governance and development in other, more stable countries of the region, such as Ghana. Supported by specialised UN agencies, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), other international organisations and Western governments, the members of the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS) have taken steps to tackle the problem, notably by committing in 2008 to a comprehensive regional action plan to combat transnational drug trafficking and organised crime. The UN Secretary General and the UN Security Council (UNSC) have repeatedly warned that the hard-won end to the armed conflicts that ravaged Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire in the 1990s and 2000s is at risk of being reversed. A UNSC statement of July 2012 read,

> despite significant progress in the consolidation of peace in West Africa, recent seizures of power, armed insurrection, piracy, terrorist threats and increased illicit traffic [mean] that the security situation [is] precarious and reversible and continued international assistance [is] critical in support of regional efforts.
> (UN Security Council 2012)

These concerns mirror heightened awareness within the international development community about the negative effects of 'external stresses' on development, poverty reduction, governance and security in countries in Africa and other regions affected by state fragility and violence. The *World Development Report 2011* (World Bank 2011a) on conflict, security and development has been instrumental in catalysing debate about these issues in the development community, including at the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), Germany's Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the European Commission (EC) and others. External stresses – military invasion, external support for domestic rebels, cross-border conflict spillovers, international terrorism and criminal networks, and price shocks – are believed to combine with internal ones – low income levels, youth unemployment, corruption and human rights abuses – resulting in elevated levels of 'stress' and 'new' forms of violence which are '[supplementing] continued preoccupations with conventional war between and within countries' (World Bank 2011b: 1). Mitigating the negative effects of external stresses requires the affected countries, in the World Bank's analysis, to build 'buffering institutions' at the national level and enhance cooperation with their regional neighbours.

This report interrogates the stressor framework and applies it to the case of transnational cocaine trafficking through West Africa. The key conceptual innovation presented is that internal and external stresses should not be conceptualised as separate but actually as *relating to* and *reinforcing* one another for they are interconnected through transnational actors and processes that are part of broader globalising dynamics. In the case of illicit drug trafficking, such as the prohibited trade in cocaine, these dynamics should be understood as manifestations of 'illicit globalisation' (Andreas 2011). Not only cocaine trafficking itself, but also international and regional strategies to control it, reflect the region's insertion into globalising dynamics, albeit on the back of both illegal trade and efforts to stop it.

While this report discusses extensively the need for a much better empirical understanding of how transnational criminal networks operate in West Africa and what impact trafficking has on the region's states and governance, the problem at hand is arguably of a different order of

magnitude than involvement in other illicit trades, which have been a constant for a long time in West Africa. Drug trafficking not only carries the risk of exacerbating existing institutional and governance weaknesses, cementing poverty and potentially spurring violence, but also has the potential to prompt the emergence of new, qualitatively different challenges for West Africa's states that require bold and innovative policy responses.

Focusing on building stronger national institutions and enhancing regional cooperation without paying due attention to the political economy of trafficking and the transformative effects it – potentially – has on power relationships and governance in West Africa is likely to meet with disappointment. In this respect, it is critical to recognise that in the case of drug trafficking, establishing stronger institutions should not be equated with primarily enhancing law enforcement, drug interdiction and judicial capacities, though this is important as well. Broader political, economic and governance reforms are called for. The major task at hand is to devise strategies that effectively enable and support West Africa's states to manage the opportunities afforded to them by, and the pressures resulting from, processes of illicit globalisation in such a way that the incentives for national elites and their patronage-dependent constituencies to engage in trafficking are reduced; and the incentives to build more accountable, legitimate and effective public institutions are increased. This requires action at the global, regional and national levels.

Starting with a brief critical discussion of the binary internal–external/fragility–vulnerability model presented in the *World Development Report 2011*, the paper continues with a description of cocaine trafficking through West Africa and its estimated size, analyses the relationship between the region's states and transnational criminality, addresses the question of the risk of increased violence in West Africa on account of transnational cocaine trafficking, and ends with a set of policy recommendations. It should be noted that the report focuses on cocaine and not on other prohibited substances because of the prominence cocaine has gained in trafficking dynamics in West Africa in recent years. The report is also centred on analysing issues that are related to the trafficking of cocaine, not its use. Finally, while there are of course significant differences between individual West African states in terms of their institutional strengths and weaknesses, levels of socioeconomic development and political histories, the report adopts a regional perspective. This is complemented by country-specific analysis and illustrations, including from the South American cocaine source countries, with a focus on two West African countries that arguably are at the extreme end of the scale of penetration by transnational criminal networks: Guinea-Bissau and Guinea.

2 'External stresses': what's behind a term?

The *World Development Report 2011* (World Bank 2011a) highlights the centrality of 'internal stresses' and 'external stresses' for generating insecurity and increasing the risk of violence in fragile countries. Among the major *internal* stresses identified by the World Bank are economic factors such as low income levels, youth unemployment, and corruption; security-related factors such as legacies of armed conflict; and justice-related factors such as human rights abuses and impunity. Major *external* stresses are linked to military invasion and occupation, external support for domestic rebels, cross-border conflict spillovers, international terrorism and criminal networks, price shocks, and perceptions of global inequity and injustice in the treatment of ethnic or religious groups.

Fundamentally concerned with the human development and security of over a quarter of the world's population that live in fragile and conflict-affected states, the World Bank identifies 'organised crime and trafficking, civil unrest due to global economic shocks [and] terrorism' as responsible for spawning 'new' forms of violence that have 'supplemented continued preoccupations with conventional war between and within countries' (World Bank 2011b: 1). Adopting a 'stressor' approach drawn from contemporary resilience thinking,[1] the report argues that the risk of 'new' forms of conflict and violence stems from the

> combination of the exposure to internal and external stresses and the strength of the 'immune system', or the social capability for coping with stress embodied in legitimate institutions... Countries and subnational areas with the weakest institutional legitimacy and governance are the most vulnerable to violence and instability and the least able to respond to internal and external stresses.
> (World Bank 2011b: 7)

As Michael Watts puts it, 'the centrepiece of the vulnerability model [employed by the World Bank] is the concept of institutional capacity and legitimacy. Societies that rely on elite pacts, coercion, and patronage risk cyclical violence' (Watts 2012: 120). The *World Development Report 2011* posits that such countries lack sufficiently robust 'buffering institutions' with the capacity to absorb external shocks and prevent the shockwaves from wreaking political, social and economic havoc. In short, in the World Bank's analysis, state fragility (internal) combines with vulnerability (external) to create situations in which the risk and adverse impacts of 'new' forms of violence on states, societies and citizens increase significantly.

This narrative about external stresses and state vulnerability is useful in as much as it makes explicit that instability and political disorder are not merely related to domestic weaknesses of fragile and conflict-affected states, but are also conditioned by outside forces. Using the language of 'internal' versus 'external' and portraying the state as a normally 'healthy' entity that comes under stress from both internal and external actors and variables allows the World Bank to communicate its argument in easily understandable terms to a broad, non-specialist audience. However, by doing so, it runs the risk of over-simplifying complex issues

---

[1] Originally developed by scholars working on systems ecology, in the past few decades resilience 'as a science of complex adaptive systems and an operational strategy of risk management' has 'infiltrated vast areas of the social sciences, becoming a regular, if under-theorised, term of art in discussions of international finance and economic policy, corporate risk analysis... development policy... and national security' (Walker and Cooper 2011: 143). Applied resilience thinking, such as in the *World Development Report 2011*, is essentially based on the assumption that shocks and threats to political systems and institutions cannot be fully predicted and prevented for they are constitutive and inherent features of social life and organisation. 'The catastrophic event (natural, social or economic)... becomes a sign not of the occasional failure to predict, prevent and manage crisis but of the systemic limits to public management and state planning' (*ibid.*: 154). In this vein, it is held that a 'strategy of resilience replaces the short-term relief effort – with its aim of restoring the status quo ante through post-catastrophe reconstruction – with a call to permanent adaptability in and through crisis' (*ibid.*: 154).

and framing the analysis in a way that reduces its usefulness for policy purposes. It also runs the risk of uncritically reiterating dominant contemporary discourses on global and transnational problems, such as the one on transnational organised crime and illicit trafficking.

National and multilateral crime-fighting and counter-trafficking agencies tend to operate on the basis of the assumption that with the intensification of globalisation after the end of the Cold War, states have come under increasing attack from transnational organised criminal groups and networks. These processes have been described as the 'dark side of globalisation' (Heine and Thakur 2011) in which transnational criminal organisations and trafficking networks exploit the institutional and other weaknesses of states for illicit economic purposes, making a mockery of national sovereignty by operating across international borders, playing off one national jurisdiction against another, and using violence to regulate global black markets. The *World Development Report 2011* adopts this framework, although it also acknowledges that 'international mechanisms that focus on global or transnational issues... have tended to neglect impacts on fragile states' and that 'policies are often only suitable for the larger, more capable states' (World Bank 2011a: 217). The existing prohibition-oriented, UN-sanctioned international drug control regime and the counter-narcotics policies that flow from it would be a case in point, but the report stops short of elaborating on this politically sensitive issue.

There is no doubt that illicit trafficking and contraband, cross-border insecurity, and commodity price and resource shocks – among other transnational and global pressures – create very difficult situations in many developing countries, and particularly in fragile states. The problems range from drug-trafficking-related violence epidemics and food riots to regionalised conflict and political regime change or breakdown. Yet it is crucial to recognise that these complex processes (a) tend to involve external, internal and *transnational* actors and variables that are often interrelated; (b) create losers as well as winners, and can promote the interests of powerful state and non-state groups in and outside of the country or world region under 'stress'; and (c) do not all have the same kind of impact on states and societies in terms of generating violence.

Thus, the issue is not merely that state fragility (internal) and vulnerability (external) *combine* to create significant and sometimes overwhelming levels of 'stress' in affected countries, which can heighten the risk of violence. Internal and external stresses actually *relate to and reinforce one another,* for they are interconnected through *transnational* actors and processes – i.e. 'regular interactions between state and non-state actors across national boundaries [that contribute to shaping] political, social [and economic] outcomes at home, abroad, and in an emerging global governance sphere' (Orenstein and Schmitz 2006: 482). Furthermore, these transnational dynamics should be understood as being part of broader processes of globalisation, both licit and illicit; states are not just overwhelmed by them but play an active role in shaping them. With respect to illicit globalisation, Peter Andreas notes that 'states shape and even exploit the illicit global economy. Contrary to conventional wisdom, illicit globalisation is not new, and its relationship to the state is not only antagonistic but symbiotic' (Andreas 2011: 405).

The *World Development Report 2011* also does not acknowledge that in some circumstances, stresses – external and internal – can have *stabilising* effects, in that they work to the benefit of, or indeed are the making of, powerful state and non-state groups in the affected countries or world region (Andreas 2011; Reno 2009a; Abraham and van Schendel 2005). Here we have to remind ourselves that 'illegal flows are not external forces that, arrow-like, fly past supine borderland societies. On the contrary they are actively domesticated and incorporated into borderland projects' (van Schendel 2005: 55). Beyond the impact of illicit flows like drug trafficking on the structuring of social, political and

economic relations in borderlands and between areas in the periphery and the central state, these flows also have effects on the national body politic and governance structures, and on wider state–society relations. 'The image of states as simply reactive, responding [or not] to the growth of clandestine transnational flows, is misleading because it understates the degree to which states actually structure, condition, produce and enable clandestine border crossings' (van Schendel 2005: 59) and illicit flows.

As will be discussed with reference to West Africa in Section 5 below, external stresses, such as illicit drug trafficking, are also not always associated with armed conflict and violence.[2] Depending on the type of policy a government chooses to tackle such stresses, they can actually lead (at least temporarily) to development gains in producer and transit countries, often in peripheral and desperately poor internal agricultural frontier communities and in borderlands that span international boundaries (Goodhand 2009). In settings where drug trafficking *is* driving large-scale violence, such as presently in Mexico, this is related both to external factors (such as the massive flow of Andean cocaine through Mexico to the US consumer market) and internal ones (such as Mexico's transition from a closed, one-party political system that operated an illicit 'joint extraction regime' (Snyder 2006) together with trafficking groups, to a more democratic and pluralist system deeply entangled in the US-led 'global war on drugs').

In sum, while intuitively appealing, the binary internal–external/fragility–vulnerability model that underpins the World Bank's analysis of external stresses appears to be too limited to inform strategies to address the challenges experienced by states and societies arising from external pressures as diverse as illicit transnational trafficking, price and resource shocks, and climate change. There is a risk that the *World Development Report 2011* is contributing to the over-simplification of complex issues and the uncritical reiteration of dominant discourses about pressures on states, thereby limiting the policy options available to tackle what are undoubtedly serious problems for fragile and poor countries, including risks related to the outbreak or perpetuation of different types of violence.

---

[2] The *World Development Report 2011* adopts a very broad notion of violence, which it defines as the 'use or threat of physical force by groups, including state actions against other states or against civilians, civil wars, electoral violence between opposing sides, communal conflicts based on regional, ethnic, religious, or other group identities or competing economic interests, gang-based violence and organised crime, and international, non-state, armed movements with ideological aims' (World Bank 2011b: 39). The core of the argument is that these different forms of '21st-century violence [do] not fit the 20th-century mould. Interstate war and civil war are still threats in some regions, but they have declined over the last 25 years... Many countries and subnational areas now face cycles of *repeated* violence, weak governance, and instability' (World Bank 2011b: 2). Echoing the 'new wars' narrative (Kaldor 2012; Münkler 2002), the Bank perceives violence and armed conflict in their 'new' guise as more diffuse, recursive and globalised than during the Cold War era, and instrumental for achieving economic gains for private violence entrepreneurs such as warlords and drug traffickers. It also perceives violence and armed conflict as less driven by states and clearly identifiable organised non-state groups with political and social reform agendas, though the *World Development Report 2011* does not rule out the existence of such agendas.

3　Cocaine trafficking through West Africa: the – estimated – size of the beast

Since the mid-2000s there has been mounting concern about the trafficking of cocaine from South America to West Africa and from there on to large drug consumption markets, especially in Europe. While both regional observers and international officials tasked with monitoring global flows of narcotics and combating them have made efforts to gather information on their nature and size, assess the impact in West Africa, and devise policy responses, the knowledge base remains thin. There is clearly a need for a much better and more fine-grained empirical understanding of how transnational drug trafficking in West Africa works, and for whom, and what its impacts on the state, governance and development are.

Spearheaded by UNODC, which started producing regular reports on West Africa a decade ago, work on the phenomenon has become something of an analytical and policy growth industry in its own right. Although the debate was initially dominated by sectors within the international drug policy and security communities, development agencies have now joined it (World Bank 2011a). Yet it is important to caution that the existing analyses tend to reflect institutional/organisational interests and mandates rather than rigorous independent research. For instance, UNODC's reporting on drug trafficking through West Africa is heavily skewed toward representing a situation that calls for building up increased regional law enforcement and interdiction capacities to curb illicit flows – a goal that is at the core of its mandate. Subsuming transnational drug trafficking under the metaphor of external stresses, the *World Development Report 2011*, in turn, goes some way toward addressing development issues but fails to acknowledge that international counter-drug strategies themselves are known to have negative effects on countries affected by trafficking, thereby adding to the existing institutional and governance weaknesses and socioeconomic grievances.[3]

Initiatives to address drug trafficking have proliferated in recent years, with West Africa witnessing the establishment of a regional drug control architecture that appears to be taken straight from a textbook on international drug supply reduction strategies. Much of this effort has been driven by international actors, such as the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, UNODC, Interpol, Europol, the EC, the United Kingdom's Special Organised Crime Agency and other law enforcement agencies of EU member states. ECOWAS adopted a regional action plan to respond to drug trafficking in 2008 (West Africa Commission on Drugs 2013). Consequently, 'an array of institutions… has been set up by the UN and international donors, such as Transnational Crime Units (TCUs), West African Joint Operations, the West Africa Coast Initiative, the Dakar-based Intergovernmental Action Group Against Money Laundering' (Carrier and Klantschnig 2012: 129).

The general thrust of these initiatives has been to curb the flow of illicit drugs by strengthening the law enforcement and drug shipment interdiction and judicial capacities of West African countries, and between them and the South American source countries.

---

[3] As will be discussed in more detail below, counter-drug strategies are usually heavily focused on the eradication of coca, poppy and other crops used for the production of plant-based psychoactive substances, as well as on the destruction of drug production facilities, the arrest of traffickers (and also of consumers), the breaking up of trafficking groups, and the interdiction and seizure of drug shipments. Interventions geared toward addressing public health, socioeconomic development and governance issues tend to receive much less attention and funding in the 'war on drugs', especially in source and transit countries. If not properly balanced with other 'soft' public policies, 'hard' counter-drug policies risk leading to violations of human rights, the destruction of livelihoods (particularly in rural areas), and the militarisation and securitisation of governance, ultimately contributing to damaging state–society relations.

However, it has been noted that 'there is still limited coordination of activities at the operational level, with serious overlap between traditional donor support in the areas of governance and the rule of law on the one hand, and counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism support implemented by specialised agencies on the other' (West Africa Commission on Drugs 2013: 11). The experience of the EC-funded Cocaine Route programme, launched in 2009, has shown that transregional cooperation between West African and South American law enforcement agencies faces significant challenges due to disparate levels of institutional capacity and development on the two sides of the Atlantic. Following in the footsteps of the Latin American Commission on Drugs and Democracy and the Global Commission on Drug Policy, in 2013 a group of West African notables joined to form the West Africa Commission on Drugs (WACD) and explore alternative approaches to dealing with the region's increasing drug trafficking problems.[4]

The trafficking of illicit drugs – notably cannabis, cocaine and heroin – through West Africa has been known to exist for a long time (Carrier and Klantschnig 2012; Ellis 2009; Mazzitelli 2007; Klein 1994). But in recent years there have been indications that the volume of the trade has increased significantly, especially in respect to cocaine; and a larger number of West African countries have become engulfed by it. While the available figures about the size of the illegal business ought to be handled with care, shifts in the global supply of, and demand for, cocaine in the past years show quite unequivocally why West Africa has risen to become an important transhipment point on the cocaine route to Europe. What these processes and West Africa's convenient geographic location do not explain, however, is what the role of local actors, including both political and military elites and subaltern groups, has been in enabling the establishment of transnational drug economies of significant size together with their foreign, notably Latin American, partners in crime; and how political marketplaces, elite bargains and power relations in a number of West African countries have changed as a result. Before going into these issues it is necessary to provide an overview of global cocaine supply and demand dynamics and of the estimated magnitude of the cocaine trade through West Africa.

The production of cocaine in the Andean region of South America dates back more than 40 years and saw its heyday during a 20-year period lasting from the 1980s to the 2000s. The multi-billion dollar business has continued since then, though possibly on a slightly reduced scale due to significant drug crop eradication and drug shipment interdiction campaigns, especially in Colombia. In the beginning, most of the coca leaf used to produce cocaine was grown in Bolivia and Peru, the two Andean countries with large indigenous populations and millennial traditions of cultivating coca and using it for cultural and medicinal purposes. Colombia did not have significant areas of coca crops at the time but served as the site where Bolivian and Peruvian cocaine paste – an easily shippable precursor product of the final drug – was processed and refined into pure cocaine. Located in the north-western tip of South America, with access to both the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, the country was also the key staging point for the export of refined cocaine to international markets, particularly in the US (International Crisis Group 2005a; 2005b).

Prompted by several factors, including coca eradication campaigns in Bolivia and Peru and the intensification of Colombia's armed conflict (which meant that the state's territorial control was increasingly challenged by the insurgents, who alongside numerous criminal and paramilitary organisations became ever more involved in the cocaine business), in the 1990s both coca cultivation and cocaine production became centred in Colombia. At the same time,

---

[4] Following the creation of the Latin American Commission on Drugs and Democracy in 2008 under the co-chairmanship of former presidents Fernando Henrique Cardoso (Brazil), César Gaviria (Colombia) and Ernesto Zedillo (Mexico), the Global Commission on Drug Policy was formed in 2010. The latter comprises some two dozen personalities of international standing from across the world. Modelled on the other two commissions, in 2013 the WACD was established under the auspices of the Kofi Annan Foundation. All three blue-ribbon commissions have released reports urging the reform of international drug policies and the adoption of approaches focused on public health and human rights when dealing with problems associated with drug production, trade and use.

international cocaine flows became more diversified, in part due to stepped-up, US-led counter-drug efforts in the Caribbean and the Andean region. Increasing amounts of the drug became destined for the growing European market, while demand in the US market first stagnated and then saw a slight reduction. The most significant cocaine-trafficking vector from South America to Europe has consistently been the maritime route across the Atlantic Ocean. But since the mid-2000s the route from Brazil and Venezuela to West Africa and from there across the Sahara to the southern shores of Europe has become another vector of some importance (International Crisis Group 2008a).

UNODC (2013a) estimates that there was a very significant increase in the volume of cocaine transiting West Africa in the period 2004–2007, rising from 3 tons (2004) to 47 tons (2007). This trend was then partially reversed, with cocaine volumes steadily decreasing until 2010, without falling, however, to the starting level of 2004.

Table 3.1 Tons of pure cocaine transiting West Africa on their way to Europe, 2004-2010

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Tons of cocaine	3	17	32	47	23	21	18

Source: Adapted from UNODC (2013a).

It is alleged that in 2009, 13 per cent of the cocaine seized in Europe had transited West Africa, though this figure could have been substantially higher (Stearns Lawson and Dininio 2013). Since the late 2000s the region has not witnessed the seizure of large bulk shipments of cocaine, which had been common only a few years earlier and had caught the attention of local and international law enforcement agencies. Yet West African experts hold that:

> Although a decline in trafficking has been reported since 2009, recent cocaine seizures in Ghana and arrests of security officers in Sierra Leone and Liberia on trafficking charges… are indicators of the on-going problem of trafficking in the sub-region.
> (West Africa Commission on Drugs 2013)

Similar observations have been made regarding other West African countries, including Guinea-Bissau and Mali.

The estimates of the quantities of cocaine that are being trafficked through West Africa put forward by different organisations vary a great deal. They are usually based on drug shipment interdiction data, such as the data compiled by UNODC from a variety of local, regional and international sources. Yet a drop in the volume of annually seized cocaine can be attributed to various factors and does not necessarily reflect diminishing flows of illicit drugs to the region. Fewer seizures could, for instance, be related to less active law enforcement in West Africa due to budget constraints, more aggressive tactics by traffickers to bribe local customs, military and other officials, or higher levels of official collusion with traffickers. There could also be an element of more cunning avoidance of law enforcement, with traffickers breaking up large bulk cargoes of cocaine into smaller parcels that are easier to conceal while still at sea. A recently published mid-term review of the EC-funded Cocaine Route programme reports that:

> As for the current scale and significance of the route the view of Europol is that while there has been a decrease since 2009 in seizures of cocaine from [West Africa] as well as in the region 'this is more likely to reflect a change in trafficking methods and/or routes than an effective shrinking of cocaine flows toward the region'.
> (Klein, Aku Attakpah and Uribe 2013:153)

UNODC data on cocaine seizures suggests that there are two separate trafficking hubs or gateways on the West African mainland and one off-shore (UNODC 2013a). The southern mainland hub comprises Ghana, Togo, Benin and south-western Nigeria, from where cocaine is transported through Niger, Algeria and Tunisia to Spain, France and Italy. The northern mainland gateway is centred on Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, The Gambia, the Casamance region in south-western Senegal and northern Sierra Leone, from where the cocaine is trafficked on the trans-Sahara route through Mali, Mauritania, Algeria and Morocco to southern Europe, most notably Spain. This route is also used for the transhipment of cocaine that enters West Africa through the off-shore hub in Cape Verde. Yet knowing that there are identifiable cocaine gateways in West Africa through which an estimated quantity of cocaine enters West Africa as a region does not equal knowing how much cocaine enters and leaves individual countries. There are no systems in place that consistently monitor cocaine seizures in each country (West Africa Commission on Drugs 2013). One can only speculate whether particular countries have a larger trafficking problem than others, as seems to be the case with Guinea-Bissau in the northern, and Ghana in the southern hub.

Due to these data gaps it is impossible to know with any certainty what the annual value of the illegal business in West Africa is, what proportion of the proceeds ends up in the hands of West African traffickers and their networks, and what the situation is in the individual countries. This notwithstanding, it is not implausible that in a number of impoverished states of West Africa drug trafficking represents today an important source of income. This could also be reflected in the fact that 'alongside Central Africa, West Africa is... the continent's biggest source of illegal financial outflows' (Vorrath 2013). UNODC estimated that in 2006 the wholesale value of the cocaine that passed through the region (40 tons) amounted to US$1.8bn in the European market. Assuming a profit margin of 25 per cent, West African traffickers would have earned some US$450m in that year. This figure could, however, be higher if they were also involved in retailing cocaine in European countries, which is likely (UNODC 2007). In 2009, the wholesale value at destination could have been worth anything between US$1.8bn and US$2.8bn for the region as a whole (UNODC 2011) and US$1bn for Guinea-Bissau alone (Felbab-Brown and Forest 2012).

Considering that UNODC estimates that the total wholesale value of South American cocaine in Europe in 2009 amounted to US$34bn, these figures do not appear to be implausible, but they conceal the big value differentials between West Africa and Europe. Experts note that 'a more realistic, though equally speculative, denominator would be the regional wholesale price, with cocaine for instance trading at an estimated US$14,000–16,000 in Guinea-Bissau, suggesting a volume of several hundred million dollars [per year]' (Klein *et al*. 2013: 154–5). Still, even comparing these lower figures to the gross domestic products (GDPs) and national budgets of the region's countries shows that with one or two exceptions, such as the oil giant Nigeria and economic powerhouse Côte d'Ivoire, they are very large indeed. For instance, in 2006 Guinea-Bissau had a GDP of US$304m and its national budget was just US$125m (UNODC 2007).

The bottom line is that the available data on the size of cocaine trafficking through West Africa, the value of the regional market, and the proportion of the trafficking profits that stay in the region are patchy and inevitably speculative. But even those who are rightly sceptical of the accuracy of UNODC and other data used by the international drug control community concede that in the past ten years or so West Africa has become increasingly drawn into transnational cocaine trafficking dynamics on the South America–Europe route. With good reason they warn, however, that designating the region as a trafficking hub could result in the roll-out of counter-narcotics strategies geared at supply-side reduction and militarised law enforcement initiatives, which have proved to be ineffective and harmful in other regions affected by large-scale trafficking, especially in Latin America (Csete and Sánchez 2013; Carrier and Klantschnig 2012).

4   Weak national states, powerful transnational criminality

At first sight the World Bank's concept of 'external stresses' appears to apply readily to the phenomenon of large-scale cocaine trafficking through West Africa. The region is among the poorest in the world and the majority of its states are commonly referred to as 'weak', 'fragile' or at risk of 'failing' – a situation which, it is held, is exploited by global drug traffickers who find in West Africa a convenient stepping stone on the cocaine route to Europe.[5] Yet our understanding of how global forces, such as illicit transnational flows, impact on West African states and potentially exacerbate existing authority, capacity and legitimacy deficits is still limited. A brief review of the evolution of the academic and policy debates about the state in West Africa is in order before moving on to address the particular transformative effects drug trafficking has been observed to have or – as its large-scale emergence is relatively recent and the full impacts have yet to be felt – potentially could have.

Much of the work on West Africa produced in the 1990s and early 2000s was centred on internal factors that were perceived to be responsible for undermining the effectiveness and legitimacy of political institutions and driving the emergence of brutal and 'messy' armed conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau and the Niger Delta in Nigeria.[6] Shocked by the viciousness of West Africa's civil conflicts, analysts and policymakers focused on the political, economic and social factors underlying the rise of rebel movements and militant groups; the relationship between natural resources and armed conflict; and the role of predatory local elites and the ways in which they abused their power to loot national treasuries and appropriate rents – often drawn from extractive industries – for private gain and for the benefit of their patronage-dependent constituencies. The treatment of external factors was largely limited to examining multilateral peacekeeping and peace-building interventions in West Africa; the regional transborder movement of insurgent fighters, refugees and weapons; and the contraband of diamonds, timber and – in a few analyses – illicit drugs.[7] Diamonds were of particular concern due to their role in fuelling the bloodshed in Sierra Leone and Liberia, and because Western countries were seen to be responsible for fanning violence in West Africa to obtain the precious stones, which were destined for sale in commercial centres in Europe and elsewhere in the North.

The role of West African political elites and their patronage-dependent constituencies in broader and more variegated processes of (illicit) globalisation and as participants in

---

[5] A majority of the countries that make up ECOWAS have consistently been at the bottom of the UNDP's Human Development Index or are classified as low-income countries by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC).

[6] Interestingly, this debate unfolded at the same time as the concepts of 'failed´ or 'fragile' states started to gain currency in academic and international policy circles, leading to the creation of several indices that attempt to measure the evolution of 'state failure' or 'state fragility' from year to year. A number of West African countries have figured consistently among the group of 'most fragile' states or states 'at highest risk' in these indices. The Carleton University-based Country Indicators for Foreign Policy (CIFP) project, for instance, included nine West African states in its first list of the world's 30 most fragile countries (Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Niger, Mauritania, Guinea and Burkina Faso), which it released in 2006; in 2008, the index put seven states in the region among the world's most fragile (Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Togo, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Guinea); and in 2011 eight countries were included (Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone and Mali). Other indices designed to measure state fragility, such as the Failed States Index produced by the Washington-based Fund for Peace, have painted roughly similar pictures for West Africa. It is noteworthy that the recently created G7+, which comprises 18 of the world's least developed and poorest countries, also includes six states that are located in West Africa (Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Togo).

[7] Among the many works produced on these topics are Adebajo and Rashid (2004), Ero and Temin (2004), Le Billon (2006) and Reno (2000, 1999, 1997).

transnational criminal networks was not of primary concern[8] – arguably because these dynamics were still less pronounced and visible at the time.[9] Curiously, there was also not much recognition of the impact that the international financial institutions' (IFIs) structural adjustment programmes were having on the weak and embattled states of West Africa, particularly with respect to inadvertently helping to create an enabling environment for the spread of corruption and organised criminality.[10] In 2004, two leading Ghanaian writers, Eboe Hutchful and Kwesi Aning (2004), still felt sufficiently confident to refute the notion of the 'criminalisation' of the state in Africa, which had been fielded by a group of scholars around French sociologist Jean-Francois Bayart a few years earlier (Bayart, Ellis and Hibou 1999).[11] However, with hindsight the observation that numerous countries in sub-Saharan Africa were at risk of increasing and potentially unprecedented pressures on their political institutions and governance structures on account of transnational criminal dynamics turned out to be quite visionary. Although this is now beyond doubt, particularly in West Africa but also in other parts of the continent, such as in Kenya and South Africa, deeper and more fine-grained analysis is needed of how transnational criminal networks operate in the continent and what the impacts on accountability, transparency, tax revenues and, more broadly, democratic governance are.

Responding to increasing concerns about transnational drug trafficking and organised criminality in West Africa, several distinct strands of academic and policy research have emerged in recent years. Put somewhat schematically, one can be said to be of an 'official' cut and is principally promoted by the international drug control community, specifically the UNODC. The focus of this body of work is on understanding the nature and dynamics of organised crime in West Africa and how the international community can support states in the region to build up stronger law enforcement, drug interdiction and judicial capacities to contain it (UNODC 2013a, 2010, 2008, 2007, 2005; Mazzitelli 2007). Another strand of work is broadly concerned with the negative impacts of drug trafficking and other illicit transnational activities on the governance structures, security and development prospects of African countries, with a special focus on West Africa (Aning and Pokoo 2013; Brown 2013; Kavanagh *et al.* 2013; Olukoshi 2013; O'Regan and Thomson 2013; Cockayne and Williams 2009; Aning 2007). Two further lines of inquiry highlight the potentially negative consequences of militarised anti-drug policies for stability and development in the region (Csete and Sánchez 2013; Carrier and Klantschnig 2012), and examine how political elites have actively linked themselves into illicit transnational commercial networks as part of their strategies to maintain power and assert political authority through patronage and clientelism (Felbab-Brown 2010; Reno 2009a).[12]

---

[8] As were other criminal activities of significant magnitude and with transnational dimensions. The massive theft of crude oil in Nigeria's Niger Delta region and its export to international markets is a case in point. Research on this issue has begun to appear only recently (Katsouris and Sayne 2013).

[9] Here it is noteworthy, however, that under the umbrella of ECOWAS West African governments began addressing transnational security threats, including cross-border crime, money-laundering and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, in the 1990s. ECOWAS also set up a Drug Control Unit to provide technical support and expertise to member states on drug control matters. Yet several observers have noted that for the most part these initiatives remained on paper only and the implementation of policies has seriously lagged (Addo 2008; Obi 2008).

[10] Work undertaken by Kate Meagher (2003) in the late 1990s and early 2000s is an exception to this rule. She makes a compelling case that processes of structural adjustment and globalisation resulted in a significant expansion of unofficial, 'parallel' transborder trade in West Africa, including the trafficking in diamonds, drugs and arms. In her analysis, 'the trade in criminal commodities is not merely a product of opportunistic shifts in the commodity portfolio of transborder operators… Criminal activities are linked to the entry of new participants thrown up by the social and economic upheavals of structural adjustment' (Meagher 2003: 63). She cautions, however, not to overestimate the importance of criminal transborder activities, which in the early 2000s did not outweigh the unofficial trade in cheap and used consumer goods in West Africa. As discussed in the present report, there are strong indications that this began to change a few years on with the emergence of West Africa as a large cocaine trafficking hub on the trans-Atlantic route from South America to Europe. Recently published work by a West African scholar suggests that the spread of informality and corruption in the region due to the implementation of structural adjustment programmes '[laid] the countries open to penetration by well-oiled and practiced global drug cartels with cumulative experience from other regions of the world on how to capture institutions and systems to serve their specific ends' (Olukoshi 2013).

[11] It is noteworthy that a few years later Aning became engaged in the debate about the impact of organised crime on governance in Ghana and West Africa. See, for instance, Aning (2007).

[12] Particularly this last strand of research builds on earlier work on warlordism and the political economy of armed conflict in West Africa (Reno 2000, 1999, 1997; Bayart *et al.* 1999).

At the heart of these diverse approaches to analysing and understanding the phenomenon of increasing drug trafficking and organised criminality in West Africa are accounts of statehood and state weakness in the region. A common view is that the rise of drug trafficking and other illicit commerce in West Africa are *symptoms* and not *causes* of state fragility (McGuire 2010). Both the region's geographic location and its political history and structures are cited as key factors enabling the emergence and entrenchment of transnational criminal activities. Writes Stephen Ellis:

> Not only is West Africa conveniently situated for trade between South America and Europe, but above all it has a political and social environment that is generally suitable for the drug trade: expertise in smuggling, the weakness of law enforcement agencies, and the official tolerance of, or even participation in, certain types of crime, constitute a form of social and political capital that accumulates over time.
> (Ellis 2009: 173)

Other authors highlight the 'predatory' nature of West African states, which in the past decade or so has led political and military elites to latch onto emerging drug trafficking dynamics with determination in their quest to secure rents from illicit commerce to maintain positions of power and influence (Felbab-Brown 2010; Reno 2009a). The behaviour of ruling groups is characterised as 'rapacious' and political contestation is seen as essentially centring on controlling the state for the purpose of capturing rents (Felbab-Brown 2010), and not on aiming to build accountable and effective political institutions. Pervasive patronage networks and the existence of large informal sectors are perceived to be blurring the 'line between the state and the official political system on the one hand and… the illegal economy on the other' (Felbab-Brown 2010: 5), providing ample opportunities for the spread of trafficking and crime. This is also captured by scholars who use the lens of hybrid political orders, where 'diverse and competing claims to power and logics of order co-exist, overlap and intertwine, namely the logic of the "formal state", of traditional "informal societal order, and of globalisation and associated social fragmentation"' (Boege *et al.* 2008: 10). In West Africa, such hybrid orders are believed to 'facilitate the corruption or infiltration of state institutions by criminal actors… The step from legal to illegal activity is small and not necessarily perceived as such by those involved' (Vorrath 2013: 2–3).

4.1   Transformative effects of large-scale drug trafficking

While this report is not the place to examine in any depth the merits and shortcomings of these accounts of statehood and state weakness in West Africa, they provide a useful backdrop for discussing the *distinctive ways* in which large-scale illicit economies of a transnational kind, such as drug trafficking, have been observed to impact on or might in future impact on, and transform, power relationships, political institutions and governance structures in the institutionally weak, politically unstable and impoverished countries of the region. Bearing in mind the above-discussed need for more rigorous independent research on these matters the core argument is that the interplay between internal and external factors may not only result in exacerbating the existing weaknesses but could actually lead to the emergence of (a) a qualitatively different set of challenges for West African states due to the transnational nature of drug trafficking understood as forming part of broader processes of (illicit) globalisation; and (b) new political equilibriums and settlements, which are, however, likely to be unstable, exclusionary and – sometimes – violence-prone. The hypothesis is that participation in transnational drug trafficking and efforts to counter it produce few transnationally networked 'winners' among West African political and military elites and their patronage-dependent constituencies, and many more 'losers'. Both benefits and risks are likely to be distributed in a highly uneven manner and the negative effects of trafficking (and

potentially also of counter-drug strategies) are felt above all by common people, whose livelihoods, security, and fundamental rights are subjected to increasing pressures.[13]

4.1.1 A bigger bang

Drug trafficking is arguably of a different order of magnitude than other forms of illegality that form part of the 'normal' (ill-)functioning of the region's states discussed earlier. Regardless of the aforementioned difficulties entailed in estimating the volume and value of illicit drugs that transit West Africa annually, there are indications that the amounts of money associated with this illegal business could be significantly larger than those drawn from other criminal activities, which resourced armed conflicts in the region in the past, e.g. the trade in 'blood diamonds' and 'conflict timber'.[14] In 1998, at the height of the civil conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the value of conflict diamonds that were smuggled out of West Africa was estimated to be US$400m, including, however, significant quantities of diamonds that were diverted from Angola (Meagher 2003). The World Bank reports that annually the illicit trade in diamonds and timber was worth some US$60m in Liberia and more than US$25m in Sierra Leone (World Bank 2013). Yet another expert puts the value of smuggled diamonds in Sierra Leone in the period 1991–2000 at US$25–75m per year (Le Billon 2012).[15] Whatever the most accurate figures may be, the value of the illicit trade in diamonds and timber in the 1990s appears to have been significantly less than the estimated value of today's cocaine trade through countries such as Guinea-Bissau, Ghana and Nigeria. Consequently, the risk of corruption in the public sector increases and the political economy of corruption changes (Brown 2013). Writes Peter Gastrow:

> The sophistication, and ability to corrupt with large amounts of money, is often confined to those involved in transnational criminal networks. They are the ones who have moved up the social ladder and who mix with the elites because of their wealth, skills, and international exposure, and they are the ones who have the means to corrupt top figures in government and politics because of the vast profits they earn from their illicit trade.
> (Gastrow 2011)

Drug-trafficking-related corruption thus touches broad sectors in the state and society. These include not only political and military elites but also subaltern groups, which provide important logistical and other services to external traffickers and act as local low-end facilitators. While it is likely that this results in an increase of what has been labelled 'opportunistic corruption' (Cockayne and Williams 2009: 11) among government officials and members of the state's security forces and the judiciary, what seems to be more significant is that in the West Africa context such corruption acquires profoundly political dimensions capable of reshaping power relationships and political institutions.[16] One route for this, which has also been documented

---

[13] See Sections 4.2 and 4.3 (with reference to Guinea-Bissau and Guinea).

[14] One exception to this could be the massive theft of crude oil in the Niger Delta of Nigeria – locally known as 'oil bunkering' – and its sale in international markets. Estimates of the magnitude of this criminal activity vary widely. While the Nigerian government estimates that in recent years some 400,000 barrels of oil have been stolen each day (Wallis 2012), other experts put this figure for the first quarter of 2013 at around 100,000 barrels per day (Katsouris and Sayne 2013). Accordingly, the estimates of the income generated by oil bunkering also vary a great deal and it is not known with any certainty in whose pockets most of the profits end up. Yet what is not in dispute is that the proceeds are sizable and have fuelled violence in the Niger Delta since the early 2000s.

[15] With all these figures it is not clear, however, whether they refer to the value of the smuggled commodities in the destination markets, e.g. Antwerp in the case of diamonds, or the local value, which was certainly less.

[16] This argument is informed by Mark Philp's (2008) analysis of corruption in post-conflict contexts. In settings where political order is contested by the former warring parties the conventional definition of corruption as the 'abuse of public roles or resources for private benefit' fails to capture that 'activities undertaken in the interests of one's political party, ethnic group, or familial network… can be… source[s] of major corruption' (Philp 2008: 313). Corruption is therefore not merely a problem for post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building because government officials and other public and private actors misappropriate public funds or turn a blind eye to illegal activities in exchange for kickbacks. What is more problematic is when corruption becomes integral to the political agendas of contending groups in the post-conflict setting, and when they use it to systematically subvert the emerging political order and structure it in such a manner that it represents their own group interests and not the interests of society as a whole.

in several Latin American countries, is through traffickers contributing to the electoral campaigns of 'clean' politicians with drug money or using it to finance their own political campaigns. Electoral competition is thus skewed in favour of political groups involved in, or which are in collusion with, the drug business (Casas-Zamora 2013; Stearns Lawson and Dininio 2013).

It is important to note, however, that the outcomes of these processes are not pre-determined for they are dependent on specific circumstances, both locally and in relation to transnational trafficking dynamics. What can result is either heightened political instability or the rise of new political settlements between established local elites and emerging groups with ties to external traffickers. Yet as I discuss in more depth below, such political settlements are based on bargains that are vulnerable to being quickly undone and are therefore likely not to last for very long.

4.1.2 Impact on political marketplaces and elite bargains

High-value criminal activity such as drug trafficking reshapes 'relational dynamics between and among political and security actors, the citizenry, and the business community within and beyond borders' (Aning and Pokoo 2013: 5); and it does so in particular ways. It has been known for some time that leaders of irregular armed groups in West Africa, who during wartime engaged in illicit commerce and other activities that are commonly described as criminal, have been adept at establishing alternative forms of public authority and build political relationships that 'are seen by those who participate in them as one of the few avenues for active participation in the… economy and politics' (Reno 2009b: 47). A good example in this regard are the leaders of militant groups in the oil-rich Niger Delta of Nigeria, who set out to fight for 'resource control' but then became involved in criminal activities, such as abducting oil industry personnel, oil theft and reportedly also drug trafficking. In 2009, they negotiated an amnesty with the federal government, which provided them with judicial guarantees and substantial economic benefits in return for their demobilisation (Schultze-Kraft 2013), and which was possibly designed to cover up federal elite participation in large-scale oil theft. Thus, far from being threatened by the activities of criminal organisations, states or sectors within them have powerful incentives to become 'criminal instigators themselves' (Locke 2012: 5). In this vein, researchers at the Center on International Cooperation write, 'public officials and political and business elites are not always the hapless victims of organised crime as often portrayed, but rather consciously engage in illicit activity with the aim of achieving specific political or financial goals' (Kavanagh *et al*. 2013: 7).

Once large-scale drug markets have become established, political marketplaces[17] (de Waal 2009) are prone to undergo significant change. Group loyalties that hitherto were negotiated within, and structured by, patronage and clientelistic relationships of a 'traditional' kind, that is, without significant external influences, become vulnerable to breaking up or being transformed. In these circumstances it is arguably more difficult for established ruling elites to maintain control of political marketplaces. New, well-resourced players are appearing on the scene – including outside trafficking groups – who have the capacity and financial muscle to challenge existing power relations and both out-buy and, sometimes, out-gun established elites and their patronage networks. New relationships of loyalty and patronage emerge that are likely to involve a larger number of groups, including subaltern ones. In extreme cases, such as in Guinea-Bissau, this can result in the staging of coups by factions of the military

---

[17] Political settlements are essentially established between elites and can usefully be defined as 'formal and informal one-off events, such as elite pacts, peace agreements and amnesties, or a new constitution. But [they] can also take the form of more dynamic and fluid processes of (overt and covert) negotiation, compromise, bargaining, accommodation and coalition and network-building between powerful groups of state and non-state actors, including influential and resourceful contending groups like militant, insurgent and criminal organisations' (Schultze-Kraft 2013: 8). Political settlements are understood to shape and underpin formal institutional and state structures and to regulate competition over resources and the means of violence between elites.

and political elites that compete over drug trafficking rents, as well as in the capture of the entire state by drug-trafficking interests (Shaw and Reitano 2013).

But there can be other, less dramatic, though in the longer term not less pernicious, variations of these dynamics. Importantly, elite bargains that underpin existing political settlements[18] and provide a degree of stability can be shaken up when, for instance, one powerful faction becomes involved in the drug business and switches alliances. In the West African trafficking context these new alliances necessarily involve the leaders of both local and external criminal organisations and their brokers. Other powerful groups which are left out of these criminal bargains will have strong incentives to follow suit and establish their own alliances with traffickers so as not to end up in a disadvantaged position *vis-à-vis* their competitors. A vicious circle can result in which progressively more groups that hold sway over their country's political and economic affairs are drawn into the trafficking networks and become beholden to criminal interests. Such a scenario appears to be particularly likely in states with weak judicial systems and where the rule of law is not upheld. Indeed, to different degrees many West African states fall within this category.

4.1.3 Transnational criminal linkages
While 'traditional' types of criminal activity in West Africa have transborder dimensions to them – there is a long history in the region of the smuggling of diamonds and other locally sourced commodities, including oil – they are nonetheless essentially 'home-grown'. Cocaine trafficking presents a different scenario. The commodity in question is produced in another continent and when it arrives in West Africa it is the property of well-resourced and experienced external, notably Latin American, traffickers.[19] Evidently, these external actors are pursuing their own interests and have *modus operandi* and organisational structures that are more likely than not different from those of their West African partners.[20] Unfortunately, the evidence on the connections and relationships between external trafficking groups and their West African counterparts, especially in the state and wider society, is patchy. The need for deeper and more systematic research on these important issues is increasingly recognised (Klein *et al.* 2013; West Africa Commission on Drugs 2013).

A common narrative is that prior to the mid-2000s, when cocaine trafficking through West Africa picked up dramatically, the illicit trade was largely dominated by loosely structured, non-hierarchical and project-based Nigerian networks with quite significant connections to other, less prominent criminal groups across the region. Members of the Nigerian diaspora in other countries of sub-Saharan Africa (especially in South Africa) as well as in Latin America (particularly in Brazil), the US, Europe and a few Asian countries were also linked to these illicit networks. 'By the mid-1990s…', writes Stephen Ellis, 'some Nigerian drug traffickers… had not only developed the means to invest in bulk shipments of narcotics, but had also

---

[18] The concept of the 'political marketplace' has been developed from the observation that in many so-called 'fragile' countries formal rule-based institutions 'are subordinate to social affinities and patronage networks… People [in such settings] still care about political issues and fight over them, but can neither organise their political allegiances through rule-governed organisations nor resolve them through state institutions according to the rule of law' (de Waal 2009: 99). Political life is organised in political or patrimonial marketplaces that resemble an 'auction of loyalties in which provincial elites seek to extract from one or other metropolitan centre the best price for their allegiance… The marketplace of loyalties also operates at a lower level, whereby provincial elites secure the support, including votes and guns, of their constituents in return for money, jobs and licences to trade or pillage' (de Waal 2009: 103).

[19] This is particularly the case with the bulk shipments, not necessarily with the smaller-scale trafficking, which involves mostly West African traffickers who act as couriers and 'mules' (Carrier and Klantschnig 2012).

[20] Here, it is noteworthy that the *lingua franca* of the global cocaine trade is Spanish, not English and French, which are the official languages in most of West Africa. It would be interesting to research what effects the non-Hispanic linguistic context in West Africa has on the way Latin American traffickers, who are unlikely to speak French or have a good level of proficiency in English, relate to their local counterparts, who in turn are unlikely to be fluent in Spanish. It is not far-fetched to assume that in this regard working in West Africa must be more of a challenge for Colombian, Venezuelan and other Latin American traffickers than working in, say, Central America, Mexico, Spain and even the US. The linguistic divide might even have a bearing on transactions and the nature of the bargains that are struck between external and local actors. In this vein, it is worth asking whether linguistic issues have played a role in making Guinea-Bissau such an important cocaine trafficking hub in the past years. After all Portuguese is spoken in Brazil and it is more similar to Spanish than English and French. See UNODC (2007).

become fully global, having business associates in both producing and consuming countries' (Ellis 2009: 185).

These dynamics changed with the advent of the shipping of very large bulk cargoes of South American cocaine to West Africa in the mid-2000s. New local trafficking networks began to emerge in several countries (Mazzitelli 2007) and external trafficking groups started to establish bridgeheads in several smaller countries in the region, including in Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Ghana and Liberia (Ellis 2009). They have since built connections to:

> Well-established local trafficking networks, mainly Nigerian and Ghanaian, who are either paid in kind by foreign cocaine-trafficking operators for the provision of logistical services, or buy directly from foreign traffickers consignments of up to a couple of hundred kilogrammes… These local trafficking networks… are the natural successors of local drug-trafficking entrepreneurs who started their operations in the region in the last 1980s and 1990s, and who progressively graduated from small subcontractors to larger regional independent entrepreneurs.
> (Mazzitelli 2007: 1076)

While this analysis provides insights into the functioning of West African trafficking networks and how they have evolved over time, and while it gives some idea of the business transactions and relationships between local and external trafficking groups, it does not elaborate on what the wider linkages of West African traffickers are to local ruling elites and their constituencies and what the role of Latin American and other foreign trafficking groups is in shaping these connections. There are some well-informed and hair-raising accounts of specific cases of collusion and direct involvement of powerful West African political figures in drug trafficking and other criminal schemes (Ellis 2009). But they fall short of revealing the bigger picture of how the transnational dimensions of large-scale drug trafficking are reshaping power relations and political institutions in West African countries.

4.1.4 Illegality breeds more illegality

The relationship between illegality and the *production of illicit drugs* was observed some time ago in the Latin American context.

> The location of narcotics production is determined more by the 'comparative advantage in producing illegality' than by the comparative advantage in the production of raw materials for narcotics. Illegality, or more precisely, the lack of institutions and law enforcement is typically a necessary condition for large drug economies to emerge.
> (Rubin and Guáqueta 2007: 10)

It should be added that once illegality in this sense has enabled the establishment of large-scale illicit drug production, it is very difficult for the affected country to break out of a vicious circle in which illegality produces more illegality. A telling example in this respect is Colombia. In the 1980s, this Andean country rose to become the world's top producer and exporter of cocaine while at the same time witnessing the intensification of the armed conflict between the state and several insurgent organisations, the emergence of powerful paramilitary groups with ties to the military and political elites, and skyrocketing levels of impunity and human rights violations.

A similar logic appears to apply to *drug transit countries*, such as in West Africa. In the case of drug trafficking the commodity in question is both by national and international law illegal and those who participate in trading it engage by definition in a criminal activity. Arguably, this means that the operating procedures of drug traffickers and those who collaborate with them are of a different kind and quality than in the case of, say, the illicit contraband of licit

commodities like diamonds, timber, oil or cigarettes. Stealth is a key requirement for success in the trafficking of drugs, especially when traffickers are faced with the possibility of being apprehended by both domestic and external law enforcement agencies and extradited to serve long prison terms in the US, for instance. But stealth evidently brings with it reduced levels of transparency and increased levels of uncertainty, including for government officials who are on the outside of the illegal dealings (Stearns Lawson and Dininio 2013).

Recent research from West Africa suggests that the governance problems that result from drug trafficking in West Africa 'almost always begin in an enclave manner within targeted public and societal institutions that are critical to the success or failure of any trafficking effort' (Olukoshi 2013). Individuals and groups within the police, customs, and immigration services are drawn into the illegal business in discreet ways that initially may not be obvious even to insiders (*ibid.*).

This indicates that in the early stages of the process of penetrating a transit country external and local traffickers are moving with caution, trying to cover their tracks to avoid detection by the official security apparatus, international drug control agencies and foreign law enforcement agencies. They are aware that the illegal nature of their business requires taking special precautions, even if the capacity of the country they are targeting to enforce the law and prosecute apprehended traffickers is limited. Yet it is also possible that in some cases, particularly in countries with authoritarian and non-accountable governments, this process starts at the top with the collusion and involvement of senior public officials, including ministers, high-ranking military officers and even heads of state. As will be discussed below, this seems to have been the case in Guinea-Bissau under President João Bernardo Vieira.

If left uncontrolled, illegality can spread like a bush fire from the bottom to the top or cascade down from the top and become an established mode of governance. The more people and sectors become involved in the drug business, the less capacity already weak states have to extricate themselves from what can be called the rule of illegality. An aggravating factor in the case of weak and unstable drug transit countries is that they have little or no control over the production and global flows of illicit drugs. These are largely determined by supply and demand dynamics, as well as strategies to suppress the production of drugs and stop them from reaching the large consumer markets in Europe and North America. While in recent years this has begun to change, in the past such strategies were usually designed and (co-)funded by governments of countries with large consumer markets, with the US at the forefront.

4.1.5 Unintended consequences of international counter-drug strategies

Beyond the widely documented difficulties and outright failures of 'orthodox' counter-drug strategies to achieve their stated goals – that is, to reduce the supply of illicit drugs in global markets (Carrier and Klantschnig 2012; Keefer and Loayza 2010; Nossal Institute 2010; International Crisis Group 2008a; Schultze-Kraft 2008; Nadelmann 2007, 1988; Youngers and Rosin 2005) – they have furthermore tended to be poorly suited to deal with governance problems and entrenched structures of illegality and criminality in drug source and transit countries. Law enforcement and interdiction-focused anti-drug programmes are prone to have counter-productive effects by promoting the transmutation, splintering and both horizontal and vertical extension of clandestine and criminal groups and networks. In countries with stronger states, spiralling violence and veritable arms races between the state's security apparatus and the trafficking groups are not uncommon results of such policies. The cases of Colombia and, more recently, Mexico flash warning signs in this respect. As I discuss in the next two sections, in countries with weak governance structures, such as is in virtually all West African states, conventional drug control policies may not necessarily lead to increased levels of violence because the countervailing forces are too

feeble. But they certainly risk further destabilising already unstable settings by, for instance, investing in the build-up of law enforcement agencies which cannot be held accountable and which may well have strong incentives to work hand-in-glove with trafficking groups.

Against this backdrop, it is important to raise the question of whether international responses to drug trafficking situations are qualitatively different from other types of external engagement in fragile and conflict-affected states, such as mediating settlements of civil conflicts, managing humanitarian crises and supporting post-conflict reconstruction. While international interventions in general tend to be met with varying degrees of local resistance for a variety of (good) reasons, externally driven counter-narcotics strategies often face particularly strong objections. This has been shown to be the case on numerous occasions in the past in Latin America, for instance, where the US-led 'war on drugs' has been one of the most polarising political and social issues for decades. It is probably correct to say that the only Latin American country that has ever embraced large-scale counter-drug aid from the US has been Colombia in the 2000s. Other countries have either been very reluctant to accept foreign assistance to combat drug trafficking (Mexico) or entirely opposed to it (Brazil, Bolivia and Venezuela at different moments in the past decade). Where external support has been accepted this has usually been due to significant pressure from the US and because governments and ruling elites feared that they could be overwhelmed by trafficking organisations and insurgent and other armed groups financed by the illegal drug business.

In contrast to humanitarian and peace-building missions – which at least purport to do some good in the country of intervention, even if the outcomes often do not meet local expectations – conventional counter-drug strategies are arguably perceived in a more negative light. This is because they have the specific and rather limited goal of curbing the flow of illicit drugs from the source countries to the large international consumer markets, especially in North America and Europe. As in West Africa, this is usually attempted by focusing heavily on the interdiction and seizure of drug shipments, the dismantling of trafficking groups and networks, and the capture and judicial prosecution of traffickers (as well as consumers). Addressing complex governance and socioeconomic problems associated with the production, trafficking and use of illicit drugs tends to receive less attention and fewer funds, though international donors have made quite extensive efforts to support 'alternative development' and 'alternative livelihoods' in drug source countries. However, on the whole the outcomes of these efforts have arguably been disappointing in terms of 'deterring the cultivation of illicit drug crops' (Nossal Institute 2010: 6). In addition, to date, far too little attention has been paid to addressing and mitigating the significant negative effects of strategies focused on law enforcement (often militarised) and interdiction in transit countries, which carry the risk of further undermining already weak governance structures and promoting a spiral of violence. Consequently, 'hard' counter-drug measures in unstable and/or poor producer and transit countries have little to offer by way of improving people's living conditions. At the same time, they carry the risk of human rights violations, enhancing citizen insecurity and contributing to political instability.

Efforts to curb the flow of drugs through West Africa have officially been assigned priority by many political leaders in the region, but real commitment to implementing policies and investing political and financial capital in them have not followed suit (Aning and Pokoo 2013). Furthermore, counter-drug strategies lack legitimacy in the eyes of ordinary citizens because it is not evident to them why they should not participate in an economic activity that helps them protect their livelihoods in the absence of other, licit employment opportunities. Reportedly, there tends to be little social stigma associated with participation in the drug business (Stearns Lawson and Dininio 2013). As will be discussed in Section 5 below, with the possible exception of militant groups in the Niger Delta in Nigeria and Islamist groups in northern Mali (allegedly linked to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb) it appears that drug trafficking in West Africa does not fuel armed conflict and in contrast to other world regions it is also not associated with high homicide levels. Hence, an important question is why political

leaders in the region should put their weight behind counter-drug strategies that risk upsetting political balances, might not produce much by way of tangible results in the fight against organised criminality and the establishment of more effective and legitimate governance structures, and – in countries like Guinea-Bissau – might fly in the face of the core interests of those in power.

4.2   Winners and losers

The preceding analysis suggests that large-scale cocaine trafficking through West Africa produces both winners and losers. However, the latter are by far more numerous than the former. Under the existing international drug control regime, playing a role in the illegal drug economy means big business and the opportunity for a relatively small group of people around the world to accumulate sizable financial, political and social capital. For other, more numerous sectors it can be a vehicle to make some money to get by, though likely on a temporary basis only and by running high risks. For the great majority of citizens in the South's drug source and transit countries, however, organised criminality and the international and local responses to it tend to entail significant threats to their livelihoods, fundamental rights and security due to the manifold negative knock-on effects of trafficking and of the strategies to control it. These often include political instability and heightened corruption and, in some cases, more violence.[21] With significant context-specific variations this is true for West Africa as it is for other world regions heavily affected by the drug trade, such as Latin America and the Caribbean, and South and Central Asia.

As discussed earlier, William Reno has to be credited with bringing to the fore the fact that elite involvement in, and sanction of, illicit commerce forms part of West African ruling elites' strategies to assert political authority in the context of political regimes built on patronage and clientelism (Reno 2009a). Arguably, there are strong incentives for West Africans to participate in drug trafficking, not only by providing logistical support to trafficking operations but also by seeking to increase their overall stakes in the illegal business and making it a sustainable source of income. This is reflected in West Africa's 'upgrade' in recent years from being mostly a transit point on the cocaine route to Europe to becoming a key point for the re-packaging, re-routing and re-sale of cocaine. Key officials in sectors within the region's states that control assets which are of strategic importance for the smooth running of trafficking operations stand to benefit, at least temporarily. These include military and police officers, customs officials, central bankers, staff of the ministries of defence and the interior, airport and seaport officials, and so on. Businesspeople in the banking, import–export and transport sectors too are seeking to grab their slice of the cake, as are unemployed youth, members of the clergy and common criminals (West Africa Commission on Drugs 2013).

In effect, the evidence suggests that there is hardly any sector nowadays in the countries that constitute West Africa's northern and southern trafficking hubs that is not involved in one way or another in the illegal business, which two analysts have called an 'invisible tide' (Cockayne and Williams 2009). For a number of both political and military elites and subaltern groups in the region the incentives to draw rents or simply make a living from this illicit opportunity are too high not to become involved; and there are no sufficiently strong countervailing institutional and social forces, nor are there enough alternative, licit sources of income available to marginalised and impoverished groups, to change this highly problematic situation. In effect, due to the region's progressively deeper insertion in processes of illicit globalisation through the trade in cocaine and other illicit drugs, West Africa could be *ad portas* of entering a new era of lost development in which bouts of political instability and localised outbreaks of violence are preceded or followed by the establishment of new equilibriums on the basis of short-lived political settlements centred on the narcotics trade and other illicit commerce.

---

[21] See Section 5 for a discussion of the relationship between drug trafficking and violence in West Africa.

In this respect, one analyst observes that:

> To the extent that external drug-traffickers make alliances with internal outsiders – former or existing rebels not linked to the official system or young challengers who seek social mobility in an exclusive system – the traffickers will develop a conflictual relationship with the state, and political instability may well follow. To the extent that the governing elite captures rents, a symbiosis between external (and internal) drug traffickers and the ruling elites may develop. Drug traffickers will enjoy a sponsored safe haven; and while democratic processes and institutional development of the country will be threatened, political stability and the existing political dispensation may well be strengthened.
> (Felbab-Brown 2010)

As discussed earlier, it must not be forgotten that both scenarios play out in an environment in which participation in the drug trade is often viewed as a 'legitimate form of commerce' (Felbab-Brown and Forest 2012) and there is little stigma attached to participating in it because 'the step from legal to illegal activity is small and not necessarily perceived as such by those involved' because 'the dividing line between informal and criminal business is extremely blurred' (Vorrath 2013).

In the words of West African and international experts:

> In the context of poor or non-existent delivery of basic services, organised criminal activities are often deemed legitimate sources of funding for services, at times providing income and employment or investment in local communities. The reinvestment of drug-related proceeds in the community provides… much needed support and services in areas where the government has been markedly absent. The latter can be of particular incidence at the local level, where government services and resources are limited and citizens seek to sustain themselves through whatever means possible.
> (Center for International Cooperation 2012: 4)

Local leaders in the Sahel region are reported to participate in the drug trade as a means to sustain their communities' livelihoods. Elected officials in Ghana and Sierra Leone have been found to invest proceeds from trafficking in community projects and distribute cash during visits to maintain the support of their constituencies. This helps to lubricate existing patronage systems and also skew the outcomes of electoral processes in favour of those who partake in the illegal business (Stearns Lawson and Dininio 2013). On the other hand, low-end traffickers are seeking to challenge existing power relations and patronage networks, including those dominated by traditional leaders and tribal elders and increase their social standing (Felbab-Brown and Forest 2012). In several countries of the region, including Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali and Niger, 'drug trafficking revenues… offer a highly tempting fast-track to the top for younger, impatient generations of military officers or social groups that feel deprived of their fair share of criminal market revenues' (Cockayne 2011).

Against this backdrop a key issue is what 'political stability' and the strengthening of the 'existing political dispensation' on the back of large-scale drug trafficking means for West Africa's longer-term development prospects; who benefits from it and in what way; and who is left out. Arguably, the corrosive longer-term effects clearly outweigh short-term gains. As one author points out:

> The short-term stability of having non-democratic ruling elites enter into 'symbiotic' relationships with drug traffickers will in the long-term choke off democratic evolution in West Africa. The stability of this alliance lasts only until the next group of wannabe leaders acts to mount a coup or launch an insurgency.
> (Brown 2013)

Or, it should be added, until external trafficking organisations see it as being in their best interest to change local partners or migrate to another West African country where the business environment is more stable. This appears to have been the case after the 2009 turmoil in Guinea-Bissau, when scores of Latin American traffickers relocated to neighbouring Guinea, which they reportedly perceived to be a more stable setting for their criminal activities (Ellis 2009).

A fundamental problem is that the proceeds from drug trafficking are distributed in a highly uneven fashion, and so are the risks involved. With few exceptions, those involved in top-end trafficking do not have to fear judicial prosecution, especially if they form part of ruling elites.

> Very few political actors have been tried and sentenced for their involvement in drug trafficking even when there is sufficient evidence pointing to their involvement. When important political figures involved in illicit activity are eventually caught, it is often due to the policies and pressures implemented and exercised by third countries.
> (Center for International Cooperation 2012)

While in the past West African political leaders have paid much lip service to the importance of reining in drug trafficking, and while in more recent times there have been some genuine efforts to this effect (Cockayne 2011), it remains questionable how much real commitment and room to manoeuvre there is to make headway on this front (Shaw 2012). 'It is precisely with regard to the exercise of will', writes one West African scholar, 'that many [regional] governments have faltered and failed as the drug cartels have also launched countervailing measures of their own, including penetrating elite intelligence-gathering and enforcement institutions with inducements of various magnitudes' (Olukoshi 2013).

While in extreme cases official top-end traffickers can pay the ultimate price of losing their lives (discussed in Section 4.3 in relation to events in Guinea-Bissau in 2009), the risks entailed in participating in the illegal business are assumed for the most part by low-end traffickers, such as logistical operators and drug couriers known as 'mules'. Externally designed and funded strategies to curb the flow of illicit drugs through West Africa are not taking these realities into account sufficiently. Focused on the overarching goal of reducing the availability of cocaine in Europe by shutting down the trafficking routes through the region, they ignore the political economy of drug trafficking in countries such as Guinea-Bissau, Ghana or Mali. Not only does this undercut the programmes' chances of 'success', it can also contribute to increasing the likelihood of political instability and violence.

External anti-narcotics aid can contribute to bolstering the power of the very groups within West African states that are high-end facilitators of the trafficking of illicit drugs. Newly created anti-narcotics and specialised law enforcement agencies, such as Transnational Crime Units (TCUs), can be co-opted by trafficking groups, providing them with additional advantages through access to privileged information and high-tech equipment. Further, aid to curb the flow of drugs through West Africa runs the risk of becoming yet another source of rents for political elites, which they may use to pursue their own (covert) agendas. This can lead to heightened political instability and – sometimes – violence, as will be discussed in Section 5. Given the high levels of poverty and unemployment in the region, especially among youth, heavy-handed drug control strategies also risk inciting popular unrest and further undermining the weak legitimacy of governments (Felbab-Brown and Forest 2012).

Armed groups with political agendas and 'historic animosity toward the state' (Locke 2012) have also shown interest in appropriating proceeds from drug trafficking and have formed 'alliances of convenience with criminal groups for profit, access to illicit logistical chains, or for the sake of joining forces against a common enemy, the state' (Felbab-Brown and Forest 2012). This was recently revealed in Mali, where al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb reportedly allied with, and provided protection to, drug traffickers along the trans-Sahara route. As two observers point out:

> Actors involved in organised crime currently wield decisive political and military influence in northern Mali… The political system in Mali has in part become reliant on criminal proceeds, thereby creating an impenetrable barrier to entry for legitimate democratic processes.
> (Shaw 2012: 2)

> The former Malian leadership tried to use organised crime as a resource for the exercise of influence in the north by allowing its local allies to engage in criminal activity. It eventually lost control over the conflicts this generated, while the rule of law and the legitimacy of state institutions were eroded through complicity with organised crime… The Malian leadership deliberately exploited these tensions to exert its influence by playing leaders from certain communities against others and relying on select tribes to keep the north under control… The alliance between the Malian leadership and local notables based on organised crime also applied to AQIM's [al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb's] kidnapping for ransom business. These arrangements go a long way to explain why the Malian security apparatus by and large stopped short of confronting AQIM and its practice of using northern Mali as a safe haven for its hostage cases.
> (Lacher 2012: 11, 13)

4.3   Guinea-Bissau and Guinea

By all accounts both Guinea-Bissau and Guinea are heavily affected by transnational cocaine trafficking and may be considered to be at the extreme end of the scale of penetration by transnational criminal networks. Starting in the mid-2000s, the two countries are reported to have witnessed significant inflows of cocaine from South America. According to UNODC (2013a), most of the drugs arrive by ship and aircraft in Guinea-Bissau and are then trafficked on to Guinea, Mali, The Gambia and Senegal, from where they continue their journey to the European destination markets. Although, as discussed earlier, there are only rough estimates of the volume of cocaine flowing into West Africa overall and how much is trafficked through the region's individual countries, Guinea appears to be a preferred conduit for drugs that enter the region through Guinea-Bissau. According to experts, this could be explained by the existence of what has been called a 'cocaine axis' between Bissau, the capital of Guinea-Bissau, and Conakry, the capital of Guinea, via the town of Kamsar (International Crisis Group 2008b). In both countries, senior government officials as well as high-ranking military officers have been linked to the transnational drug trade (see below). Guinea's former president, Lansana Conté, a former general who seized power in 1984 and died in office in late 2008, was known for his friendship with João Bernardo Vieira, a three-time president of Guinea-Bissau, who was assassinated by elements of his own military in March 2009. Reflecting Guinea's extensive meddling in the wars that ravaged several West African countries in the 1990s and 2000s, including the 1998–99 conflict in Guinea-Bissau, Conté had supported Vieira in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to put down a military rebellion against his rule by sending Guinean troops to the neighbouring country.

Official participation in cocaine trafficking was preceded by deep involvement in the illicit arms trade in the region, particularly by government officials and military officers in Guinea but also Guinea-Bissau. Under Conté Guinea played a critical role in supplying armed groups

in, for instance, Sierra Leone and Liberia with weapons. In 2005, the International Crisis Group reported that 'surprising as it may seem, a mid-level functionary in the [Guinean] agricultural ministry, who worked in conjunction with European arms dealers, was responsible for issuing 80 per cent of the documentation for illicit arms fuelling West Africa's regional war' (International Crisis Group 2005b: 15). Guinea's military hierarchy oversaw these illegal operations, which ranged from 'the supply of ammunition as part of cross-border trade to large deals in heavy weaponry and light arms' (*ibid.*). In Guinea-Bissau, both President Vieira and top military commanders were involved in channelling weapons to the separatist Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance in Senegal. In both countries, 'profits from arms trafficking became critical for [civilian and military] elites to build and maintain alliances and loyalty – a mechanism of "self-financing" separate from the diversion of official budgets and abuse of authorities to feed patronage networks' (O'Regan and Thomson 2013: 17).

With the West African conflicts drawing to a close, by the mid-2000s members of Guinea's and Guinea-Bissau's political and military elites were faced with the prospects of losing significant rents from illegal activities, such as gun running, cross-border trade in goods looted by rebel groups and government soldiers, and the illicit appropriation of development and emergency aid. The cocaine trade presented them with an opportunity to fill this income shortfall, providing them effectively with access to even larger illegal rents than before. The indications are that both in Guinea-Bissau and Guinea senior members of the government and the military hierarchy latched onto cocaine trafficking with dedication and ease, reportedly amassing quite unprecedented wealth and influence in the process (O'Regan and Thomson 2013; International Crisis Group 2010). For instance, after Conté's death and a military coup in 2008, his eldest son Ousmane was arrested by Guinea's new military rulers on charges of drug trafficking, to which he eventually confessed publicly on television (International Crisis Group 2009: 5).

At the same time, political instability and elite infighting not only persisted but arguably intensified, particularly in Guinea-Bissau. Two observers note that:

> Powershifts have become more frequent and violent given the huge amounts of money involved in the drug-trade relative to the economy. This transcends previous patterns of corruption and patronage in Guinea-Bissau, which required a certain degree of inter-elite or cross-institutional support. Drug-trafficking has provided both the means and motive to sidestep the state and it has sparked its own fierce competition.
> (O'Regan and Thomson 2013: 21)

In April 2012, the country's political process was yet again rocked by a military coup and a return to civilian-electoral rule is still pending. While in Guinea the election of President Alpha Condé in 2010 – widely considered as the first democratic poll in the country since independence from France in 1958 – brought a degree of political stability, and some steps to counter drug trafficking and official involvement in it have been taken, relations between the military and the civilian government remain tense, as was evidenced in an attempted military coup in 2011.

One often-cited example of heightened competition between political and military elites over rents from cocaine trafficking are the assassinations of, first, Guinea-Bissau's Chief of Defence Staff, General Batista Tagme Na Wai, on 1 March 2009 and then President Vieira on 2 March.[22] While the motives for the two killings remain unknown, they have been 'linked to deep mistrust between the political-military elites', on the one hand, and clashing drug

---

[22] Tagme Na Wai was killed in a bomb blast in which a sophisticated remote detonating device was used and Vieira was killed hours later by soldiers loyal to Tagme Na Wai.

trafficking interests of both men on the other (International Crisis Group 2009: 1, 3). It may well be that both motives were intertwined as it is not unlikely that issues related to the control of profits from drug trafficking prompted increasing rivalry between political and military elites at the helm of the state. Members of the military are arguably in a privileged position to access drug rents.

> It is, above all, the complicity of some soldiers which facilitates the traffickers' work. The latter receive local logistical support from soldiers or marines, depending on the transit point… The army hierarchy is therefore able to acquire part of vast amounts of money injected into the country through drug trafficking.
> (International Crisis Group 2008b: 22)

In April 2013, the US government indicted two senior Bissau-Guinean military officers, including the Army Chief of Staff, Antonio Indjai, on alleged drug trafficking charges (Economist Intelligence Unit 2014). Furthermore, divisions within the armed forces of Guinea-Bissau have also deepened (International Crisis Group 2009). In late 2013, it was reported that 'military alliances are fluid and fast-changing as various factions seek to settle scores and vie for political influence and control over the lucrative drugs trade' (Economist Intelligence Unit 2014).

As in other West African countries, international and regional counter-drug efforts in Guinea-Bissau have focused on curbing the flow of cocaine by strengthening local law enforcement capacity, intelligence sharing and the judiciary, and reforming the security sector (West Africa Commission on Drugs 2013). For instance, under the West Africa Coast Initiative, which was launched in 2010 by the United Nations Office for West Africa to support the ECOWAS Plan of Action, Guinea-Bissau committed (alongside Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire) to establishing a TCU within its judicial police. Arguably, there has been less attention to critical governance issues and establishing a consistent political dialogue with Bissau-Guinean leaders that could help address deep-seated problems in relation to the penetration of drug trafficking interests in the government and military. Chronic political instability has undermined counter-drug and anti-crime strategies, as became manifest after the April 2012 coup, when the US government and the European Union suspended their assistance to Guinea-Bissau.

5 Cocaine trafficking and 'new' forms of violence and insecurity

The end of the internal wars of the 1990s and 2000s brought a decrease in the levels of violence in West Africa. While data on homicides and other violent deaths in the region are hard to come by, the available evidence seems to suggest that (with the exception of Côte d'Ivoire) the levels are quite low in comparison to countries in other world regions heavily affected by drug trafficking, especially Colombia and Venezuela in the Andean region of South America, and El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras in Central America.[23] Statistical data from the World Health Organization compiled by UNODC (UNODC 2013b) indicate that in 2008 (the only year for which data on West Africa are available) the average intentional homicide[24] rate for 15 West African countries[25] was 16.1 per 100,000 inhabitants. The country which recorded by far the highest rate was Côte d'Ivoire (56.9), followed by Guinea (22.5), Guinea-Bissau (20.2), Ghana (15.7) and Benin (15.1). All other countries had homicide rates below 15/100,000. In absolute terms, Nigeria had the highest number of homicides in 2008 (18,422), followed by Côte d'Ivoire (10,801), Ghana (3,646), Burkina Faso (2,786), Guinea (2,152), Benin (1,262), Mali (1,157) and Senegal (1,027). The other countries of the region all recorded absolute homicide numbers below 1,000 in 2008.

Table 5.1 West African homicide rates per 100,000 inhabitants and absolute number of homicides, 2008

Country	Homicide rate	Absolute number of homicides
Benin	15.1	1,262
Burkina Faso	18.0	2,786
Côte d'Ivoire	56.9	10,801
The Gambia	10.8	176
Ghana	15.7	3,646
Guinea	22.5	2,152
Guinea-Bissau	20.2	294
Liberia	10.1	371
Mali	8.0	1,157
Mauritania	14.7	485
Niger	3.8	552
Nigeria	12.1	18,422
Senegal	8.7	1,027
Sierra Leone	14.9	837
Togo	10.9	627

Source: Adapted from UNODC (2013b).

While these data present only a snapshot of one year – 2008 – and issues of under-reporting have to be taken into account, it seems not unrealistic to assume that with the exception of Côte d'Ivoire (which is not among the main drug transit countries of the region) and to a lesser extent Guinea and Guinea-Bissau (which are key cocaine transit conduits), West

---

[23] In 2008, the figures for these Latin American countries were (in the above order): 35.9/100,000, 52.0/100,000, 51.9/100,000, 46.0/100,000, and 61.3/100,000. Mexico had a rate of 12.7/100,000 which in absolute terms amounted to 14,006 homicides, putting the country in third place after Colombia and Venezuela.
[24] UNODC defines intentional homicide as the unlawful death purposefully inflicted on a person by another person.
[25] Excluding Cape Verde, for which no 2008 data are available.

Africa is not affected by a 'violence epidemic'. Thus, so far, drug trafficking through the region does not appear to be causing elevated levels of violence.

This interpretation of the available statistical data is backed up by expert assessments of the situation regarding violence in West Africa. Both local and international observers underline that the region has not witnessed significant levels of trafficking-related violence but warn that this could change in the future (Aning and Pokoo 2013; Cockayne and Williams 2009). A common explanation for the absence of high levels of violence is that in the West African context of weak states, pervasive corruption, low public sector incomes and high levels of poverty, paying off state security and law-enforcement officials is an effective means to exert influence and keep trafficking operations going. High-level political sponsorship of the illegal drug business, especially in Guinea-Bissau but also other countries in the region, is cited as another factor that has helped keep a lid on the emergence of 'drug wars' of the kind witnessed in parts of Latin America.[26] In effect, the *absence* of higher levels of trafficking-related violence in West Africa could be indicative of the key role the involvement in the illegal business plays in the strategies of local elites and their constituencies to assert and maintain political authority.

In this context, it is worth recalling that illegal or 'black' markets are not inherently violence-prone. As Peter Andreas points out, 'actors in the global illicit economy are defined more by stealth than by violence' (Andreas 2011: 417). In some circumstances illegal business actors may use violence to regulate transactions in illicit markets because they cannot take recourse to lawful forms of regulation. They are operating in contexts of legal uncertainty and the enforcement of contracts, the protection of individual and group interests, and the punishment of 'wrongdoers' may be most (cost-)effectively achieved through the threat or the actual exercise of violence (Andreas 2011). Furthermore, systems of loyalty within trafficking groups and networks are based to an important degree on members' understanding that in the case of disloyal or treasonous behaviour they stand a good chance of being called to account by violent means, which may include their execution by fellow traffickers (Maihold and Hochmüller 2013).

This notwithstanding, there is concern that drug trafficking through West Africa could eventually fuel violence on a larger scale, including military conflict and terrorist activity. This concern is informed by the region's history of internal wars, which were partly fuelled by the proceeds from the smuggling of 'conflict diamonds' and 'conflict timber'. More recently, insurgencies and terrorist groups in the Niger Delta and the Sahara have begun obtaining resources through the large-scale theft and sale of crude oil and the trans-Sahara trade in cocaine and other illicit drugs, respectively. Some authors also point to the potential risk that cocaine trafficking through West Africa could lead to Mexican-style 'drug wars' or Central American-style 'gang wars' and skyrocketing homicide rates (Cockayne and Williams 2009). These concerns ought to be taken seriously but should not be overblown. There are significant differences between the current drug trafficking situation in the region and West Africa's civil conflicts of the 1990s and 2000s as well as the bloodshed in Mexico and Central America that have to be considered when assessing the likelihood of increasing violence.

Although West Africa's civil conflicts of the 1990s and 2000s had distinct origins and features in the individual countries, in one form or another they were combinations of violent responses to state repression (expressing grievances, especially among youth), resource war and conflicts driven by the political-personal agendas of warlords, other strongmen and rebel movements that drew resources from controlling natural resources, such as diamonds, other precious stones and minerals, and timber. The warriors' aims were to subdue their

---

[26] Such a scenario has been predicted by some analysts. See, for instance, the interesting report by James Cockayne and Phil Williams (2009). However, it seems unlikely that West African countries will witness the emergence of 'drug wars' à la Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala and Colombia because the institutional parameters, state capacities and incentives for elites to increase their political and social capital by participating in drug trafficking differ significantly.

enemies and competitors and to acquire wealth which could be used to build and lubricate patronage networks and also to address socioeconomic grievances among their constituencies. This required seizing control of the state, however weak it was. As discussed earlier, there certainly were important transregional dimensions to the conflicts engulfing Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau, but the main plot, as it were, was confined to, and contained within, the West African region; the main actors were West Africans, not foreigners (though South African and other mercenaries and shady traders of all sorts, including European gun runners and diamond buyers, eagerly flocked to the region; and Libya played a significant role in funding and training rebel movements).

The trafficking of cocaine through West Africa presents a very different scenario. First and foremost, the shipment of large bulk cargoes of cocaine to West Africa is on the whole not managed by West Africans but by foreign traffickers, most notably Latin Americans, though it has been reported that Nigerians are involved in some capacity in organising trafficking operations from Brazil (Ellis 2009). Latin American traffickers would not use the impoverished countries of the region as stepping stones to the European market nearly as much as they have been doing since the mid-2000s, were it not for the difficulties they are experiencing due to increased and more effective interdiction and law enforcement on other, more attractive and important trans-Atlantic routes.

West African trafficking networks appear to be balancing profit-seeking for themselves and for their kin and group with efforts to conceal their activities and reinvest parts of the gains in building and maintaining relationships with allies in political office. It is unsurprising that this would include 'energising' the electoral and political campaigns of friends and relatives, keeping patronage networks running smoothly, paying off judges and customs officials, and so on. Violence is not a central element of strategies of accumulation of economic and political capital of West Africans involved in cocaine trafficking and other illicit commerce. The chances that the recent civil conflicts could repeat themselves, but this time fuelled by proceeds from large-scale drug trafficking, are therefore slim. This does not rule out, however, that some militant and terrorist groups that are active in the region are seeking to derive income from the drug business by, for instance, providing security and protection to traffickers and communities located on trafficking routes, as has been reported to be the case with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in northern parts of Mali.

The gruesome Latin American violence scenarios do not appear to be imminent in the region because the West African states most affected by cocaine trafficking lack the authority and capacity to mount and sustain larger-scale anti-narcotics strategies focused on the interdiction of drug shipments and the targeting of the trafficking networks and their leaders. This is the case despite the regional drug control architecture that was established in past years with significant international support, which remains work in progress and faces numerous operational and political challenges. In this context it is not very likely that feeble or half-hearted official attempts to crack down on drug trafficking will spur turf wars between competing trafficking groups or prompt them to engage the state in a spiral of violence. International counter-narcotics assistance to West African countries is arguably not of sufficient size to be able to make any real difference here; and as the cases of Colombia and Mexico show, external assistance would only be able to do so if there were very substantial buy-in from local governments prepared to 'take casualties' and take the war to the traffickers. There are no indications presently that this is the case in West Africa or could become a reality in the foreseeable future.

It is more difficult to assess whether gang warfare involving mostly youths could result from drug trafficking. All West African countries have large young populations and in a number of countries sizable youth gangs and cult groups exist, such as the Bakassi Boys and Icelanders in Nigeria or gangs of former rebel fighters in Sierra Leone and Liberia. However, it appears that the social and political structures in which West African youth gangs operate

are quite different from those of their peers in Central America and Mexico. For instance, ethnic relations and the role of the family and traditional rule take on different forms in the two regions and there are different implications for youth violence associated with them.

The present analysis suggests that the potential for higher levels of violence associated with the drug business in West Africa is therefore dependent on whether:

- the control of the illegal market becomes monopolised by one elite group, which could prompt other powerful groups to challenge it through violent means;
- 'traditional' patronage networks (which may be based on ethnicity or other identities) break up and are replaced by new networks that are lubricated by drug money, empowering subaltern groups to challenge established elites, which may result in violence;
- the spoils of drug trafficking become more difficult to attain for all participant groups because the volume of drugs trafficked through West Africa (temporarily) decreases due to internationally led interdiction and law enforcement strategies (meaning that potentially violent competition over drug rents may increase);
- outside traffickers switch to paying local counterparts more frequently and more generously in kind, which carries the risk of a proliferation of trafficking groups in the region and which could result in heightened competition between them over a share of the illegal market;
- Latin American and other external trafficking groups with operations in West Africa start employing similar tactics as, for instance, in Mexico to enforce loyalty among group members and local partners, settle scores or maintain control over high-value trafficking assets, locations and routes.[27]

---

[27] Although there are reports on killings allegedly carried out by Latin American criminals in West Africa (Brown 2013), this last scenario is perhaps the least likely as foreign traffickers will seek to maintain a low profile in the region, knowing that they would be disadvantaged *vis-à-vis* local traffickers, who know their own turf much better.

6 Tackling the negative effects of drug trafficking on governance and development

As noted at the beginning of this report, underpinning the World Bank's analysis of external stresses is a vulnerability model centred on the institutional capacity and legitimacy of fragile/vulnerable states. In the absence of sufficiently robust, effective and legitimate 'buffering institutions', fragile states or states with a legacy of violent conflict are said to risk cyclical, recursive violence. This risk is heightened by the impact of external stresses stemming from various sources, such as illicit trafficking, cross-border violence spillovers, and commodity price and resource shocks. According to the World Bank's analysis, the region in which a state is located defines not only the type of threats it is likely to face but also the potential support available to it to help withstand the destabilising impact of external stresses. Hence, '[regional] collaboration and shared administrative services could create... the net gains in capacity that would allow all participating states to better handle organised violence' (World Bank 2011a: 233).

While this reasoning might apply in some cases – such as with 'uncontrolled' economic migration and refugee flows, and even cross-border support to rebels provided that an agreement to stop such support is negotiated and adhered to by the governments of the states in question – it does not readily apply where the nature of the external stresses is determined by sweeping processes of (illicit) globalisation, such as in the case of transnational drug trafficking. It is likely that tackling transnational trafficking through creating stronger domestic buffering institutions and enhancing regional cooperation will be met with disappointment, particularly if strategies equate building stronger institutions and enhancing regional cooperation primarily with beefing up law enforcement and judicial capacities. It is further questionable whether such a strategy would be politically feasible. The global and transnational nature of these activities and processes and of the actors involved transcends the regional context, which needs to be factored into the policy responses; it is this same situation that provides significant opportunities for key (criminal) state and non-state groups, including in borderlands, to enrich themselves and amass 'illicit elite political resources' (Moore 2011).

Underlying the notion of buffering institutions is the assumption that major global and transnational pressures can be neutralised by building stronger domestic institutions, presumably at the central government level; and that there is little or no agency on the part of transnationally and globally networked groups in the affected countries in the making and promotion of such pressures. However, as this report suggests with respect to West Africa, in many institutionally weak, politically unstable and impoverished states in the global South this is not the case. On the contrary, powerful political and military elites and their patronage-dependent constituencies are actively engaging in processes of (illicit) globalisation, seeking to appropriate rents to maintain positions of power and influence through patronage and clientelism. While in some countries and sectors progress has been made, the experience of the past two decades and longer shows that major efforts to help build accountable, effective and legitimate political institutions of a 'modern', liberal-democratic kind have on the whole met with significant difficulties in many parts of the developing world. These difficulties are known to be compounded by civil conflict and other forms of organised and networked violence, which, according to the *World Development Report 2011*, affect some 1.5 billion people around the world today. Transnational drug trafficking and other 'external stresses' further limit the chances of building effective and responsive states in regions like West Africa, including by facilitating their deeper insertion – however precarious and risky – into processes of illicit globalisation.

The idea that enhanced regional cooperation could effectively shield states from external stresses fails to acknowledge the empirical fact that presently whole world regions are being overwhelmed by illicit commodity flows that are essentially global in nature, such as the large-scale trafficking of cocaine. While the region in which they are located is certainly of great importance for the development, security and stability of individual countries, it would be erroneous to assume that in and of itself it could provide effective cover from external stresses.

An array of regional cooperation mechanisms to tackle the problem have been established, including the Regional Action Plan to Address the Growing Problem of Illicit Drug Trafficking, Organized Crime and Drug Abuse in West Africa, adopted in 2008 by ECOWAS member states. Western donors have supported these efforts, including through innovative interventions like the EC-funded Cocaine Route programme aiming at enhancing regional cooperation as well as cooperation between West Africa and cocaine source and transit countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Yet the indications are that thus far the results have been meagre, not least because regional cooperation has been bogged down by lagging implementation of the Action Plan due to foot-dragging on the part of ECOWAS member state governments and insufficient financial and technical resources (Aning and Pokoo 2013). Transregional efforts have been hampered by significant differences in institutional capacity and development between West Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean (Klein *et al.* 2013), and because EC-funded schemes (particularly the Cocaine Route programme) are not linked to interventions geared at addressing organised crime issues in Europe and between Europe and West Africa.[28]

To be clear, calling for more effective policies to address the serious problems associated with drug trafficking and organised criminality in West Africa does not exclude efforts to build legitimate and responsive political institutions in the ECOWAS member states and strengthen regional cooperation mechanisms. Yet the overarching aims of policy should be framed in a different way and they should not focus on the regional and national levels only, but also on the global level, as well as on coordinating and synchronising policy at the three levels.

6.1   Global level

West Africa's insertion into the transnational drug trafficking chain is taking place on the back of a process of illicit globalisation that is spurred by the UN-sanctioned international drug control regime, which prohibits certain substances, including cocaine, in the interest of public health. Responding to increasing cocaine demand in Europe and more effective drug control, interdiction and law enforcement on the established trans-Atlantic routes from Latin America and the Caribbean to Europe, traffickers have opened up alternative routes through West Africa. Effective global-level policy to tackle the problem in West Africa therefore needs to focus on:

- increasing investment in public-health-focused and human-rights-based interventions to reduce cocaine demand in Europe and in other large consumer markets, such as the US, Brazil, South Africa and Russia;
- achieving a new international consensus on drug policy based on the reform of the existing international drug control regime.

---

[28] This means, in effect, that the programme's interventions are only focused on the Latin America/Caribbean–West Africa part of the cocaine route and do not take into account the West Africa–Europe connection. Considering that Europe is the main destination market for the cocaine that is trafficked through West Africa and European or Europe-based criminal organisations are involved in the illegal business, this represents a significant problem in the design of the programme.

Following the second UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs (UNGASS) in 2009, the third special session is scheduled to take place in 2016. In recent years there has been significant drug policy reform momentum, which has been championed by several Latin American governments and blue-ribbon commissions, including the West Africa Commission on Drugs. UNGASS 2016 represents a critical opportunity for the international community, including the member states of ECOWAS, to make progress on international drug policy reform. It is therefore a forum of key importance for addressing West Africa's serious problems in relation to transnational drug trafficking and organised criminality.

Both public-health-focused and human-rights-based demand reduction and international drug policy reform are longer-term processes that need to be supported by other interventions at the regional and national levels in West Africa so that the negative effects of drug trafficking can be mitigated and counter-drug and anti-crime strategies can become more effective and legitimate. Strengthening the knowledge base on trafficking and organised criminality in the region and their impacts on governance and development should be an essential part of these efforts.

6.2   Regional level

Policy at the regional level should be refocused from being predominantly concerned with law enforcement and drug shipment interdiction. Foreign financial and technical assistance to West African states should support the interventions outlined below, which should be accompanied by continuous high-level political and policy dialogue with regional organisations, such as ECOWAS, and partner governments so as to mitigate risks of unintended negative consequences of counter-drug and anti-crime assistance. Suggested interventions are:

- strengthening cooperation between the member states of ECOWAS and other sub-regional entities, such as the Mano River Union, on critical regional governance, security, violence prevention, public health, and human rights issues;
- increasing cooperation and exchange of information on drug trafficking and organised criminality between West African regional entities and governments and their Latin American and European counterparts so as to increase capacities in the region to respond to both 'push' and 'pull' factors along the transnational cocaine route;
- avoiding the militarisation of counter-drug and anti-crime strategies in West Africa by building up effective and accountable regional criminal justice and law enforcement capacities;
- addressing the limited coordination and the duplication of efforts to tackle drug trafficking and organised criminality between and among West African governments and the international donor community.

6.3   National level

Progressive and democratic forces in political and civil society should be encouraged and supported, including by international donors, to demand committed and transparent action from their governments to improve governance and counter the negative effects on political institutions and development that are found to be associated with drug trafficking and organised criminality. Such action should not be limited to strengthening judicial and law enforcement capacities but should also focus on:

- strengthening both formal and social accountability mechanisms so as to increase the capacity of state entities, civil society organisations and the media to probe and expose official involvement in drug trafficking;

- reducing the incentives for the constituencies of corrupt political and military elites to engage in drug trafficking by offering sufficiently attractive alternative income opportunities as well as protection from persecution;
- preventing violence through social and employment programmes for young people and other marginalised sectors;
- strengthening effective civilian oversight over the armed forces and mainstreaming crime- and trafficking-sensitivity in security sector reforms;
- protecting electoral processes from criminal interference by, for instance, establishing effective transparency mechanisms with respect to electoral campaign financing;
- strengthening the capacity of relevant state entities and civil society organisations to rigorously protect human rights.

Annex 1: Map showing ECOWAS member states
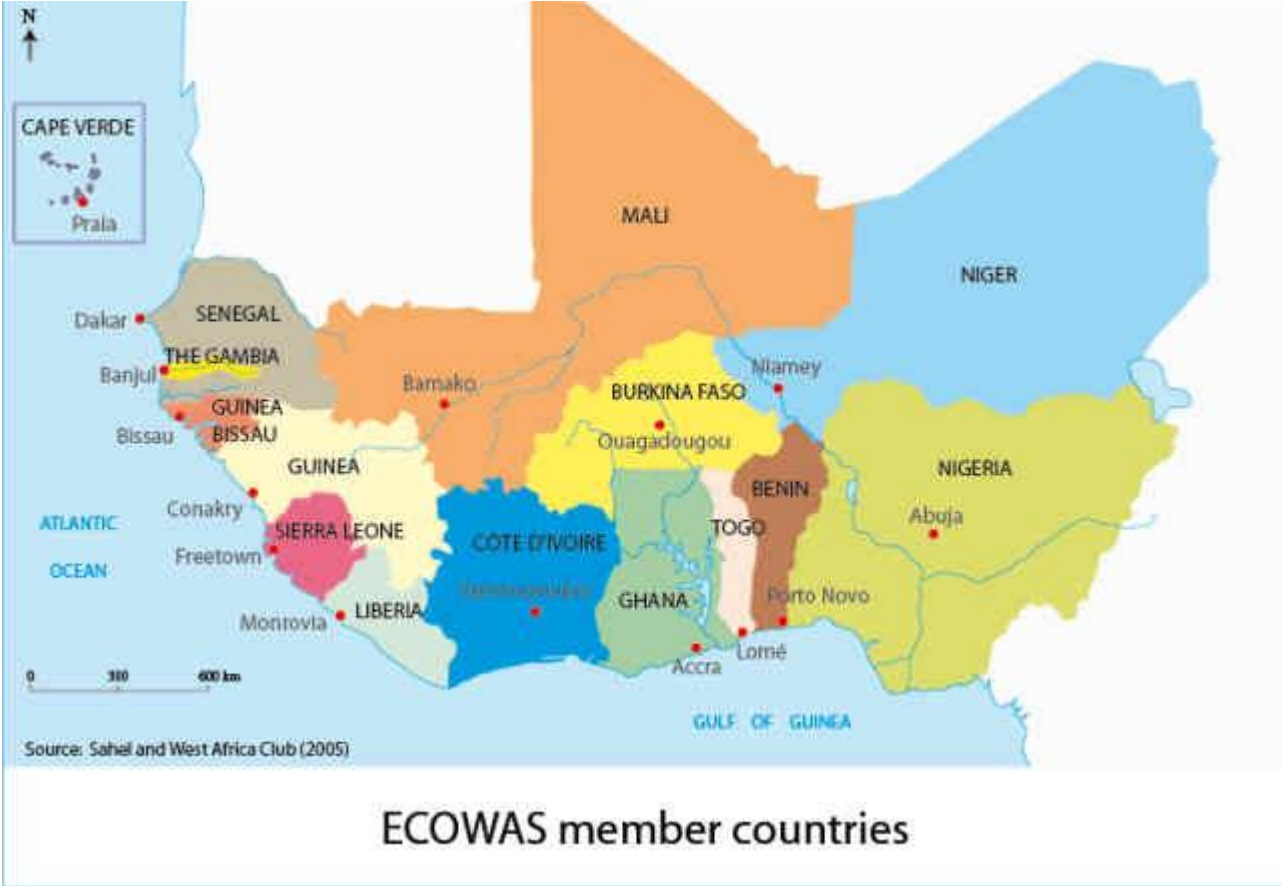
Source: Sahel and West Africa Club (2005).

References

Abraham, I. and van Schendel, W. (2005) 'Introduction: The Making of Illicitness', in W. van Schendel and I. Abraham (eds), *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders, and the Other Side of Globalization*, Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press

Addo, P. (2008) *Cross-Border Criminal Activities in West Africa: Options for Effective Responses*, KAIPTC Paper 12, Dakar: Kofi Annan International Peace Keeping Training Centre

Adebajo, A. and Rashid, I. (eds) (2004) *West Africa's Security Challenges*, Boulder CO/London: Lynne Rienner

Andreas, P. (2011) 'Illicit Globalization: Myths, Misconceptions, and Historical Lessons', *Political Science Quarterly* 126.3: 403–25

Aning, K. (2007) 'Are There Emerging West African Criminal Networks? The Case of Ghana', *Global Crime* 8.3: 193–212

Aning, K. and Pokoo, J. (2013) *Drug Trafficking and Threats to National and Regional Security in West Africa*, WACD Background Paper 1, Accra: West Africa Commission on Drugs

Bayart, J.-F.; Ellis, S. and Hibou, B. (1999) *The Criminalization of the State in Africa*, Oxford and Bloomington IN: International African Institute in association with James Currey and Indiana University Press

Boege, V.; Brown, A.; Clements, K. and Nolan, A. (2008) 'On Hybrid Political Orders and Emerging States: State Formation in the Context of "Fragility"', Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management

Brown, D. (2013) *The Challenge of Drug Trafficking to Democratic Governance and Human Security in West Africa*, The Letort Papers, Carlisle PA: Strategic Studies Institute US Army War College

Carrier, N. and Klantschnig, G. (2012) *Africa and the War on Drugs*, London: Zed Books

Casas-Zamora, K. (2013) 'On Organized Crime and Political Finance: Why Does the Connection Matter?', in K. Casas-Zamora (ed), *Dangerous Liaisons: Organized Crime and Political Finance in Latin America and Beyond*, Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press

Center for International Cooperation (2012) 'The Impact of Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking on Governance, Development & Security in West Africa', expert meeting: summary of proceedings, Dakar, 18–20 April 2012

Cockayne, J. (2011) 'Transnational Threats: The Criminalization of West Africa and the Sahel', Policy Brief, December 2011, New York: Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation

Cockayne, J. and Williams, P. (2009) *The Invisible Tide: Towards an International Strategy to Deal with Drug Trafficking Through West Africa*, New York: International Peace Institute

Csete, J. and Sánchez, C. (2013) *Telling the Story of Drugs in West Africa: The Newest Front in a Losing War?*, Policy Brief 1, Swansea: Global Drug Policy Observatory

de Waal, A. (2009) 'Mission Without End? Peacekeeping in the African Political Marketplace', *International Affairs* 85.1: 99–113

Economist Intelligence Unit (2014) *Guinea Bissau: Country Report – Main Report: December 1st 2013*, www.eiu.com/FileHandler.ashx?issue_id=541390638&mode=pdf (accessed 26 March 2014)

Ellis, S. (2009) 'West Africa's International Drug Trade', *African Affairs* 108.431: 171–96

Ero, C. and Temin, J. (2004) 'Sources of Conflict in West Africa', in Chandra Lekha Sriram and Zoe Nielsen (eds), *Exploring Subregional Conflict: Opportunities for Conflict Prevention*, Boulder CO/London: Lynne Rienner

Felbab-Brown, V. (2010) 'The West African Drug Trade in the Context of the Region's Illicit Economies and Poor Governance', presentation to Conference on Drug Trafficking in West Africa, Arlington VA, 14 October 2010

Felbab-Brown, V. and Forest, J. (2012) 'Political Violence and the Illicit Economies of West Africa', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24: 787–806

Gastrow, P. (2011) *Termites at Work: Transnational Organized Crime and State Erosion in Kenya*, New York: International Peace Institute

Goodhand, J. (2009) *Bandits, Borderlands and Opium Wars: Afghan State-building Viewed from the Margins*, DIIS Working Paper 2009:26, Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies

Heine, J. and Thakur, R. (eds) (2011) *The Dark Side of Globalization,* Tokyo: United Nations University Press

Hutchful, E. and Aning, K. (2004) 'The Political Economy of Conflict', in A. Adebajo and Ismail Rashid (eds), *West Africa's Security Challenges*, Boulder CO/London: Lynne Rienner

International Crisis Group (2010) *Guinea: Reforming the Army*, Africa Report 164, Dakar/Nairobi/Brussels: International Crisis Group

International Crisis Group (2009) *Guinea: The Transition Has Only Just Begun*, Africa Briefing 58, Dakar/Brussels: International Crisis Group

International Crisis Group (2008a) *Latin American Drugs I: Losing the Fight*, Latin America Report 25, Bogotá/Brussels: International Crisis Group

International Crisis Group (2008b) *Guinea-Bissau: In Need of a State*, Africa Report 142, Dakar/Brussels: International Crisis Group

International Crisis Group (2005a) *War and Drugs in Colombia*, Latin America Report 11, Bogotá /Brussels: International Crisis Group

International Crisis Group (2005b) *Stopping Guinea's Slide*, Africa Report 94, Dakar/Brussels: International Crisis Group

Kaldor, M. (2012) *New & Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era*, 3rd ed., Cambridge: Polity Press

Katsouris, C. and Sayne, A. (2013) *Nigeria's Criminal Crude: International Options to Combat the Export of Stolen Oil*, London: Chatham House

Kavanagh, C.; Aning, K.; Felbab-Brown, V.; Cockayne, J.; Arias, E.; Goredema, C.; Kwarkye, S.; Pokoo, J. and Walker, S. (2013) *Getting Smart and Scaling Up. Responding to the Impact of Organized Crime on Governance in Developing Countries*, New York: Center on International Cooperation

Keefer, P. and Loayza, N. (2010) *Innocent Bystanders: Developing Countries and the War on Drugs*, Washington DC: World Bank

Klein, A. (1994) 'Trapped in the Traffick: Growing Problems of Drug Consumption in Lagos', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 32.4: 657–77

Klein, A.; Aku Attakpah, S. and Uribe, S. (2013) *Mid-term Review of the Cocaine Route Programme Financed by the EU Instrument for Stability, Final Report, Project No. 2012/302922*, Hemel Hempstead: HTSP Ltd

Lacher, W. (2012) *Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region*, The Carnegie Papers, Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Le Billon, P. (2012) *Wars of Plunder: Conflicts, Profits and the Politics of Resources*, London: Hurst & Co

Le Billon, P. (2006) 'Resources and Armed Conflicts', *The Adelphi Papers* 45.373: 29–49

Locke, R. (2012) *Organized Crime, Conflict, and Fragility: A New Approach*, Policy Paper, New York: International Peace Institute

Maihold, G. and Hochmüller, M. (2013) 'Einleitung: Von failed states und Räumen begrenzter Staatlichkeit – Organisierte Krimialität, Gewalt und Staat in Lateinamerika', in G. Maihold and D. Brombacher (eds) *Gewalt, Organisierte Kriminalität und Staat in Lateinamerika*, Opladen/Berlin/Toronto: Verlag Barbara Budrich

Mazzitelli, A. (2007) 'Transnational Organized Crime in West Africa: The Additional Challenge', *International Affairs* 83.6: 1071–90

McGuire, P. (2010) *Narcotics Trafficking in West Africa: A Governance Challenge*, The Pardee Papers 9, Boston MA: Boston University

Meagher, K. (2003) 'A Back Door to Globalisation? Structural Adjustment, Globalisation & Transborder Trade in West Africa', *Review of African Political Economy* 30.95: 57–75

Moore, M. (2011) *The Governance Agenda in Long Term Perspective: Globalisation, Revenues and the Differentiation of State*s, IDS Working Paper 378, Brighton: IDS

Münkler, H. (2002) *Die neuen Kriege,* Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag

Nadelmann, E. (2007) 'Drugs', *Foreign Policy* 162: 24–30

Nadelmann, E. (1988) 'US Drug Policy: A Bad Export', *Foreign Policy* 70: 83–108

Nossal Institute (2010) *Dependent on Development: The Interrelationships between Illicit Drugs and Socioeconomic Development*, Melbourne: The Nossal Institute for Global Health

Obi, C. (2008) 'Nigeria's Foreign Policy and Transnational Security Challenges in West Africa', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 26.2: 183–96

Olukoshi, A. (2013) *Drug Trafficking and its Impact on Governance in West Africa*, WACD Background Paper 3, Accra: West Africa Commission on Drugs

O'Regan, D. and Thomson, P. (2013) *Advancing Stability and Reconciliation in Guinea-Bissau: Lessons from Africa's First Narco-State*, ACSS Special Report, Washington DC: Africa Center for Strategic Studies

Orenstein, M. and Schmitz, H.P. (2006) 'The New Transnationalism and Comparative Politics', *Comparative Politics* 38.4: 479–500

Philp, M. (2008) 'Peacebuilding and Corruption', *International Peacekeeping* 15.3: 310–27

Reno, W. (2009a) 'Illicit Commerce in Peripheral States', in R. Friman (ed), *Crime and the Global Political Economy*, Boulder CO/London: Lynne Rienner

Reno, W. (2009b) 'Understanding Criminality in West African Conflicts', *International Peacekeeping* 16.1: 47–61

Reno, W. (2000) 'Clandestine Economies, Violence and States in Africa', *Journal of International Affairs* 53.2: 433–59

Reno, W. (1999) *Warlord Politics and African States*, Boulder CO/London: Lynne Rienner

Reno, W. (1997) 'War, Markets, and the Reconfiguration of West Africa's Weak States', *Comparative Politics* 29.4: 493–510

Rubin, B. and Guáqueta, A. (2007) *Fighting Drugs and Building Peace: Towards Policy Coherence Between Counter-Narcotics and Peace-Building*, Dialogue on Globalization Occasional Paper 37, New York: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

Sahel and West Africa Club (2005) *Regional Atlas of Transport and Telecommunications in the ECOWAS Zone*, Abuja: ECOWAS

Schultze-Kraft, M. (2013) *Nigeria's Post-1999 Political Settlement and Violence Mitigation in the Niger Delta*, Evidence Report 5, Brighton: IDS

Schultze-Kraft, M. (2008) 'Narcotráfico en América Latina: hacia un nuevo consenso internacional', *Política Exterior* 22.126: 105–14

Shaw, M. (2012) *Leadership Required: Drug Trafficking and the Crisis of Statehood in West Africa*, Policy Brief 37, Pretoria: Institute for Strategic Studies

Shaw, M. and Reitano, T. (2013) 'Cocaine Politics in Guinea-Bissau: The Link Between Drug Trafficking and Political Fragility and its Wider Implications', *Columbia Journal of International Affairs*, http://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/cocaine-politics-in-guinea-bissau (accessed 17 March 2014)

Snyder, R. (2006) 'Does Lootable Wealth Breed Disorder? A Political Economy of Extraction Framework', *Comparative Political Studies* 39.8: 943–68

Stearns Lawson, B. and Dininio, P. (2013) *The Development Response to Drug Trafficking in Africa: a Programming Guide*, Washington DC: USAID

UNODC (2013a) *Transnational Organized Crime in West Africa: A Threat Assessment*, Vienna: UN Office on Drugs and Crime

UNODC (2013b) 'Homicide Statistics', www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/homicide.html (accessed 11 March 2014)

UNODC (2011) *World Drug Report 2011*, Vienna: UN Office on Drugs and Crime

UNODC (2010) *Crime and Instability: Case Studies of Transnational Threats*, Vienna: UN Office on Drugs and Crime

UNODC (2008) *Drug Trafficking as a Security Threat in West Africa*, Vienna: UN Office on Drugs and Crime

UNODC (2007) *Cocaine Trafficking in West Africa: The Threat to Stability and Development (with special reference to Guinea-Bissau)*, Vienna: UN Office on Drugs and Crime

UNODC (2005) *Transnational Organized Crime in the West African Region*, Vienna: UN Office on Drugs and Crime

UN Security Council (2012) *Despite Progress in Consolidating Peace, West Africa Now Confronts 'New Wave of Challenges' to Governance, Conflict Prevention, Security Council Told*, www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2012/sc10706.doc.htm (accessed 2 May 2014)

van Schendel, W. (2005) 'Spaces of Engagement: How Borderlands, Illicit Flows, and Territorial States Interlock', in W. van Schendel and I. Abraham (eds), *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders, and the Other Side of Globalization*, Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press

Vorrath, J. (2013) *Transnational Organized Crime in West Africa*, SWP Comments 24, Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik

Walker, J. and Cooper, M. (2011) 'Genealogies of Resilience: From Systems Ecology to the Political Economy of Crisis Adaptation', *Security Dialogue* 42.2: 143–60

Wallis, W. (2012) 'Nigeria Losing $1bn a Month to Oil Theft', *Financial Times*, 26 June, www.ft.com/cms/s/0/61fb070e-bf90-11e1-a476-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2poATxjdG (accessed 8 January 2014)

Watts, M. (2012) 'Economies of Violence: Reflections on the *World Development Report 2011*', *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 3.1: 115–30

West Africa Commission on Drugs (2013) *International and Regional Responses to Drug Trafficking in West Africa: A Preliminary Overview*, WACD Background Paper 6, Accra: West Africa Commission on Drugs

World Bank (2013) 'West Africa: Facts and Figures', http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:20179737~pagePK:34370~piPK:42768~theSitePK:4607,00.html (accessed 11 March 2014)

World Bank (2011a) *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development*, Washington DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank

World Bank (2011b) *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development – Overview*, Washington DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank

Youngers, C. and Rosin, E. (eds) (2005) *Drugs and Democracy in Latin America: The Impact of U.S. Policy*, Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner

Brighton BN1 9RE

T +44 (0)1273 606261
F +44 (0)1273 621202
E ids@ids.ac.uk
www.ids.ac.uk