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EPIDEMIC; AN INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS**

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THE WEST AFRICA-LATIN AMERICA DRUG TRAFFICKING EPIDEMIC: AN INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

West Africa, like any other region in the world, has had to swallow its fair share of modern-day political, economic and social dilemmas. One phenomenon that has had huge negative implications on the political, economic and social spheres of almost every country on the face of the earth is the production, trafficking, marketing and consumption of illicit drugs. The countries in West Africa have not been spared of the negative consequences of illicit drugs. While some countries have an illicit drug production problem, others have a consumption problem. The countries in West Africa have an illicit drug trafficking problem.

The current transcontinental drug trade in hard drugs in West Africa is rising at such a high rate and has captured the attention of the world because of the magnanimity of the negative political consequences in the region. The scale of the current Latin American drug trade transmitting through West Africa has never been seen before and so are its political consequences in the region. The fact that diplomats, political figures, non-governmental organizations and almost all sectors of civil society and security services are so concerned about it justifies how very different the present West African international drug trade has become. There is a very high chance that if the current trend in drug infiltration continues, most countries, especially Guinea-Bissau, in the region will be plunged into chaos and political instability because they do not have strong institutions to deal with the infestation. In other words, the infiltration of the region by Europe-bound illicit drugs from Latin America, coupled with the weak institutions in most of the region's sixteen countries, will result in sustained political disorder. Therefore, a well-researched thesis on this contemporary phenomenon is warranted.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

West Africa, like any other region in the world, has had to swallow its fair share of modern-day political, economic and social dilemmas. One phenomenon that has had huge negative implications on the political, economic and social spheres of almost every country on the face of the earth is the production, trafficking, marketing and consumption of illicit drugs. The countries in West Africa have not been spared of the negative consequences of illicit drugs. While some countries have an illicit drug production problem, others have a consumption problem. The countries in West Africa have an illicit drug trafficking problem. And that's the focus of this thesis.

“Trafficking and West Africa have a long and very interesting common history, dating way back to the Moorish and Touareg caravans which have been crossing the Sahara since time immemorial and to the Peul and Dioula traders who have traversed sub-Saharan Africa all the way to Chad and the Sudan, and south to the Congo River for centuries now (Shehu 2009, p. 1).”

I clearly remember from my high school history lessons, that in the 16th century, when the first European ships docked in trading towns along the Atlantic coast in West African; they barter traded with the natives in several products including gold, diamonds, and able-bodied young African men and women in exchange for rum, spicy products, and gun powder. Many historians in Africa regarded this business relationship between West Africans and Europeans as exploitation of the natural riches of the continent by the monarchies in the United Kingdom and Portugal. I must state that the triangular slave trade, which was trafficking in humans, is today referred to as one of the cruelest chapters in global human history.

Due to a host of conducive factors, chiefly, weak state institutions, and in some cases their total absence, since the mid-1990s, trafficking in hard drugs has become a booming business (Shehu 2009, p. 1) in Central and West Africa. Although the production, trafficking and consumption of cannabis and other soft drugs has always been present to some extent, the introduction and transshipment of hard drugs such as heroin and cocaine from outside the region has had serious negative political implications for the region. However, in the words of the scholar Stephen Ellis, “West Africa has a long history of involvement in the international trade, that has been dominated by Nigerian interests especially (Ellis 2009, p. 171).” In his piece titled “*West Africa’s International Drug Trade*,” Ellis reveals, “the roots of the current collaboration between drug traders in these two sub-continent go back more than a decade ago (Ellis 2009, p 171).” However, I shall partially dispute Ellis’ argument that international drug trade in West Africa is not a new phenomenon. I think the same argument could be made of the relationship of drugs trade and any other continent that has rung alarmed bells.

What I argue in this thesis is that the current transcontinental drug trade in hard drugs in West Africa is rising at such a high rate and has captured the attention of the world because of the magnanimity of the negative political consequences in the region. I will argue that the scale of the current Latin American drug trade transmitting through West Africa has never been seen before and so are its political consequences in the region. The fact that diplomats, political figures, non-governmental organizations and almost all sectors of civil society and security services are so concerned about it justifies how very different the present West African international drug trade has become. Therefore, a well-researched thesis on this is warranted.

This thesis is divided into five main chapters. The introduction chapter introduces the reader into the topic of this thesis.

This is followed by a background chapter, which, as the name implies, gives an exhaustive background into the transnational drug trade in West Africa that involves Latin American drug cartels seizing on the opportunity created mainly by weak institutions to use the region as a transit hub for trafficking Europe-bound cocaine and heroin.

The chapter that follows is the literature review. In this chapter, I dissect the various arguments advanced by well-respected scholars and authors on the relationship between state institutions and lootable resources such as alluvial diamonds and illicit drugs. Since there isn't a specifically well-developed literature, besides what's published in the public news media, on the relationship between illicit drugs and state institutions, the chapter dedicates several pages on the relationship between state institutions and a similar, but in many respects different product, alluvial diamonds.

In the research design chapter, I discuss how I am going to be conducting my research: what I mean by state institutions, and the yard stick for measuring the strengths and weaknesses of state institutions; what I mean by illicit drugs and how to measure their global scale; the negative consequences of the relationship between illicit drugs and state institutions, contextualizing the relationship between the weak state institutions in Guinea Bissau and the Latin American drug cartels.

I plan to get the information for my thesis from various sources which include text books, academic journals, data bases, such as Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index and the Fund for Peace's Failed States Index Scores, websites of public news media, and other online sources.

This thesis ends with a conclusion and recommendations chapter, which basically outlines the way forward for a West Africa that is drug free and characterized by politically stable, strong, state institutions.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND

Can Latin American illicit drugs such as heroin and cocaine politically destabilize West Africa like the way minerals (alluvial diamonds) had done to the region ten, fifteen, twenty years ago? Why have Latin American drug cartels diverted their drug trade through West Africa? What logistical arrangements do these drug

cartels employ to transport cocaine and heroin through West Africa to Europe? The scope of my thesis includes, but is not limited to the research for answers to the questions above. The centerpiece of my research is to argue the role especially that of Guinea-Bissau that weak state institutions play in the enhancement and facilitation of this transnational drug trade.

Before proceeding, it is imperative to briefly describe the West African region. West Africa is one of the five regions (east, west, north, south and central) on the African continent. West Africa covers a land area of approximately 6,140,000 square kilometer or one-fifth of Africa. The region consists of sixteen countries, namely: Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Conakry, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. Great Britain and France were the main European countries to have colonized West Africa. Most West African countries have either English or French as their official national languages (Julia 2009, p 1). All but Mauritania comprise the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)—a regional economic bloc that aims to eliminate all economic barriers to ensure the free flow of goods and people within the region (UNODC World Drug Report 2010, p.242).

West Africa is one of the poorest and least stable regions in the world. All but three of the sixteen countries in the region are on the United Nations list of “least developed countries,” including five with the very lowest levels of human development (UNODC World Drug Report 2010, p 242). West Africa has experienced at least fifty-eight coups and attempted coups, including some in as recent as the year 2009. Until today, there are many active rebel groups operating in various countries in the region (UNODC World Drug Report 2010, p 242). Presently, of the fifteen nations of the ECOWAS, about half are experiencing some form of

instability. Long-standing insurgences are found in the Ivory Coast, Senegal, Mali, Niger, and arguably Nigeria (UNODC World Drug Report 2010, p 242). Both Liberia and Sierra Leone have been recovering from brutal civil wars. According to a 2010 rating titled *Peace and Conflict 2010*, conducted by Ted Robert Gurr, Jonathan Wilkenfeld and Joseph Hewitt of the University of Maryland's Center for International Development and Conflict Management, of the twenty five countries with the highest risk of instability globally, nine were in West Africa: Benin, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mali and Niger (UNODC World Drug Report 2010, p 242).

Throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and the early part of the twenty-first century, West Africa had been at the brink of political, economic and social collapse due to the curse of mineral resources such as diamond and gold. We have seen during those two decades how an influx of illicit money fueled violent conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia (Feingold 2009, p 1). With arms purchased from funds obtained in the illegal diamond trade and laundered in European financial institutions, the Liberian and Sierra Leone rebels terrorized their respective peoples for a decade, leaving an estimated 200,000 and 300,000 people dead, thousands of children mutilated and thousands of women raped (Ku, et al, 2009, p. 270).

However, as stated above, today, there is a new scourge that has negatively affected the political stability of the West African region: the infiltration of West Africa's state institutions by Latin America drug cartels. Over the past few years, Latin America drug cartels have been using the West African region as a transit hub for transporting cocaine and heroin bound for lucrative markets in Europe.

Large scale illicit drug trafficking was first noticed in the region in 2004, which was symptomatic of a shift in the center of gravity of the global market from

the United States to Europe. West Africa traffickers had long been involved in small-scale import and marketing of illicit drugs in Europe, as they have been in many other parts of the world. But around this time, individuals based in West Africa began to provide logistical assistance to Latin American drug traffickers in organizing their maritime shipments to Europe from at least two hubs: one centered on Guinea Bissau and Guinea Conakry on the north, and one centered on the Bight of Benin in the South; both involving Nigerian traffickers (UNODC World Drug Report 2010, p242).

The international police organization (Interpol) estimates that more than a third of the cocaine arriving in Europe is trafficked through West Africa (Winter 2007, p 2). Consequently, there is general concern among experts and law enforcement agents that this lucrative illicit business could destabilize West Africa. Diplomats and other international officials worry that West African countries could develop along similar lines as Mexico, where drug gangs have a symbiotic relationship with political parties and with the state and drug-related violence results in thousands of deaths every year (Ellis 2009, p172).” It can be argued that the massive profit gains from the drug trade can potentially be used to fund criminal and violent enterprises in the region, if they aren’t already, which further exacerbates instability (Feingold 2009, p1). The infiltration of the region by “drug syndicates poses a real challenge to democracy and the rule of law, good governance and progressive economic sustainability, the fabric of West African communities, and the plight of the West African youth (Minteh 2010, p 10). In 2007 the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for West and Central Africa echoed similar sentiments: “the exploding cocaine trade in West Africa is perverting weak economies and corrupting broad sectors of the society, the youth, police, military officers, and senior government officials. The lure of lucrative cocaine profits is posing a grave

threat to security and public health in an impoverished region that until now has never faced a serious drug problem (Destrebecq 2007, p10).” I shall state that the rate at which drug cartels have expanded their illicit operational tentacles, across the region, have been quite alarming and troubling. They have established networks of operation in all but five West African states. At least nine top-tier Latin American drug cartels have established bases in eleven West African nations because there is less law enforcement in West Africa, just as there is more profit in Europe than the United States (Daily Trust 2009, p1). Out of all countries in West Africa the most heavily affected and threatened are: Guinea Bissau, Senegal, The Gambia, Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Liberia and Mali (Chothia 2010, p 4). This explains why retired four-star Army General Barry McCaffrey, who was drug policy director during the Bill Clinton presidency, said West Africa is particularly attractive to traffickers because it is near the “soft underbelly of Europe (Daily Trust 2009, p1).” The phrase *soft underbelly* means the “part of something such as an organization or plan that is weakest and easiest to attack (www.macmillandictionary.com).” I believe that this characterization of West Africa in relation to the illicit Latin American drug trade reflected the accurate situation on the ground.

The illicit drug trade poses a great danger to the region especially its value compared to local economies. This economic reality allows traffickers to pierce through to the very highest levels of government and the military. Law enforcement officers can be offered more than they can make in their lifetimes to look the other way. This extreme leverage has allowed traffickers to operate with very little resistance from the state, and therefore, there is little need to resort to violence. However, there appears to have been violence in elite circles as rivals compete for access to these profits (Horta 2007, p2). Guinea Bissau provides an example. The

country was one of the first to be affected by the illicit drug trade in the region, and due to the small size of its economy—in 2008 its GDP was \$400 million— one of the worst affected. The drug trade seemed to be quickly monopolized by the military, controlled by top-ranking military officials. These officials have threatened all who dare to discuss their involvement. From 2007 onwards high-level officials have accused the military of running the drug trade, including the Interior Minister and the head of the judicial police. Drugs have been detected arriving on military airstrips; military officers have been arrested in possession of hundreds of kilograms of cocaine; and there have been several armed stand-offs between police and military forces concerning drug shipments (UNODC World Drug Report 2010, p244).

Most West Africa experts and policy makers have identified the following reasons for this new scourge in the region:

- Weak state judicial and security institutions;
- Unguarded and porous borders;
- Increased drug law enforcement in the Caribbean;
- The lucrativeness of the drug trade in Europe;
- Number of failed states in the region;
- Abject poverty due to failed governments' economic policies;
- Corrupt and underpaid government officials and security officers; and
- The geographic proximity of West Africa to Europe and to the three Latin American nations that “produce nearly all of the world’s cocaine— Colombia, Peru and Bolivia (www.allafrica.com 2009).”

Here I explore three of the seven reasons that explain the importance of West Africa as a transit point for cocaine trafficking to Europe. But, as stated above, my emphasis is on the role of weak state judicial and security institutions.

First, there have been increased law enforcement successes in the Caribbean and in Europe, which have played a part in the development of alternative routes for traffickers. Spain is the main entry point of cocaine into Europe and traffickers exploit the historic and linguistic ties with Latin America, as well as its long coastline. In 2005, Spain's seizures of 48 tons of cocaine accounted for 45 percent of all cocaine seizures made in Europe, and rose by almost half from 2004 to 2005 after Spanish enforcement agencies intensified their control along the northern coast. The bulk of 66% of Spanish cocaine seizures is made at sea. The Netherlands is another traditional entry point for cocaine into Europe. In recent years, Dutch authorities have enforced a 100% controls policy on flights from specific Latin American countries, a procedure that may have prompted some traffickers to find different channels, notably through Africa (Destrebecq 2007, p6)."

Second, the geographic position of West Africa makes it an ideal staging post from South America to the growing market in Europe. Cocaine shipment destined to Europe frequently transit through Venezuela and Brazil. The shortest distances between these countries and West African countries are around 10 degrees of latitude north and it is exactly where the Spanish and British Navies have made most cocaine seizures with a link to Africa. So many cocaine seizures destined to Africa have been made in this Atlantic band (Destrebecq 2007, p6).

Third, West African countries are perceived as having a permissive working environment for drug traffickers due to widespread corruption and poor law enforcement structure. Many countries in the region face difficulties in controlling their territory, to administer justices, and are plagued by corruption (Destrebecq 2007, p6). A striking evidence of the weak law enforcement capacities in Africa can be derived from the comparison of cocaine seized by African authorities with the

volumes seized by European navies off the coast of Africa. In 2005, the total cocaine seizures for all 53 African countries amounted to about 2.5 tons, while in 2005, in a single catch, the Spanish navy seized three metric tons in a Ghanaian ship, representing almost 40% more than the cocaine seizures on the entire continent.

Over the years, the increased demand for cocaine and heroin in Europe has also contributed to this problem. There were an estimated 3.5 million cocaine users in Europe in 2006, a number that increased to 4.5 million in 2007, and again to 5.5 million in 2008 (Kurtzleben 2009 p1).

The United Nations estimates that annually 50 tons of cocaine worth about \$2 billion is transported through West Africa to Europe (Destrebecq 2007 p3). Some counter-narcotics experts have said the figures are higher than what most people think. Peter Burgess, a counter-narcotics project officer for the US military's Africa Command (AFRICOM), believes that over 240 metric tons of cocaine travel through the region every year (Kurtzleben 2009 p1). These figures are really a cause for alarm because they are significantly more than the combined annual GDPs of several West African states.

The severity and gigantic scale of the illicit trade is evidently manifested in the significant number of cocaine and heroin seizures by drugs law enforcement agents in many countries in West Africa in recent years.

First is Guinea Bissau, a country with an "annual GDP of \$826 million in 2009" (cia.gov estimates 2009), but "in 2006 the country's annual GDP was about \$384 million, or the equivalent of the street value of just six tons of cocaine (Kurtzleben 2009, p1)." This seems to explain why Guinea Bissau has become the first African narco-state (De Queiroz 2007 p1). A narco-state is "an area that has been taken over and is controlled and corrupted by drug cartels and where law enforcement

is effectively nonexistent (www.wordreference.com).” This former Portuguese colony is the most glaring example of the increasing use of West Africa by Latin American cocaine traffickers to get their wares into Europe. The country is wracked by poverty, coups, and political unrest and has a coastline full of uninhabited islands; creeks and swamps, providing the perfect cover for smugglers (Winter 2007, p1). Policing the coast is a monumental challenge, “especially in the case of Guinea Bissau. Aircrafts owned by Latin American cartels drop bundles of cocaine into the sea. Boats then pick up the hauls and take them to Spain and Amsterdam (Chothia 2010, p4).” Three recent incidents in Guinea Bissau illustrated how this country with no prisons is vulnerable to the quick hit of drug money. In April 2007, an estimated 2.5 metric tons of cocaine and heroin was flown into a military airstrip in Guinea Bissau. Two soldiers were arrested with cars packed with 635kg of the drug, but the rest of the shipment got through. A year earlier, 674kg of cocaine worth \$39 million, or 13% of the country’s total annual income, was found in the capital Bissau (Winter 2007, p1). The BBC reported that the drugs were then safely kept in treasury vaults where they disappeared. In 2005 some fishermen in Bissau discovered strange packets of white powder floating in the sea. When word got out, traffickers showed up to buy back what was left of their cargo (BBC 2005).

Furthermore, Latin American drug cartels have successfully penetrated all strata of the Guinea Bissau government to the detriment of the country’s institutions and poor citizens. According to the executive director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Antonio Maria Costa “drug cartels buy more than real estate, banks and businesses. They buy elections, candidates, and parties. In a word, they buy power (Destrebecq 2007).” The United States has already named Guinea Bissau’s Air Force Chief Papa Camara and former Navy Chief, Jose Americo Bubo

Na Tchuto as drug kingpins. The two men were imposed with financial sanctions under the US Drug Kingpin Act (Chothia 2010, p3), froze their US-controlled assets, and prohibiting any United States citizen from having any economic transaction with them. The head of the US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control, Adam Szubin said Camara and Na Tchuto have played significant roles in international narcotics trafficking (Ugah 2010, p1). In other words, since April 2010, when the sanctions were imposed on the two men, people designated as drug traffickers and their associates by the government of the United States control the Armed Forces of Guinea Bissau. Bubo Na Tchuto later fled to The Gambia where he ran into troubles with the authorities for alleged drug trafficking involvement.

According to the United States Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), "an estimated 800-1000kg of cocaine is flown every night into Guinea Bissau and an unspecified quantity is increasingly making its way by sea (Horta 2007, p2)."

The devastating influence of Latin American drug trade in Guinea Bissau reached its peak when "the country's President Joao Bernado Vieira was assassinated by soldiers on March 1, 2009, barely hours after a bomb explosion had killed his rival and Army Chief of Staff General Batista Tagme Na Waie (BBC 2009)." Many political analysts in the region stated that the two late archrivals had different allegiances to different Latin American drug cartels whose aim was to ignite political chaos in the country so that they could transport their drugs through the lawless country. Prior to the 2008 elections Tagme na Wai had accused Vieira of involvement in drug trafficking (UNODC World Drug Report 2010, p 243).

Furthermore, drug traffickers take advantage of the ineffective state of the judicial system of Guinea Bissau. Judges in the country often complain that even if a drug smuggler is captured, taken to court and convicted, they are often seen walking

the streets again within days (Winter 2007, p 3). A report on the phenomenon by renowned Portuguese international analyst Ana Dias Cordeiro alleged that the shroud of silence on drug trafficking in Guinea Bissau has included threats and pressure on judges not to investigate people involved in the drug trade (De Queiroz 2007, p1).

In Guinea Conakry, the presidential guard of the late president Alpha Conte, commanded by one of his sons, appeared to have been involved in drug trafficking alongside a number of high ranking public security officials making use of diplomatic pouches and passports to move drugs (UNODC World Drug Report 2010, p244).” Following the death of President Lansana Conte in late 2009, and a brief subsequent military takeover of power, the late president’s two sons were arrested, and charged with involvements in the drug trafficking (UNODC World Drug Report 2010, p244).

After the disruptions in Guinea Bissau and Guinea Conakry, it appeared that this hub had briefly relocated to The Gambia, the country where Bubo Na Tchuto had fled. In March 2010, the president, Yahya Jammeh, ordered the arrest of eleven top-level law enforcement officials in the country in connection with drug trafficking, including the Director of the National Drug Enforcement Agency, his deputy and his head of operations, the National Police Chief and his deputy, the chief of the navy the deputy chief of the army, and the minister of fisheries (UNODC World Drug Report 2010 p 244).” In May of the same year “authorities in The Gambia announced that they had seized two tons of cocaine with a street value estimated at \$ 1 billion hidden in a warehouse basement, an hour’s drive from the capital, Banjul (Doyle 2010, p1).” According to the BBC, Gambian investigators were able to discover this “haul of highly concentrated cocaine thanks to the help of the UK’s Serious Organized Crime Agency (SOCA) — a rough equivalent of the US FBI.” After the seizure of this huge quantity, Gambia’s President Yahya Jammeh threatened, “to wipe out drug trafficking

in the Gambia” and further stated that drugs bring “corruption, violence, indiscipline and underdevelopment in a country (Fadera 2010, p1).”

Senegal has also had huge drug seizures in recent years. In June 2007, Senegalese authorities announced the seizure of “a deserted empty sailing boat with 1.2 metric tons of cocaine on board. Few days later, Senegal made another seizure, 1.25 tons worth \$100 million, its biggest ever (BBC 2007).”

In February 2010, Liberia’s Justice Minister Christian Tah publicly admitted that drug trafficking was on the rise in the country (Dulleh 2010, p1). The Justice minister gave a classic hypothesis of how poorly paid drug enforcement officers can aid drug traffickers: “if you have a security patrolling the port that is paid a \$100 a month, then you have a problem because you will have drug smugglers who will give him \$5,000 to turn a blind eye” (Dulleh 2010, p1). Probably, the most notorious linkages between illicit drugs and politics in Liberia had been former president Charles Taylor’s wholesale endorsement of using the apparatus of the State to enhance such trade (Aning 2010, p 6). According to Aning, Taylor was not just an enabler of drug trafficking in his country, but was “supportive of granting banking facilities to drug barons to launder their money (Aning 2010, p4).”

In Sierra Leone, “its vulnerability is credibly associated with the country’s virtually unguarded airspace and coastline (Aning 2010, p6).” The fear that narcotics are “one of the country’s biggest threats because of their capacity to corrupt the whole of society, and weaken its institutions such as the security and judicial services are not far-fetched. Until 2008, cocaine smuggling was not even banned in Sierra Leone. However, “this changed when the minister of transportation resigned after his brother was implicated in the country’s largest cocaine seizure (UNODC World Drug Report 2010, p243).”

Concluding thoughts

I argue that illicit drugs like cocaine and heroin can have a huge negative impact in any country. These drugs have created turbulence in many countries. But what makes the current West African situation unique is that the region had just recovered from two brutal wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone that were caused by mineral resources. Those two wars had destabilized the entire region during the last two decades. Due to the lessons learned from the blood diamond trade, I argue that West Africa cannot afford to be caught up in another economic, political and social catastrophe. I do know that transnational illicit trafficking of drugs is a huge contemporary predicament confronting the world, and it requires urgent transnational concerted efforts to fight against it. Unfortunately, all indications are that if this new Latin American drug trade phenomenon isn't addressed appropriately sooner rather than later, the question may not be if, but when turmoil besets the West African region, again. And I agree with the statement by the UN Secretary-General at the 2010 African Union Summit in January 2010, "drug trafficking was a rising threat to international peace and security in Africa (UNODC World Drug Report 2010, p231)."

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

This research investigates the threat of the transnational trade in illicit drugs to West Africa—particularly, Guinea Bissau—from a security and stability perspective. I argue that the use of West Africa as a transit hub, by Latin American drug cartels can negatively impact the security and stability of the sub-region. To put it simply: Latin American drugs can politically destabilize West Africa. I am not suggesting that as a consequence of the drug infiltration, West Africa will experience civil war, as diamonds had plunged the sub-region into a chaotic political environment. Two brutal civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone are examples with spillover effects in neighboring countries about two decades ago. Such an assertion would be hard to defend, because in contemporary history, I have not yet come across any literature that has linked the civil war of any West African state to drug activities. What I am arguing in my thesis is that there is a very high chance that if the current trend in drug infiltration continues, most countries, especially Guinea-Bissau, in the region will be plunged into chaos and political instability because they do not have strong institutions to deal with the infestation. In other words, the infiltration of the region by Europe-bound illicit drugs from Latin America, coupled with the weak institutions in most of the region's sixteen countries will result in sustained political disorder. By several indications, disorderly events witnessed in recent years in Guinea Bissau—a former Portuguese colony and the country with the weakest institutions in the region—seem to point to the direction of my predictions about the potential negative political consequences of drugs in countries with weak institutions. However, as it's discussed later in this thesis, in European countries and the United States, where institutions are relatively strong, illicit drug trade results in different set of negative

consequences that do not necessarily threaten the peace and stability in those countries.

The drug scourge is a global phenomenon, and it is expanding at an alarming rate. Today, drugs are a \$US100 billion transnational industry (Flynn, 1993, p7). Others have put the figure at \$US500 billion. This whopping figure explains why transnational illicit drug trade is estimated to be the second largest global business, after the weapons trade. It is also the leading branch in transnational crime (Engvall 2006, p827). By many accounts, the West Africa-Latin America drug trade phenomenon is a new variable in the region, and this explains the reason there isn't substantial literature available besides what has been documented in the public news media.

However, while this phenomenon may be new to the West Africans, there are some regions in other parts of the world, such as Central Asia, East Asia and South America, which are no strangers to the infiltration of drugs and their consequences. In order to better comprehend my prediction of the negative political consequences of illicit drug trade, let's take a relatively brief look at what some countries in the above-mentioned regions had encountered as a result of the production, transportation or smuggling, consumption and marketing of illicit drugs. Johan Engvall (2006) notes in his article "*The State under Siege: The Drug Trade and Organized Crime in Tajikistan,*" that Central Asia has emerged as a major international hub for drugs smuggled from supply areas in Asia to Russia and Europe. Engvall states that the main factor for this development is that Afghanistan superseded Burma in the 1990s as the world's main producer of illicit opium. According to a 2005 report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2005, p1), approximately 87% of the world's opium production took place in Afghanistan. The country most

severely affected by the escalating drug trade in the Central Asia region is Tajikistan, a country especially attractive as a transit zone for drugs due to a combination of factors. These factors include: (i) Tajikistan's geographical proximity to Afghanistan (a 1,206 kilometer mountainous Tajik-Afghan border); (ii) Tajikistan's ethnic connection with Afghanistan (Tajiks make up 20-25% of Afghanistan's population); and, (iii) since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia has maintained Tajikistan as its main military outpost in Central Asia (Engvall 2006, p 828). Johan Engvall further states that drug trafficking networks have ramification throughout the Tajik society. Drug money is inevitably present at the highest state level as it is a major source of income in the country (Engvall 2006, p844). A World Bank report on Tajikistan estimates that between 30 and 50% of the country's economic activity is linked to narcotics trafficking. Citing a 2001 report by the International Crisis Group, the Brussels-based think-tank, Johan pointed out that the problem of drug money corrupting the political system in Tajikistan exceeds that seen in other Central Asian states because both the government and the opposition forces participated in the drug trade during the civil war. And that is why local and Western experts have no doubt that criminal interests are influencing the political system at the very highest level. In sum, the relationship between Tajikistan and narcotics trade has had the following consequences: (i) negative effects on both Tajikistan's territory and population; (ii) strained relations between Tajikistan and its neighbors especially Uzbekistan; (iii) negative consequences on the health security of the country—dramatic rise in drug addiction and HIV/AIDS; (iv) the criminalization and weakening of the state machinery/institutions—which serves the interest of crime not the ordinary people. The Tajikistan situation described above helps us understand the negative political consequences that emanate from the relationship between illicit drug trade and weak

institutions in a country that is being used as transit hub by powerful drug cartels. The factors that attract drug traffickers to used Tajikistan as a transit hub are quite similar to those in West Africa, Guinea Bissau in particular. Moreover, the negative consequences discussed above in Tajikistan are almost identical to the predictions that my thesis is making about the West Africa drug phenomenon. That is why I am arguing that there are lessons on the analysis on the cheapest, and that can be applied more broadly.

Proceeding on the political consequences of narcotics in East Asia reveals more about the political impact of narcotics in other parts of the world. According to Alan Dupont (May/June 1999), the author of "*Transnational Crime, Drugs, and Security in East Asia*," the infamous Golden Triangle of Thailand, Burma and Laos is the world's largest producer of heroine. Dupont further states that in East Asia drug money is distorting regional economies and exacerbating corruption and political instability. Narcotic trafficking is now big business in East Asia. Alan reveals that East Asia has metamorphosed from being once a primary producer of heroin to become a major consumer of heroin and an emerging market for a new class of designer drugs such as ice and ecstasy. The rise in illicit drug production and trafficking in East Asia is due to several factors. First, North Korea's disintegrating economy and increasingly dysfunctional state apparatus have forced North Korean diplomats to supplement their embassy finances by engaging in a range of well-documented, government –sponsored criminal activities. Second, in Burma, the diversification of heroin producers into amphetamine production can be seen as a logical extension of existing narcotics trafficking by ethnic Chinese drug lords responding to changing demand. Third, long period of sustained economic growth and the establishment of world-class regional communication and transportation network

have facilitated the spread of illicit drugs in East Asia (Dupont 1999, pp 448-449). I think Dupont's first attribution of increased drug trade to a dysfunctional state apparatus in North Korea consolidates the lessons learnt about the negative political consequences often borne-out of the relationship between illicit drug trade and countries that have weak institutions. Moreover, the fact that Dupont has also attributed strong economies and advanced communications networks to the flourishing of illicit drug trade highlight the negative consequences of a globalized and technological advanced world those anti-global village proponents have often predicted. The more globalized and technologically advanced our world is, the more conducive grounds are created for the establishment of sophisticated organized crime networks.

Furthermore, another country that has had its fair share of the negative consequences of narcotics production, consumption, trafficking and marketing is the South America nation of Colombia—the world's largest producer and exporter of cocaine and the second-largest supplier of heroin to the United States (Pardo 2000, p64). In his piece "*Domestic Implications of Illicit Colombian Drug Production and Trafficking*," the author, Richard B. Craig (1983,p325) points out that Colombia currently holds the dubious honor of being the world's leading manufacturer of illicit methaqualone. Consequently, Richard states, drugs have jeopardized the nation's electoral system, and corrupted or compromised political and judicial processes in many local areas. According to the authors, Angel Rabasa and Peter Chalk (2001) in their piece, "*The Colombian Labyrinth: The Synergy of Drugs and Insurgency and Its Implications for Regional Stability*," the current instability in Colombia derived from the interaction and resulting synergies stemming from two distinct tendencies: the

development of an underground criminal drug economy and the growth of armed challenges to the state's authority (Rabasa, Chalk 2001).

This Latin America-West Africa drug trade is partly driven by the newly intensified demand for cocaine in Western Europe, the shrinking of demand for cocaine in the United States and the pressure on cocaine smuggling from interdiction operations in the Caribbean (Felbab-Brown 2010, p1). Owing to these factors, the drug trade has increased in the past five years so much so that this epidemic in West Africa has created a frantic panic among academics, policy makers and security experts on the potential negative effects on the political stability of the sub-region

The literature on the political consequences of illicit drugs in West Africa is not well developed, but there is a huge credible amount of well researched and developed literature on a similar resource, lootable resources, such as alluvial diamonds, that I assume can be used as a lead-in to explain the potential destabilizing consequences of drugs. The link between armed conflict and the production and trafficking of illicit drugs has been frequently noted in the popular literature. Recent academic research on the matter has taken place mainly within the framework of studies of the role of natural resources in civil wars. These have tended to lump drugs together with other *lootable* resources such as diamonds. However, the results have been mixed.

By definition, and in the context of this thesis, I consider lootable resources as natural resources especially mineral resources that are both valuable, easy to transport, and have low economic barriers to entry. Lootable resources can easily be extracted by any organization that is able to physically control where they are produced (Burbank 2006, p1).

According to a research paper by Snyder and Bhavnani, empirical data showed that the presence of diamonds is not always inherently associated with the occurrence and prolongation of war. Even though alluvial diamonds have been labeled “blood diamonds” and the “ultimate loot” due to atrocities in Sierra Leone, they are actually more likely to be associated with peace than war. The majority of countries (60%) that are significant producers of alluvial diamonds have not experienced civil wars since the end of the cold war (Snyder and Bhavnani 2005, p564). Even in Africa, the region with perhaps the highest incidence of armed conflict since the end of the Cold War, half of the continent’s ten significant producers of alluvial diamonds did not have civil wars in this period (Snyder and Bhavnani 2005, p564). I think this assertion has neglected some other empirical data, which indicate that most diamond countries have experienced conflict, especially the ones with lootable diamonds.

It’s undisputable that drugs and diamonds are quite different in many facets: their mode of production, extraction, marketing, uses, and of course political consequences. Legally, rulers can be publicly involved in the extraction and marketing of lootable resources such as diamonds without any international condemnation as long as they are abiding by the global standards set by the international community in regards to activities related to lootable resources. One such mechanism that had been successfully instituted by the international community is called *The Kimberly Process*, which came into being following talks held in 2000 in the South African town of Kimberly, for which the process is named after, by international Non-Governmental Organizations (Burbank 2006,p2). Discussions were made on the establishment of an international certificate of origin system to document the path of rough diamonds from mine to polishing factory in order to prevent so-called “conflict diamonds” from entering the global market (Burbank 2006,p2).

Formally initiated in 2003, the Kimberly Process is a voluntary certification program with 67 participating countries, including all the major producers and traders of rough diamonds. The Kimberly Process requires its members to establish export and import control regimes to document the path of rough diamonds from the time they are mined or enter the country until they are exported. As part of this process, members are encouraged to issue licenses to mines and to ensure that only licensed mines are allowed to operate (Burbank 2006, p3). In her paper "*The Effects of The Kimberly Process on Governance, Corruption, and Internal Conflict (2006)*," Joelle Burbank reveals that diamonds from Kimberly Process participants now account for 99.8% of the global production of rough diamonds. In contrast, there is nothing legal in the production, transportation, marketing and usage of illicit drugs. As Snyder (2004) notes rulers who earn revenue from illicit drugs risk international sanctions (Snyder 2004, p6). There is no internationally approved program similar to the Kimberly Process in the illicit trade industry. Under international law illicit drugs are illegal. In as much as I use the diamond-drug comparison, I am trying to explain a different set of consequences. There is strong contemporary academic literature that extrapolates on the consequences of alluvial diamonds, the sliding of the affected state in to civil war and its prolongation. What explains the difference in the dependent variable is the empirical data used by academic scholars in explaining their points and defending their argument on the relationship between lootable resources and a state's political stability or instability. From my research there appears to be three contrasting camps that explain this relationship. The first camp argues that the impact of lootable resources in the order or disorder of a country depends on the strength or weakness of its institutions. The second group of scholars argue that the presence of lootable institutions weaken governments and their institutions. There is a third group that

argues that lootable resources do not cause war or political instability but prolongs it. A fourth array of scholars argues that in fact it is war that causes the exploitation of lootable resources.

The scholar Paul Collier is the most prominent political scientist in the camp that argues that countries that have been destabilized by lootable resources did not have strong institutions prior to the discovery of lootable resources in those territories. In his World Bank-produced paper "*Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy*" Collier (2003) argues, that, the fact that diamonds were critical to the tremendous economic success of Botswana, but responsible for the social catastrophe of Sierra Leone, accounts for the difference in institutional capacity. In other words, Collier implies that the reason diamonds produced economic progress in Botswana and civil war in Sierra Leone reflects difference in the strength of the institutions. While the former had strong state institutions to manage her diamonds, the latter had weak state institutions that were incapable of managing her diamonds. Here, Collier emphasizes institutions. As part of the resource-conflict-weak-strong-institutions argument, the author Michael L Ross makes a startling finding that conveniently played into Collier's case. In his piece "*Does Oil Hinder Democracy?*" Ross (2001) notes that many of the poorest and most troubled states in the developing world have high levels of natural resource wealth; that earlier studies have shown that resource wealth tends to reduce economic growth, and to increase the likelihood of civil war, there is actually a third component to the 'resource curse': authoritarian rule. Authoritarian governments, Ross opines, may be less able to resolve domestic conflicts and hence more likely to suffer from civil war. Slow growth may make domestic unrest tougher to resolve; civil wars, in turn, wreak economic havoc. There is nothing inevitable about the resource curse: states like Malaysia, Chile, and

Botswana have done relatively well despite their oil and mineral wealth. Yet most others have found—like King Midas—that their resource wealth can be an unexpected source of grief (Ross 2001, p357). As Ross (2001) finds states with large resource sectors tend to have lower education rates, which Collier and Hoeffler (2002) contend boosts the risk of civil war. In another piece written in 2003, titled “*Oil, Drugs and Diamonds: The Varying Roles of Natural Resources in Civil Wars*,” Ross argues that the degree to which a commodity is linked to conflict depends on three things: its lootability, obstructability and legality. Drugs, like diamonds, Ross argues, are easy for limited number of individuals to appropriate and transport to markets, as opposed to oil, gas, timber or minerals. Given their high value-to-size ratio, they are not easily obstructable, unlike oil, minerals and timber, which require much more time and complicated enterprises to be looted.

However, the Collier camp’s argument solidly contrasts to that made by an array of scholars who argue that lootable resources weaken strong state institutions, thus making the state susceptible to political destabilization. In their piece “*A Diamond Curse? Civil War and Lootable Resource*,” Paivil Lujala, Nils Petter Gleditsch and Elizabeth Gilmore (2005) argued that Collier’s two-country comparison is “oversimplified,” since Sierra Leone’s diamonds are secondary (lootable) while Botswana has primary (non-lootable) deposits. Primary diamonds occur in underground rock formations and are often mined by large multinational corporations that are able to bear the investment costs and risk involved in underground diamond mining. By contrast, secondary diamonds are easier to find and can be exploited with artisanal tools such as shovel and a sieve. In addition, the dispersal of diamonds from their primary source is generally accompanied by an increase in the average value per carat, as the erosion destroys the flawed stones.

Therefore Lujala et al (2005), argue that the problem lies on the type of diamonds found in a particular country, not its institutions. This explains the evidence that supports the fact that secondary diamonds are positively related to the incidence of civil war, especially in countries divided along ethnic lines. On the other hand, primary diamonds make ethnic war onset and incidence less likely (Lujala, Gleditsch and Gilmore 2005, p538). According to Lujala, Gleditsch and Gilmore, an abundance of natural resources tends to be associated, among other things, to the deterioration of institutions of governance, which in turn may increase the risk of conflict.

While Lujala et al's (2005) case is robust, I concur with Collier's (2003) argument that states with strong institutions do not necessarily suffer from the negative consequences of lootable resources like diamonds. I believe that, it is highly likely that strong institutions anywhere in the world can be trusted for their effectiveness and efficiency in their operations. For instance, let's take a look at the role of institutions or the difference they make in resource-rich countries in the context of illicit drugs in the Western countries. Despite the ubiquitousness of illicit drugs in many western countries (USA and Europe), we have yet to see or may never even witness those countries descend to civil war as a consequence of the drugs littered in their cities. My take is that the reason for the huge difference is that Western countries have strong state institutions that can effectively and efficiently enforce drug control laws and prosecute those apprehended for drug trafficking and consumption. However, it would be academically false to claim that illicit drugs have not created daunting problems for the Western countries. Illicit drugs have indeed produced huge levels of conflict, criminality and incarceration in the West. For example in 2008, 1.5 million Americans were arrested for drug offences and 500,000 of them were imprisoned (Will 2010, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-

dyn/content/article/2009/10/28/AR2009102803801.html). And in Europe, the statistics on the consequences of illicit drugs look grim. My point is that the set of negative consequences of illicit drugs one witnesses in the West are different from the huge political repercussions associated with the transnational drug trade in West Africa. The question is simple: Why? My hypothesis is that in Western countries illicit drugs produce a different set of consequences than those experienced in Africa because of the difference in the capacities in their institutions.

The role both strong and weak state institutions play in the onset of conflicts in resource-rich countries have also been argued by Richard Snyder and Ravi Bhavnani (2005) in their paper "*Diamonds, Blood, and Taxes: A Revenue-Centered Framework for Explaining Political Order.*" Snyder et al (2005) argued, that, in countries rich in lootable resources like alluvial diamonds, precious hard wood, and illegal drugs, the ability of their leaders to achieve and maintain political order depends on three things:

- (1) the availability of non-lootable resources as a source of revenue;
- (2) the mode of extraction of lootable resources especially whether they are extracted by hard-to-tax artisans or, alternatively, by large, taxable industrial firms; and
- (3) patterns of state spending—in particular whether rulers consume revenue frivolously or invest it in strengthening the military, providing social welfare, and improving their capacity to earn revenue in the future. For example, Snyder et al (2005) pointed out, in Sierra Leone (former president Joseph) Momoh's failure to maintain the industrial mode of diamond extraction bequeathed by his predecessor, (Siaka) Stevens, was partly a function of the growing coercive power of private resource holders (for example, the Lebanese diamond traders), a factor that may itself have been a direct cause of the country's collapse into civil war. To put it bluntly, the decay of Sierra Leone's institutions under Stevens' chosen successor Joseph Momoh

presidency, between 1985 and 1992, deprived the government of revenue, caused a deep fiscal crisis that rendered the state vulnerable to collapse, and made an important source of income –diamonds— more readily available to rebels. To put simply, Sierra Leone experienced the negative consequences of diamonds through a brutal civil war because there were no robust state institutions that could industrialize its alluvial diamonds deposits that could have been taxed, and the proceeds could have been used for the welfare of her people. However, in the absence of the state institutions to manage the nation’s resources, the Sierra Leonean people resorted in a competitive artisan-non-taxable mode of extraction that resulted in the fierce and brutal struggle for diamonds. Richard Snyder expanded more on this in his July 2004 piece titled, *“Does Lootable Wealth Breed Disorder? A Political Economy of Extraction Framework.”* In this working paper Snyder states that if rulers are able to forge institutions of extraction that give them control over the revenues generated by lootable resources, these resources can actually contribute to the maintenance of order by providing the income with which to govern. Without it, Snyder (2004) continues, the breakdown or absence of such institutions can produce instability in two ways: first, by causing a fiscal crisis of the incumbent regime that renders it vulnerable to collapse and, second, by making it easier for rebels to organize and gain access to income. The scholar Macartan Humphreys (2005) agrees with Snyder et al’s (2005) analysis that weakened state institutions that could not industrialize the diamonds mode of extraction in Sierra Leone pushed the country into civil war.

In his paper titled *“Natural Resources, Conflict, and Conflict Resolution: Uncovering the Mechanism,”* Humphreys (2005) states that Sierra Leone was “vulnerable not simply because it had gems but because it had not gone through a

process of industrialization and held within its clusters of rural communities with relatively weak commercial ties” between them.

Furthermore, in the article “*Natural Resources: A source of conflict?*” by scholars Charles-Philippe David and Jean-Francois Gagne the authors argue that resource-based conflicts are more likely to occur in impoverished societies governed, if at all, by very weak postcolonial regimes which are dependent on export revenues from one or a few natural resources. I think this argument is consistent with the weak state institutions explanation discussed above.

There are many political scientists who have argued that lootable resources do not create conflict but contribute to its prolongation. Michael L. Ross (2004) states in his paper “*What Do We Know about Natural Resources and Civil War?*” that gemstones, opium, coca, and cannabis do not seem to be linked to the initiation of conflict, but they do seem to lengthen pre-existing wars. Ross (2004) strengthened his argument by mentioning high profile conflicts in the 1990s in Angola, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia where the continuation of those conflicts was credibly linked to the presence of resources such as diamonds and illicit drugs. Ross (2004) further notes that states that depend heavily on the export of oil, gemstones, and minerals tend to suffer from a variety of problems including: slow economic growth, high poverty rates, high corruption levels and authoritarian governance. Ross states that countries with large resource exports tend to tax their population less heavily which impedes democracy because low tax revenues weaken states. Ross’s argument is bolstered by the scholar Svante E. Cornell (2005), who notes that recent academic research show that drugs are not linked to the onset of conflict but appear to be linked to the duration of conflict. However, he cautions, in his article “*The Interaction of Narcotics and Conflicts,*” that the causal mechanism of

the linkage between narcotics and conflict remains poorly understood. Cornell (2005) notes that empirical cases indicate that where a pre-existing drug production exists, the conditions of armed conflict boost narcotic production and enable insurgents to become involved in the drug trade to finance their struggle, thereby increasing their capabilities and the challenge they pose to states. In some cases, Cornell further argues, involvement in the drug trade also seems to affect the motivational structures of insurgent groups, creating an economic function of war and the vested interests in the continuation of armed conflict. In their piece titled "*Oil and War in Angola*" Jedrzej George Frynas and Geoffrey Wood, argued that mineral wealth has not only financed Angola's war but has also intimately shaped the contours of the conflict. The *Movimento Popular de Libertacao de Angola's* (MPLA) access to oil revenues and the *Uniao Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola's* (UNITA) to diamonds can help to explain the duration and character of the conflict, and, to some extent, even the timing of military operations (Frynas and Wood 2001, p587). The dependence on lootable resources, such as alluvial diamonds, gems, drugs, or timber, affects the duration of conflict (David and Gagne 2006/2007, p16).

Moreover, there are some scholars who argue that in fact the advent of war leads to the exploitation of resources. One such academic is Ingrid Samset. In her piece, "*Conflict of Interests or Interests in Conflict? Diamonds and War in the DRC,*" she argues that the persistence of conflict in Angola, Sierra Leone, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) all seemed to be connected in various ways to the exploitation of valuable natural resources in these countries. War, Samset argues, does not only enhance the exploitation of resources but also diverts it. For over three years, she argued, the Congolese war had facilitated and reinforced diversion of natural resources beyond Congolese control. Samset reveals that while the total

wartime looting is estimated at 5 percent of the Congo's GDP, calculations show that in the MbujiMayi region, where the DRC alliance partners have their key concessions, roughly 20 percent of exports yield no local benefit. The corresponding diversion for coltan in the eastern areas, where Rwandan and Ugandan contingents dominate, is 50 percent (Samset 2002, p477). Samset concludes that war facilitates excessive resource exploitation that spurs continued fighting, and in the DRC case resource exploitation had been linked to triggering and prolonging the armed conflict.

As has been argued above, the infiltration of drugs into a country has often led to internal political destabilization, example Colombia and Tajikistan. In Guinea-Bissau, where the Latin American narcotics trade has pierced through all strata of the mini West African state's institutions and society a similar political environment has already emerged. Unlike rebels in diamond-rich countries, drug dealers may be not interested in seizing political power. They are usually interested in weakening state institutions (where they exist) that otherwise would dampen down their activities, so as to engage in their clandestine economic enterprise. They achieve this objective by employing several means, which include corrupting law enforcement officials, bribing the judicial systems, and patronizing influential political figures to the highest levels of authority. Strong state institutions make that impossible. By contrast, in most conflicts in diamond-rich countries, strong institutions put a mechanism that enhances the extraction, transportation, and marketing of those resources so that the state derives revenue for the benefit of the population. In short, strong institutions curtail drug activities, but advance the extraction and marketing of diamonds.

The issue here is that the Latin American illicit drug trade through West Africa creates huge political negatives consequence in the sub-region.

Institutional Concepts

In the earlier part of this chapter I dissected the compelling arguments made by various scholars on the relationship between lootable resources such as alluvial diamonds and illicit drugs, and their implications on the political stability of a country. The positions taken by two opposite camps seem to be the most relevant in the debate over the impact of lootable resources on state political institutions. The first group of scholars has argued that lootable resources weaken strong state institutions thus rendering the state to be vulnerable to political upheaval. The second group has argued that in fact any state that has descended into political disorder due to lootable resources had no strong institutions prior to the intrusion or discovery of those resources. In other words, states with strong institutions do not bear the brunt of the negative consequences of lootable resources like diamonds and drugs.

There is little doubt that the debate has been broad on the political consequences of the lootable resources on the stability or instability of a country, especially in Third World countries. However, I am of the conviction that a few important components have been missing in the contemporary debate about illicit drugs and state institutions. First, what are strong institutions? What are the characteristics of strong state institutions? How does one measure the strength and/or weakness of state institutions? Second, what are illicit drugs, and how does one define them? Since illicit drugs are an underground trade, how does one measure them? What are the negative consequences credibly associated with the relationship between strong state institutions and illicit drug trade?

Here I discuss what I mean by strong state institutions, and describe the yardstick for measuring a strong state institution. I will also explain what I mean by illicit drug trade and how it is measured. Furthermore, in this chapter I will also

generally discuss the negative implications of the relationship between illicit drug trade and state institutions by contextualizing the Guinea Bissau conundrum.

However, I must state that I will not be inventing new ways of measuring strong state institutions, illicit drug trade and the impact of the relationship between the two.

How exactly can illicit drug trafficking pose a threat to stability? According to the UNODC World Drug Report 2010, there are two ways that illicit drug trafficking can pose a threat to the stability of a country. The first involves countries where insurgents and illegal armed groups draw funds from taxing, or even managing, drug production and trafficking.” The “second concerns countries that do not face such a situation, but where the illicit drug traffickers become powerful enough to take on the state through violent confrontation, high-level corruption, or (usually) both (UNODC World Drug Report 2010, p231).”

It is common knowledge that drug trafficking is problematic for any country it touches, but it can become particularly destabilizing where there are pre-existing governance issues. The most significant of those pre-existing governance issues are state political institutions that are either relatively weak or strong.

For the purpose of this research, I am embracing the definitions of political institutions as humanly devised rules and procedures—both for formal and informal—that constrain and enable political behavior (Levitsky and Murillo, 2009, p117). Since politics is ubiquitous or that it’s deeply embedded in our lives, as many political scientists like to say, I think it is fair to say that state political institutions affect every aspect of today’s society. Having briefly defined state political institutions let me move onto to the next question: what are the characteristics of strong institutions?

Characteristics of institutional strengths

In their piece, “*Institutional Strength, Social Control and Neighborhood Crime Rates*” the scholars Ruth A. Triplett, Randy R. Gainey and Ivan Y. Sun (2003), state that based on the sociological literature on institutions, institutional strength is best defined in terms of four characteristics: stability, resources, clear rules and statuses, and interconnections. The first characteristic defining institutional strength, stability, refers not only to the lack of change but also to the ability of the institution to function in the face of change through maintenance of institutional structures and roles. The second characteristic defining institutional strength is the level of resources embedded in, or capable of emerging from, an institution and its activities. The third important characteristic defining institutional strength is a clear delineation of roles and statuses. A final characteristic indicative of institutional strength is interconnectedness which deals with linking structures and functions found between institutions both within and across the private, parochial and public levels (Triplett, Gainey and Sun, 2003 pp443-459).

The results of institutional weakness

Triplett et al (2003) further note, “there are four main reasons for predicting that weak institutions diminish national levels of social control at the private and parochial levels. First, weak institutions do not provide stability that is needed for effective informal social control to develop. Second, weak institutions a nation’s access to the resources needed to enact effective informal social control. Third, weak institutions are less effective at informal social control because they are less able to provide guides for behavior. Finally, institutions, like social networks, are structures within which individuals interact, connecting to each other and to the society to which they are a part. Weak institutions are unable to provide the structures for effective

interaction, thus affecting the development of social networks and their ability to serve in a capacity of social control (Triplett, Gainey and Sun 2003, pp448-449).”

In their paper “*Variation in Institutional Strength*,” the scholars Steven Levitsky and Maria Victoria Murillo (2009) assert, “many formal institutions in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the former Soviet Union are neither minimally stable nor regularly enforced. In other words, instead of taking root and generating shared behavioral expectations, formal rules are widely contested, routinely violated, and frequently changed (Levitsky and Murillo 2009, p116).”

The concept of institutional strength in terms of enforcement and stability

Levitsky et al (2009) theorizes that “institutional strength may be conceptualized along two dimensions: enforcement and stability. Enforcement is the degree to which parchment rules are complied with in practice. Where all relevant actors in a given territory routinely comply with parchment rules or face a high risk of punishment, enforcement is high. By stability, we mean durability. Institutions are stable to the degree that they survive not only the passage of time but also changes in the conditions—i.e. , underlying power and preference distributions— under which they were initially created and reproduced . Institutional instability must be distinguished from normal institutional change. Because even the most robust rules evolve, one or more instances of institutional change cannot necessarily be taken as an indicator of instability. Rather, institutional instability is best understood as a pattern in which, given a common environment (i.e. exogenous shocks, changes in power and preference distribution), a particular institutional arrangement changes with greater frequency than other similarly designed ones (Levitsky and Murillo 2009, p117).”

From the discussion, above, on the characteristics of institutional strength, I shall state that the main feature that stands out is the “stability” of an institution. As we shall see later, stability is one characteristic that many countries lack in West Africa, particularly Guinea-Bissau. As an indigene of the region, I can attest to the fact that most institutions in West African countries have not survive the passage of time and the occurrence of change, either in the form of military takeover, change of government through democratic elections or other economic situations. To further facilitate the comprehension of the two dimensions of institutional strength refer to the table below that I reproduced from Levitsky and Murillo (2009):

TABLE

| | | Enforcement | |
|------------------|-------------|---|--|
| | | High | Low |
| Stability | High | Strong formal institutions | stable (but weakly enforced) formal institutions |
| | Low | Unstable (but enforced) formal institutions | weak formal institutions |

Here is how Levitsky and Murillo (2009) explain the table above:

“Enforcement and stability do not necessarily vary together. As the table above

shows, the two dimensions may be combined to produce four distinct types. The upper left quadrant corresponds to strong institutions, or those that are both stable and enforced. It is these pure cases of institutional strength—characterized by a tight coupling between formal rules and actual behavior— that predominate in most of the theories of institutions generated by studies of advanced industrialized democracies. However, institutional strength is not the exclusive characteristic of established democracies. The lower left quadrant in the table above corresponds to institutions that are enforced but unstable. In such cases, parchment rules are widely followed, but they are modified with comparatively high frequency, such that actors are unable to develop shared expectations on past behavior. The upper right quadrant corresponds to formal institutions that are stable but not enforced. In other words, rules remain on the books for long periods of time but are routinely ignored, serving, in effect, as window dressing. Frequently in such cases, actors adhere to established informal rules of the game. Finally, the lower right quadrant of the table above corresponds to institutions that are neither stable nor regularly enforced. Here the coupling between formal rules and actual behavior is very loose. Rules exist on parchment, but in practice, they do little to constrain actors or shape their expectations (Levitsky and Murillo 2009, pp117-118).”

Based on the facts discussed later in this chapter, I believe that the institutional situation in West Africa, particularly Guinea Bissau, is very much summed up in the lower right quadrant of the table above. To put it simply, it is a situation where stability of institutions is at its lowest points, and there is a total absence of the enforcement of the rule of law.

Defining and measuring illicit drugs

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) uses the term illicit drugs to describe “drugs which are either under international control— and which may or may not have licit medical purposes— but which are produced, trafficked and/or consumed illicitly.”

It is common knowledge and obvious that drugs change the way the body and brain function. And sometimes the changes can be pleasant in the case of prescription medications by treating diseases. However, sometimes the changes are monstrous and cause great harm to the human body and well-being. While I recognize the fact that the consumption of some licit/legal drugs can be harmful to the human being, I shall state that most drugs that have negative consequences in the human body are illicit drugs. The “main illicit drugs are the opiates, mostly heroin, cocaine, cannabis, and ATS (amphetamine-type stimulants) such as amphetamines, methamphetamine and ecstasy (Shah 2008, p2).”

Among the group of drugs that devastate the human body and brain are heroin and cocaine whose trafficking political implications in West Africa, particularly Guinea Bissau, are the focus of my research.

I am aware that illicit drugs are a problem for the economies of all the countries they affect. I agree, “size is one of the determinants of an illegal activity’s effects on a country (Thoumi 2009, p 109).” I think they are a problem primarily because they are an underground business that usually escapes the radar of measurement of most countries. However, despite these obstacles, I think some form of measurement is needed for several reasons: for drug policy formulation; negative effects on the legal market or economies; and of course political implications on the institutions of states where they are trafficked and traded.

The United Nations Drug Control Program (UNDCP) which is usually the official source of estimates of this illicit trade reveal that the “current value of international drug trade account for approximately 8% of the international trade (UNDCP 1997, p.124).” Contextually, this means that “in 1994, this figure would have been larger than the international trade in iron and steel, and motor vehicles, and about the same size as the total international trade in textiles (UNDCP 1997, p.124).” As estimated by the UN, the “heroin figure is a little more than a quarter of the total for all world drug sales (Reuter and Greenfield 2001, p160).”

However, I am compelled to state that numbers or figures that represent an estimation of any product may be subjected to exaggeration and misrepresentation. According to Reuter and Greenfield (2001), the global drug markets are so large and secretive that the official estimates are without doubt highly exaggerated, because the underlying data that give rise to estimates of global drug markets are riddled with discrepancies and inconsistencies. For instance, in his piece, “*The Measurement of Illegal Drug Markets: The Implications of its Irrelevance*” (publication date unknown) the author Peter Reuter argue that “the numbers about illegal drugs market in the US are in fact just decorations on the policy, rhetorical conveniences for official statements without any serious consequences.” I need to make two points here. First, I do not agree with this criticism, because while I agree that drug figures have mostly been estimates anti-drug policy makers’ inaction due to lack of factual drug figures won’t help in the war against drugs. I believe any figure, no matter how inaccurate they are, will be more helpful than not coming up any numbers at all. Second, my research have proven that the increasing rate of illicit drug trafficking, coupled with weak institutions, have negative political consequences in West Africa, and Guinea-Bissau in particular. While I value accuracy in numbers, I shall argue that

it does not matter much in the Guinea-Bissau scenario. The fact remains that illicit drug trafficking has been on the rise in the region, and the negative political consequences are unarguably troubling.

Relationship between Guinea Bissau's weak institutions and illicit drugs, and consequences

I believe that Guinea Bissau's state institutions are not characterized by any of the features of strong institutions discussed above. Rather, I shall argue that all the features of weak institutions define them. The country's institutions lack stability; they also lack resources to operate; there is no clear delineation of roles and status especially between the army and the police force; there is a total lack of interconnectedness between the various so-called structure and institutions; and enforcement of the rule of law is at its lowest point, and in some instances totally absent.

The negative consequence of the relationship between institutions and illicit drugs is evidently clear in the Guinea Bissau situation. Guinea Bissau "is one of the ten poorest nations in the world. The former Portuguese colony gained its independence in 1975 after thirteen years of brutal guerilla war against the Portuguese colonial army (Horta 2007, p1)." During the next two decades the "country was ruled by one-party dictatorships which resulted in the two year civil war between 1998 and 2000 (Horta 2007, p1)." As a consequence of these wars and continued instability most of the state's institutions have either collapsed or non-existent. "The judicial system is non-existent with judges and other legal staff being paid miserably. Most of the infrastructure such as court buildings and prison still lie in ruins. The country's

police and gendarmerie force as an institution is so dysfunctional that it is unable to impose law in only the capital (Horta 2007, p1).” “The judicial police for example, have sixty agents, one vehicle and often not fuel. As a result when culprits are apprehended they are driven in a taxi to the police station (Bybee 2009, p6).” “The army which is plagued by internal strife and personal and tribal loyalties is more a collection of various warlords than a real national military institution (Horta 2007, pp2).” Also, the military has “one rusty ship that patrols the 350 kilometer coastline and the country’s 88-unpoliced islands (Bybee 2009, p10).” “With the country’s economy in tatters the government is often unable to pay public servants, and as of 2006 the country relied on foreign aid to cover over 90 percent of its state’s budget needs (Horta 2007, p1).”

Given the facts discussed above, it can be argued that “a state with no ability to protect its territory, a struggling economy, no police force and an overbearing and corrupt military is the ideal place for narco traffickers and other criminal elements to run their illicit activities (Horta 2007, pp1-3).” In other words, it is a state with no strong institutions. And that’s exactly what the situation is in Guinea Bissau. Due to Guinea Bissau’s weak institutions “the drug trade and the profits it brings to those willing to associate with has led to the culture of violence and intimidation among the security services and the elites (Horta 2007, p2).” For instance, there had been dramatic situations where violence had erupted among the different sectors of the security apparatus.

Moreover, Guinea-Bissau’s weak institutions’ inability to address the drug scourge resulted in a “risk of secession of some parts of the country. Most of the cocaine from Latin America enters the country from its southern provinces with its numerous waterways and dense jungles. The large profits going into the pockets of

corrupt military commanders and local officials are greatly increasing their power base while decreasing the influence of an already weak and impoverished government. The provinces of Guinara, Tomball, and the archipelago province of Bolama are the most vulnerable to possible secession (Horta 2007, p2). I think it is not a far-fetched prediction that a situation may arise where “local military commanders are empowered by narco dollars and make use of tribal loyalties, thus becoming the de facto rulers of mini narco states (Horta 2007, p2).”

It’s worth noting that Guinea Bissau’s problems have already spilled into neighboring countries like Senegal, Guinea Conakry, Gambia, Mali, and Mauritania. It is often argued that countries with weak and small economies and prolonged instability have troubling asserting authority over their sovereign territory. And it is no secret that “West Africa has many countries that are poor and unstable. This situation among others seems to explain why the United Nations has come to recognize the relationship between political stability and organized crime” (UNODC World Drug Report 2010, p231). In his March 2005 report titled “*In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*,” the United Nations Secretary General concluded that organized crime contributes to state weakness, impedes economic growth, fuels many civil wars, regularly undermines United Nations peace building efforts and provides financing mechanisms to terrorist groups.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN

The data analyzed in this chapter is obtained from highly credible sources. The sources are the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Transparency International, and the Fund for Peace.

This chapter is divided into three main sections. In the first section, I will provide data obtained from the UNODC that shows changes in the flow of illicit drugs from Latin American countries to countries in West Africa, particularly Guinea Bissau. I will measure that data by using mathematical figures such as pie charts and tables that will clearly demonstrate when, how and where there has been an increase in the illicit drug trade in West African countries. I will also measure data that

indicate drug flow increase by relying on annual figures on drug production and seizures published by the UNODC from 2000 to 2008. As will be seen later, these figures have shown a dramatic increase in the production and transportation of illicit Latin American drugs through West Africa from 2000 to 2008.

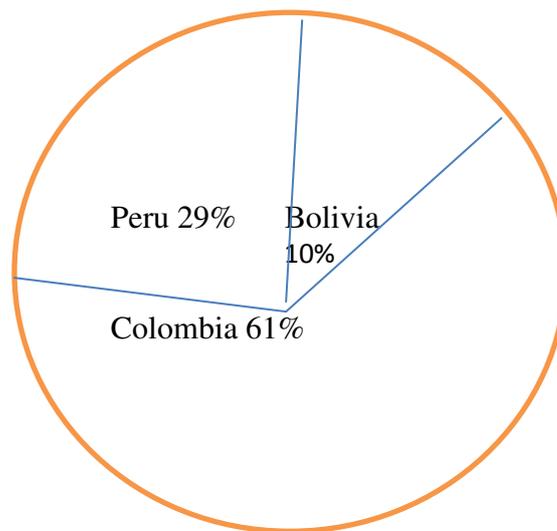
In the second section, I will provide data on the strength and/or weakness of state institutions in West African countries, particularly Guinea Bissau. I will measure this data by comparing the political stability, as a consequence of strong state institutions in West Africa prior to the illicit drug infiltration, with the political stability, in the same countries, after the spotting of the incursion of Latin American illicit drugs. I will measure institutional strength by focusing on what I think is the most important variable in the region: corruption. I will rely on Transparency International's annual Corruption Perception Index (CPI). I think that corruption is in many respects an inherent feature of weak state institutions that drug cartels have smartly exploited in all levels of society and government, by paying politicians, judges (O'Regan 2010,p3) and security personnel to look the other way, thus the rise in drug trade and subsequent political instability.

In the third section of this chapter, I will make available data on the instability in the region due to the increased illicit drug flows under conditions of weak state institutions in West African countries, especially Guinea Bissau. Measuring these consequences will involve the discussion of the political upheavals, assassinations, dwindling living standards, increased drug-related crime rates, and rigged electioneering processes that are all attributable to the increased presence of Latin American illicit drugs in West Africa, especially Guinea Bissau. In summary, I will show how all those factors have created to fail or unstable states in the region, by

relying on the Failed States Index Scores published annually by the Washington-DC based Fund for Peace.

Data on increased illicit drug flow and measuring it

Figure 1: National shares of global potential cocaine production in 2007



Data source: UNODC World Drug Report 2008

The pie chart above shows the 2007 global cocaine production of three Latin American nations: Colombia, Peru and Bolivia. I must note that these countries have also been the main sources of almost all Europe-bound cocaine seized in West African nations in recent years. The pie chart shows that 61 percent of global production came from Colombia, 29 percent from Peru and 10 percent from Bolivia. In other words, according to the pie chart, the entire global production of cocaine is done in these three countries, all of which have a close geographical proximity to all countries in West Africa, whose state institutions are weak.

Table 1: Annual Cocaine Seizures in West Africa, 2000—2007

| Year | Quantity seized in Kilograms |
|------|------------------------------|
| 2000 | 97 |
| 2001 | 268 |
| 2002 | 95 |
| 2003 | 266 |
| 2004 | 1,788 |
| 2005 | 1,323 |
| 2006 | 3,161 |
| 2007 | 6,458 |

Data source: UNODC World Drug Report 2007.

The table above provides data about the trend of cocaine seizures in West Africa from 2000 to 2007. I must concede that recorded quantities of seized drugs may not give us the accurate figure on drug that passes through the region to Europe annually. However, I believe one way of reading the increased quantities of seized drugs is that, drug trafficking has also increased. I believe that large quantities of drug seizures correspond with increased drug flow. The table above has led me to make this conclusion: drug flow in the region has been skyrocketing year in and year out, under the conditions of weak state institutions in almost all states in West Africa over the last decade. In 2000, only 97 kilograms of cocaine were reported seized in the whole region. Four years later, 1,788 kilograms were seized, and in 2006 that number had almost doubled. And as recent as 2007, 6,458 kilograms of cocaine were reported intercepted and seized in West Africa.

Data on strength of state institutions and how to measure it

There can be various ways to measure the strength of institutions. But I believe the most reliable mode of measuring state institutional strength is to determine the level of corruption in a country. It is my belief that strong institutions are usually resistant to the temptation and culture of corruption, while weak institutions such as those in West African states are highly susceptible to an ingrained culture of corruption piercing through the highest level of government: the executive, legislative and judiciary branches. This is why I examined and measured the data shown below on the level of corruption in West African states as evidence of weak institutions which has increased the illicit drug trafficking thus posing the risk of regional instability

Table 2: West African countries Transparency International's CPI ranking and scores.

| Country | World Ranking | Score |
|--------------|---------------|-------|
| Cape Verde | 45 | 5.1 |
| Ghana | 62 | 4.1 |
| Liberia | 87 | 3.3 |
| The Gambia | 91 | 3.2 |
| Burkina Faso | 98 | 3.1 |
| Senegal | 105 | 2.9 |
| Benin | 110 | 2.8 |
| Mali | 116 | 2.7 |
| Niger | 123 | 2.6 |
| Nigeria | 134 | 2.4 |
| Sierra Leone | 134 | 2.4 |

| | | |
|----------------|-----|-----|
| Togo | 134 | 2.4 |
| Mauritania | 143 | 2.3 |
| Ivory Coast | 146 | 2.2 |
| Guinea Bissau | 154 | 2.1 |
| Guinea Conakry | 164 | 2.0 |

Data Source: Transparency International CPI 2010. Table format: my idea

The table above shows the world rankings and scores of all the sixteen countries in West Africa out of 178 countries globally in the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index 2010. Scores were allocated ranging from "10" which means highly clean or least corrupt to "0" which represents highly corrupt. In other words, the closer a country's score is to "10" the less corrupt it has, while the closer a country's score is to "0" the more corrupt that country is. Also, the higher a country's ranking number is the more corrupt it is, while the lower a country's ranking number is the least corruption that country experiences. Out of the 178 countries polled only one West African state (Cape Verde, score 5.1, rank 45) made it to the first fifty less corrupt countries in the world. Fifteen of the sixteen West African states could not even score half the range, which is 5.0. Only five West African countries (Cape Verde 45, Ghana 62, Liberia 87, The Gambia 91 and Burkina Faso 98) were ranked in the first one hundred countries in the world. All the remaining eleven West African countries were ranked above the 100th position. The countries of Guinea Bissau (rank 154, score 2.1) — the focus of my thesis, and neighboring Guinea Conakry (rank 164, score 2.0) are among the twenty-fourth and fourteenth (respectively) most corrupt nations on the face of the earth. Both countries

are closely behind Ivory Coast (rank 146, score 2.2) Mauritania (rank 143, score 2.3), while Togo, Nigeria and Sierra Leone in a tie (rank 134, score 2.4).

The 2010 CPI tied Denmark, New Zealand and Singapore at the apex of the list with a score of 9.3, while Somalia is at the bottom of the list with rank 178 and score 1.1. What this means is that Denmark, New Zealand and Singapore are the least corrupt countries in the world, whereas Somalia is the most corrupt on this planet.

A look at the previous Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) between 2004 and 2009 has shown a similar pattern in ranks and scores for almost all West African states: that they are among the most corrupt countries in the world.

In 2004, out of 146 countries polled no West African made it to the top fifty less corrupt. The best rank for the region came from Ghana, which made it to the miserable position of 64, while Nigeria, the region's powerhouse, was the 144th corrupt country in the world.

In 2007, with the exception of Cape Verde (rank 49, score 4.9) all West African countries were among the most corrupt states in the world. In the same Guinea Bissau was the world's 147th most corrupt country with a score of 2.2.

In the 2008 CPI ranking of 180 countries Guinea Bissau was the world's 158th corrupt state. Again, with the exception of Cape Verde (ranked 47, score 5.1) no West African state ranked the first fifty least corrupt.

The corruption level did not improve in 2009 either. Out of the 180 polled in 2009 by TI's CPI, Guinea-Bissau ranked as the world 162nd corrupt in the world. The rest of the countries in the region with the usual exception of Cape Verde (rank 46, score 5.1) were pathetically among the worst corrupt countries in the world.

I, therefore, argue that based on the entrenched culture of massive corruption, West Africa's state institutions are among the weakest in the world, dating back to 2004 when Latin American illicit drug incursions were first spotted.

Consequences of increased illicit drug flow under weak state institutions

The increased illicit drug flow under the conditions of weak institutions has resulted in the instability of the region through failed states. I am of the view that all failed states are unstable states. And West Africa has a lot of them.

Here is how to read the Failed States Index Scores: the lower the rank number of a country, the more unstable/failed state it is, while the higher a country's rank number, the more stable the state is. In other words, the most unstable countries are at the top of the list, and the most stable ones are at the bottom of the list.

The Index determines a state's instability based on the accumulation of scores (ranging from "0" which represents excellent rating to "10" meaning worst rating) on the following issues: demographic pressures, refugees and internally displaced persons, group grievance, human flight, uneven economic development, economic decline, delegitimization of the state, public services, human rights, security apparatus, factionalized elites and external intervention.

Table 3: Failed States Index Scores 2010: West African country ranking and score

| Country | Global Rank | Total Score |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| Guinea Conakry | 9 | 105.0 |
| Ivory Coast | 12 | 101.2 |
| Nigeria | 14 | 100.2 |
| Niger | 19 | 97.8 |
| Guinea Bissau | 22 | 97.2 |
| Sierra Leone | 28 | 93.6 |
| Liberia | 33 | 91.7 |
| Burkina Faso | 35 | 90.7 |
| Mauritania | 39 | 89.1 |
| Togo | 47 | 88.1 |
| The Gambia | 75 | 80.2 |
| Mali | 78 | 79.3 |
| Cape Verde | 88 | 77.2 |
| Benin | 93 | 76.8 |
| Senegal | 99 | 74.6 |
| Ghana | 122 | 67.1 |

Data source: Fund for Peace Failed States Index Scores 2010. Table format: my idea

The table above shows the global ranking and total scores of all sixteen West African states in the 2010 Fund for Peace Failed States Index Scores that ranked the instability or stability of 177 countries globally. The deleterious consequences of increased drug flow under the conditions of weak states are unquestionable. Ten of West Africa's sixteen countries are among the 50 most unstable or failed states in the world. Contextually, this number means that almost three quarters of West Africa are made up of failed/unstable states. Guinea Conakry topped the regional list by being the 9th most failed/unstable state in the world, with a total score of 105.0. West Africa's powerhouse, Nigeria ranked the world's 14th most failed or unstable state, and the region's third most failed/unstable state. It closely follows Ivory Coast which is the region's second and the world's 12th most unstable or failed state. With a miserably total score of 97.2, Guinea Bissau is the world's 22nd and the region's 5th most unstable or failed state.

In the previous Failed States Index Scores dating back to 2004 until 2009, the instability of countries in West Africa has never gotten better but worse.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Clearly, the current picture of West Africa-Latin American drug trafficking does not look good. It remains gloomy and politically threatening to the future of the region. Digging the region out of the deep pit it has found itself in will be quite a monumental challenge, but it's not insurmountable. I think that the battle for a drug-free West Africa with strong state institutions has not yet been lost. In order for the region to have a bright future in the second decade of the 21st century, it must rid itself of drug infiltration, but doing so will not be easy. It would entail making some very hard choices, difficult decisions, and an extraordinary amount of sacrifice.

In a paper presented at the meeting of the Joint Committee on political affairs, peace and security/NEPAD and Africa peer review mechanism of the ECOWAS parliament, Dr. Abdullahi Shehu, director general for the Inter-Governmental Action Group Against Laundering in West Africa (GIABA), extrapolated on six things that need to be done in the fight against drug incursion in the region. Here I summarise them in bullet points:

- Raise the consciousness of severity of the situation
- Created coordinated response to the threat
- Build public awareness
- Search for adequate funding
- Involve the use of modern technologies
- Provide good training of law enforcement officers

I think there is little doubt that the suggestions above deserve to be taken seriously. There needs to be a conscious acknowledgement of the severity of the drug problem by African leaders; there needs to be a coordinated regional response to the

drug threat; public awareness is no doubt important; adequate funding is needed to fund serious programs; the use of modern technologies will be of great help; and training of a professional drug enforcement team is crucial.

However, just doing those six things is only solving the problem half-way; in fact the problem with those six points is that they do not address the root causes of this drug scourge, and that they raise more questions than answers to the real illicit drug problem in West Africa.

First, there is no doubt that leaders in the region do have a conscious knowledge of the severity of the situation. The suggestion that the leaders in the region do not acknowledge the severity of the situation is tantamount to an insult to the intelligence of the region's political leaders. Moreover, the severity of the situation varies from country to country, thus their respective leaders prioritize it differently. There is no regional uniformity of the severity of the problem. For example, in Ghana, where there are less negative effects of the drug scourge, leaders there are less likely to take actions than the political leaders in Guinea-Bissau, a country riddled with drugs virtually everywhere.

Second, it makes no sense for anyone to think of a coordinated response to the threat of illicit drugs in a region of sixteen countries with different systems of government, security apparatus, demography and even terrain. It is true that there is strength in unity. But, even with existence of ECOWAS, regional coordination does not seem feasible, considering the fact the region does not have a long history of confronting threats together.

Third, the issue of public awareness is complex. How feasible is it to raise awareness in a region of over five hundred different local languages. What media would one use? How does one convince the ordinary people benefiting from the drug

trade that the practice is harmful to the welfare and the safety and security of their respective countries? Furthermore, in a region where many people take the law into their own hands, how does one persuade good citizens not to worry about reprisal in the event that they give out gang information to the government? How does one get the public awareness message to the remotest villages that have never seen a radio, a newspaper or even a television? In a region where there are few democracies, how does one expect governments to show transparency in their actions, so as to build public confidence in the masses that they are interested to educate? The chances are zero.

Fourth, every serious public program requires sufficient funding. That is quite obvious. However, there are some very pertinent questions that need to be asked in regards to funding the war against illicit drug trafficking through the West African sub-region. Which countries should be responsible for shouldering the lion's share for funding contribution: West African countries, Europe or the United States of America? How do the resources get distributed among the West African nations that are affected by the drug scourge? In other words, where would the majority of the funds come from? What criteria would countries use to distribute the funds? And perhaps the most important question: in a region where every level of government is corrupt, how does one ensure that the funds meant for fighting the drug scourge don't end up stashed in the Swiss bank accounts of powerful and influential political leaders and security chiefs?

Fifth, I do recognize the inescapable fact that the use of modern technologies could be very instrumental in the fight against drug trafficking in the 21st century. But it needs to be mentioned that West Africa is one of the poorest and least developed regions of the world. And in such a region, the use of technology does not seem to be

the smartest suggestion to fight a problem as huge as the drug scourge that the region faces now. It would make more sense to advocate for a heavy reliance on human intelligence to combat drugs and their traffickers.

The sixth point that I disagree with is Dr. Shehu's advocacy for more training of law enforcement officers in order to tackle the drug problem in the region. In a region where law enforcement officers are among the least paid in the world, professional training is a nonstarter. What kind of professional training would be sufficient to convince a patrol police officer that it is better to turn down a bribe of thousands of dollars from a drug dealer, turn around and arrest him just for a meager monthly government salary of few hundred dollars? No amount of professional training can make that happen in the region. It needs to be understood and accepted that the implementation of harsh law enforcement measures do not seem to be working, and thus should be abandoned.

Having firmly critiqued the six suggestions laid-out by Dr Shehu in the fight against illicit drug trafficking in West Africa, I would like to spell out my own plan or solution to the problem. However, I believe that there are no unique or unilateral solutions to the drug epidemic in West Africa. Nevertheless, here are the main solutions I think can go a long way in ameliorating the illicit drug trafficking in West Africa:

(1) I firmly believe that the bureaucratization of the culture of corruption and the subsequent weakening of state civil and security institutions is a huge predicament that needs to be tackled in the region. West Africa's political leaders must rid their countries of the ingrained culture of corruption at all levels of government and society. All sixteen countries in the region need to establish anti-corruption commissions to look into the role that bribery and corruption play in the enhancement

of the illicit drug trade. These commissions need to be composed of highly credible members of civil society, and should be given a time frame of up to six months to report on their findings to the political leaderships. Then, they should be required to defend their findings and recommendations before bipartisan panels of parliamentarians in the presence of members of the foreign diplomatic corps. Each country's government must be obligated to accept and execute the recommendations by those anti-graft commissions. And in the event that a particular country demonstrates reluctance to act upon its commission's recommendations, the home countries of those foreign dignitaries represented during the proceedings need to mount pressure on them. For example, if the Guinea-Bissau government refuses to recognize the recommendations of its anti-corruption commissions, its former colonial power Portugal, that has an ambassador in Bissau, needs to exert enormous pressure on the government in Bissau to act accordingly. West Africa's leaders need to understand that the region does not need strong men at the helm of power; it needs strong institutions. Strong institutions that are efficient and effective can address the problems faced by any country. Strong institutions are incorruptible, but strong men are—the region has a lot of strong men as political leaders. Removing corruption is also an important step in encouraging international direct investment. Foreign investors usually pay attention on the corruption level index of a country prior to making investment decisions. Foreign direct investors do not invest in countries that have high levels of corruption indexes. Countries that have low levels of corruption indexes attract foreign direct investment, which stimulates local economies, creates employment for the youth, and raises the living standards of the citizens of host countries.

(2) The building and sustenance of strong institutions will not be easy, and cannot be done without foreign help. This is where the unconditional assistance from industrialized countries such as the United States and mostly importantly the European Union (EU) is needed. European countries need to accept that they have a stake in the drug trade in West Africa. They need to understand that a solution to the West African drug problem is equally a solution to their own drug problem. European governments need to set up a huge fund dedicated to the fight against drug trafficking in West Africa. The EU should set up a fund called the West Africa Europe Anti-Drug Fund (WAEADF). The funds should be contributed by all members of the European Union, with varying contributing quotas—EU countries affected most by the illicit drug consumption need to contribute the most money, while the least affected in terms of drug consumption should be asked to contribute the least money to the fund. These funds then need to be disbursed to the various West African states every six months. The West African states that are the worst affected by the consequences of the illicit drug trafficking need to receive the largest disbursement, and the least affected get the lowest money. In order to ensure transparency, each fund-recipient country needs to provide to the WAEADF a yearly report on its progress and the failures in the fight against drug trafficking. The more successful a fund-recipient country is in its fight against drug trafficking, the more funding it gets in the subsequent years. The European Union needs to establish a similar partnership with the Latin American countries, especially the three highest producers of cocaine and heroine in the region—Bolivia, Colombia and Peru.

(3) The third solution is one that should include all three regions: Latin America (the producers), West Africa (the middlemen) and the European Union (the consumers). These three regions should set up a transcontinental 9-member (three

members/experts from each region) international trade council specifically dedicated to understanding every aspect of the illicit drug trade affecting the three regions. This council will also be tasked with coordinating all efforts aimed at eliminating the production, trafficking and consumption of illicit drugs in the three regions. This council should also be given the opportunity to closely work with the United Nations, the European Union, Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, and of course the Latin American regional body.

(4) There needs to be an agricultural approach to the war on drugs. Alternative measures need to be created for the growers of cocaine and heroine plants in the Latin American countries. The governments of Bolivia, Colombia and Peru need to encourage the diversification of agricultural production in their rural farming communities by encouraging farmers to cultivate other arable crops that have high domestic and international demand. Such legal arable crops can include: peanuts, corn, wheat and vegetable crops that are relatively easy to sow, weed and harvest. In addition, those Latin American governments need to offer their farmers prices to their produce that are much more attractive than they had gotten from the cocaine and heroin crops. By offering higher prices for legal agricultural products than illicit drugs, there is little doubt that rural farming communities would abandon cocaine and heroin production.

(5) West African states need to devise ways and means of restricting, auditing, and, when appropriate, sanctioning political parties, politicians and donors who engage in the trafficking of drugs in the region. All countries in the region need to establish watchdog groups that have the capacity to track the complicated money trail that often makes its way into the accounts of powerful political and influential businessmen and women. Moreover, all West African states need to make it a

requirement for their politicians to disclose their financial information to the media and voters before they are certified to run for any public office. Such financial information should include local and foreign bank statements detailing cash flow in and out of their accounts. Such a measure would expose to the ordinary voters the politicians that are involved and profiteering from the drug trade, which has been ruining their region over the last decade. Consequently, voters would have the opportunity not to elect into public office any politician involved in the drug peddling. One of the long-term effects of such a measure is that most governments in the region would be run by decent public figures with clean records, who are dedicated to public service, not their selfish aggrandizement.

(6) It is well documented that one of the reasons Latin American drug cartels have used West Africa as a transit for their Europe-bound drug shipments is that it is logistically cheap. I believe any destructive attitude that is cheap needs to be made expensive. And I recommend the same for West Africa. The routes need to be made expensive. Governments in the region need to make trafficking in the region a nightmare. The more expensive it is the less inclined cocaine and heroine traffickers will be to use the region as transit hub.

(7) Each West African state needs to establish a single institution that would serve as a counter-narcotics focal point for national inter-ministerial and inter-agency. This institution can also foster greater regional collaboration. The creation of such an institution can eradicate the often competing and strained relationships that usually exist between various government ministries and agencies that are usually tasked with varying roles in fighting drugs. It is worth noting, that, experienced drug cartels had often exploited the uncooperative relationships that had existed between government ministries and agencies to engage in their illicit business. It is not an uncommon

scenario in West African countries where many government agencies do not share intelligence on issues as pertinent as drug trafficking.

(8) Every quarter, each West African country needs to conduct exhaustive and strong investigations that target two leading drug trafficking cartels or networks and bring them to justice. If this counter-narcotic measure becomes successful in all West African countries, there will be a total 24 drug cartels or networks taken off the streets in the entire region every three months. That would mean the elimination of 96 drug cartels or networks from the entire region in just 12 months! Practically speaking, the region would rid itself of drugs within a very short period of time.

(9) There needs to be a long-term bottom-up educational approach to the war against drugs in West Africa. The children in the region need to be educated about the negative consequences of illicit drugs in their communities. The education ministries in all sixteen countries need to convene a regional conference that will look into ways and means of incorporating the study of drugs in their school syllabuses either as a component of their science or social studies subjects or as a separate field of study. The study of drugs should be included in the syllabuses from elementary/primary schools to high schools— probably starting from the first to the twelfth grade. I believe this approach will be more cost effective and have more lasting effects than a so-called short-term public awareness campaign using the media. The inclusion of drug studies in a school system syllabus is undoubtedly cheaper than a mass media campaign aimed at an audience that is either skeptical or not listening. Furthermore, it is psychologically easier to persuade young and tender minds than older ones.

(10) All West African states need to set aside a special date annually and declare it as *West Africa Drug-Free Day*. It would be better if the entire region annually observes this day on a single date. During every annual observance, all

sectors of society need to exclusively dedicate their entire day on the issue of drug enlightenment. On this day, the issue of drugs should dominate electronic media programming, print media pages, discussion topics in town squares, social media chatter forums, classroom lessons, and even political rallies by all politicians irrespective of political affiliations.

(11) Another solution to the West Africa Latin America drug trafficking problem is through co-coordinating the actions of international agencies against drug trafficking. One such agency is the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). This agency is non-political and it is the clearinghouse of information for police forces around the world. In other words, since its establishment, Interpol has been a forum for contact and cooperation among police agencies from around the world. West African states need to establish a stronger cooperation with Interpol so that they can have easier access to the agency's centralized database that contains reports and tip-offs on international crimes including transnational illicit drug trafficking. There is no doubt that a country's easy access to such a valuable global database will enable its police to have access to quick information about drug trafficking activities that may be happening within its political borders. Timely access to important information—one of the main obstacles to police activity in the region—will definitely lead to more arrest of traffickers en-route and raids on drug cartel hideouts.

(12) The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which is the global body's arm that deals with drugs and crimes, could be very helping to West African states in their crusade against illicit drug trafficking. West African states need to maximize their use of the human, material, financial and logistical resources that the UNDOC has at its disposal for UN member states. West African states should tap

into the funds, the expertise and the loads of documents of information, which the UNODC has, about the drug trafficking in the region. They can do that by seeking smart anti-narcotics strategies and garnering financial help from the UNODC.

Furthermore, West African states need to hire the drug experts at the UNODC to help them formulate goal-oriented anti-drug policies that will produce better results in their war against drugs. I do know the region is not suffering from the lack of sufficient anti-drug experts. However, it won't hurt if the region's various anti-drug agencies or ministries co-opt renowned drug experts from the UNODC to work together with the local talent. Lastly, it is often said that the provision of accurate information often results in sound decision-making processes. And that's why West African states need to have more access to valuable UNODC facts and figures about the true picture of the drug trafficking situation in the region. As one of the poorest regions in the world, it's hard to think of a way that the region can successfully combat this illicit scourge without the help of the UNODC.

I believe there are no perfect solutions to the Latin American drug trafficking problems in West Africa. But one thing is clear: doing nothing about it is no solution either. Something really serious needs to be done. West African states need to harness all the resources, expertise and funds at their disposal, and aggressively but smartly confront this scourge that has weakened state political and security institutions, the consequence of can lead to instability for the region. I believe Latin American drugs are a ticking time bomb hovering over West Africa.

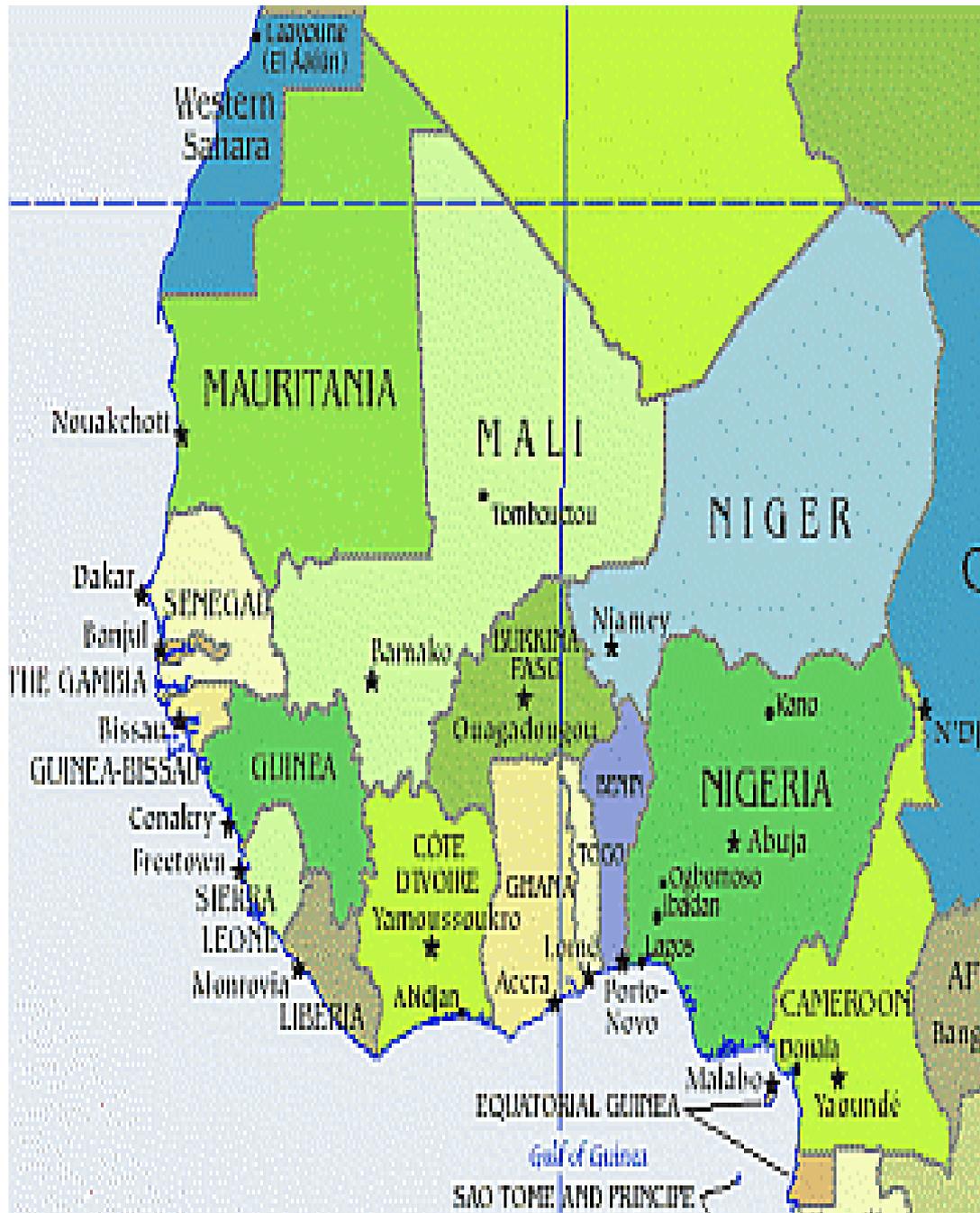


Fig. 1: The map of present-day West Africa

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFRICOM==United States Africa Command

BBC==British Broadcasting Corporation

CIA==Central Intelligence Agency

CPI==Corruption Perception Index

DEA==United States Drug Enforcement Agency

DRC==Democratic Republic of Congo

ECOWAS==Economic Community of West African States

EU==European Union

GDP==Gross Domestic Product

GIABA==The Inter-Governmental Action Group Against Money Laundering in West Africa

INTERPOL==International Criminal Police Organization

MPLA==Movimento Popular de Libertacao de Angola

NEPAD==New Partnership for Africa's Development

NGO==Non-Governmental Organizations

TI==Transparency International

UN===United Nations

UNDCP==United Nations Drug Control Program

UNITA==Uniao Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola

UNODC===United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

WAEADF==West Africa Europe Anti-Drug Fund

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