

GETTING SMART AND SCALING THROUGH: NARCOTICS/PROSTITUTES' TRAFFICKING AS ORGANIZED CRIMES IN COLONIAL AND POST COLONIAL WEST AFRICA, C.1920-C.1998

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Abstract. *Conflict analysis and management are not a new phenomenon to students of history and social sciences the world over. Conflicts either on organizational or international scale have received mediation and/or alternative dispute resolution in different parts of the world. This article focuses on West Africa as a zone where organised crime has been going on since the first decades of the 20th Century although much attention has been paid to terrorist organisations like the Boko Haram, AQIM and Janjaweed only recently. Using secondary and primary sources, the article examines more detail the way crimes have been organised in the region in the colonial and post-colonial periods. It examines the mobility of narcotics and prostitutes trafficking in the sub-region. More crucial to this article is the way regional and international organisations have attempted to mediate and bring to an end such conflict situation. From the sources gathered so far, the article maintains that narcotics and prostitution mobility have made West Africa the hub and the middle passage where drugs and prostitutes passed through to other parts of the world. Yet such a situation has received scant attention in a deeper historical perspective, a gap which this article sets out to fill. Conversely and more particularly, the drugs comes from as far as Latin America and South Africa and they are rooted back to Europe and United States while prostitutes have been migrating within the region and sometimes responsible for the movement of the drugs. What makes West Africa so unique in this trafficking? Which are the routes used in the organisation of the drug and prostitute trafficking?*

What constitutes the network of the traffickers? By confronting such questions, the article hopes to add to the budding literature and volume of knowledge that exists on drugs and prostitutes trafficking.

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Introduction

This article examines the place of West Africa as *rite de passage* of organised crime. West Africa has been very topical in scholarship and for a very long time too. Recently,

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terrorist activities like the al-Qaeda in the Islamic Mahgreb, (Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria and Janjaweed of Southern Sudan has attracted much international concerns). The region has also come under attack from international community and criminal networks that are using the sub-region as a key global hub for distribution, wholesale and increased production of prohibited drugs and trafficking in human beings especially in children and women (Brown, 2013: 1-23). Branded as the “Whiteman’s grave” until the discovery of quinine in the mid 1880s, West Africans were well known as hewers of wood and drawers of water. This generally kept the continent in the backyard of the entire world’s civilization. Such Eurocentric perspective further led to the sub-region to be besprinkled as a zone of organised crime although largely perpetuated by the Europeans themselves it was downplayed.

Much focus has been paid to West Africa as a zone of organised crime. This is however done by more contemporary historians, anthropologists and political scientists. The zone as a geographical transit region has played host to three major crimes. These include the slave trade, legitimate trade, prostitution and drugs. This has not been adequately handled by researchers. To appreciate historically, the role that West Africa has played we need to take into consideration the major stop gaps at any one time. The zone refer to as West Africa in this article will include Mauritania, Benin, Burkina Faso, Guineas, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra-Leone, Ghana, The Gambia, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, and Togo

While talking on the 20th February 2012 with regards to West Africa, the former United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Anan said:

Over the last decade, West Africa has made encouraging progress. Violent conflicts that had blighted the region for many years have been ended. There have been real advances in development, health and education. Economic growth is accelerating. Democratic practice although still not the norm everywhere in the region is taking roots. However, we need to take action now before the grip of the Criminal networks linked to the trafficking of illicit drugs tightens into a stranglehold on West African political and economic development

Put in its proper place one wonders whether the speech of the former UN Secretary General could be taken seriously given the fact that much conflict has been going on in the region. He emphasized on illicit drugs trafficking but left out even the historical part of it which saw prostitutes, slave trade as well as even what was called legitimate trade. All said and done the point is that the region has played host, in time and space to crimes of all sorts which needs to be properly historicized. That is the kernel of this article.

Conflict analysis and management are not a new phenomenon to students of history and social sciences the world over. Conflicts either on organizational or international scale have received mediation and/or alternative dispute resolution in different parts of

the world. This article focuses on West Africa as a zone where organised crime has been going on since the 1400 although much attention has been paid to terrorist organisations like the Boko Haram, AQIM and Janjaweed. Using mostly secondary sources the article examines in a more detail the way crimes have been organised in the region in the colonial and post-colonial periods. It examines narcotics and prostitutes trafficking and mobility in the sub-region. More crucial to this article is the way regional, and international organisations have attempted to mediate and bring to an end such conflict situation. From the sources gathered so far, the article maintains that narcotics and prostitution mobility have made West Africa the hub and the middle passage where drugs and prostitutes passed through to other ends of the world. Yet such a situation has received scant attention in a deeper historical perspective, a gap which this article sets out to fill. Conversely and more particularly, the drugs comes from as far as Latin America and South Africa and they are rooted back to Europe and United States while prostitutes have been migrating within the region and sometimes responsible for the movement of the drugs. What makes West Africa so unique in this trafficking? Which are the routes used in the organisation of the drug and prostitute trafficking? What constitutes the network of the traffickers? By confronting such questions, the article hopes to add to the budding literature and volume of knowledge which exists on drugs and prostitutes trafficking.

Understanding Organise Crime

The concept of organised crime needs further clarification. Organised crimes have received much attention, yet it is not quite clear what is. Onuaha (2013) drawing from his empirical works contends that there have been over 150 definitions proffer so far in the extant literature. Plywacewski (2000:99), attempted the definition of organised crime as the “activities of criminal groups set up out of desire for gain for the purpose of carrying out various offences...criminal or economic which would entail ...as intended by the organizers...would be to bring unlawful gains into the legal economy” Lebeya (2007:17-19) defines organised crime in the past tense and according to this scholar organised crime was any serious crime that was systematically and persistently committed on a continuous basis or in a determinate period by a consciously organised criminal group of two or more persons or a criminal enterprise, in pursuit of an undue financial or other material benefits.

Furthermore, a United Nations working paper (1975) lends a more profound definition. According to this paper “Organise Crime is the large scale and complex criminal activity carried on by a group of persons, however, loosely or tightly organised for the enrichment of those participating and at the expense of the community and its members”. A closer scrutiny of this kind of definition suggests that organised crime is frequently facilitated by political corruption. Although there are various and conceptual meanings

of organised crime extant literature further reveals that there are three main trajectories of understanding organised crime viz structuralist, network and market perspectives.

Historically, structuralists perspectives were fashionable in the academia between the 1970s and late 1980s and held that organised crime could be understood within hierarchical groups of individuals. These group/groups have clearly defined functions and authorities are collectively involved in illegal activities with the main purpose of attaining profits and power. Abandinsky (1994:6) went closer to this type of understanding organized crime when he stated that the structuralist perspective was “a non-ideological enterprise involving a number of persons in close social interaction, organised on a hierarchical basis for the purpose of securing profit and power by engaging in illegal and legal activities”. This classical perspective so to say has over time and space diminished within the academia and even so within the policy makers scenario

In contrast to the structuralist perspective is the network perspective which instead focuses its concerns with the network character of such a criminal enterprise. According to the apologetics of this school organised crime as a criminal enterprise involving a network of individuals or small organisations, rather than a clearly structured and easily understood pyramid (Oche, 2009:248). One example from such school presents it as “a set of activities spread in networks that have components of economic endeavour, that is, it needs repetitive activities (though without the discipline, regularity and rights of regular work), a goal of which is profit (easier, higher, and better at the wholesale networks), using variable methods and currencies for exchange typical of underground relationships” (Zaluar, 2001:377). The network-centric view however looks at the contemporary nature of organised crimes. It is no doubt useful in explaining the fluidity as well as a dynamic nature of different forms of organised crimes operating in different places at different times. Network perspectives suffer from one hallmark in that it fails to into account why such crimes persist even when part of the network is fractured or annihilated.

The market perspective appears to be neither the structuralist, hierarchical nor network perspective. In other words, it is neutral. It emphasizes on the nature of the market which is regarded to be unique and which is responsible for the sustainability of the crimes even when individuals and structures in the activity are intermittently disrupted. Ipso facto of the dynamic nature of different forms of organised crimes and the intricacies of connection and interconnectivity also known as globalisation, organised crime has been recently viewed less as a matter of a group of individuals involved in a range of illicit/illegal activities involving some individuals for the exchange of services or goods.

One of the greatest apologetic of the market perspective is the United Nations on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Its main kernel of the argument is that “if these individuals are arrested and incarcerated the activities continue because the market and the incentives it generates remains” (UNODC, 2009:10). The UNODC, therefore, presents a new paradigm

shift in the entire understanding of organised crime. This is more plausible because it re-focuses on law enforcement and also intervention efforts at curbing organised crimes. The policy direction should be shifted away from the 'group' behind the illicit activity to a discrete containment and control strategy designed to fracture markets by making it structurally more difficult for organised crimes to flourish (UNODC, 2009).

The literature on organised crime suggest that scholars and researchers have over-concentrated in the present (Ellis, 2009:150-172; Champin, 2011 & 2012; Reyskens, 2012; Akyeampong, 2005; Wyler & Cook, 2009; de Andres, 2008). Amongst these scholars, Ellis and Akyeampong stood out as hardcore historians but have largely overlooked the historicity of organised crime in West Africa. Historical evidence informs us that organised crime to be better-understood predates the contemporary period. This article, therefore, takes up prostitution and drug trafficking to better understand the historical developments of organised crime in West Africa.

Significance and structure of the paper

The reemergence of the militant Islamist groups in West Africa such as Boko Haram and Al-QIM has been a cause for significant concern both within West Africa and the international community and above all to the academia. Since late 2010, the organizations have been responsible for a brutal crusade of attacks that have been targeting public officials and institutions and, increasingly, ordinary men, women, and children, reeking havoc across West Africa with its ramification spilling over to the international scenario. In terms of human casualty at least 5,550 people are said to have been killed in many separate attacks in by such organisations, a grisly toll that has been accelerating while scores of many were maimed and others rendered as widows and orphans. Meanwhile, the rhetoric and tactics of such organisations indicate that the organizations have expanded its reach well beyond West Africa. As a matter of fact its *modus operandi* indeed has evolved, and it is evolving into a transnational threat with links to other terrorist groups and violent extremists in North, West, and East Africa. The groups thus have constituted a wider threat to the political, economic, and security interests in Africa and more particularly to the sub-region.

In the last decades of the 20th Century and the first decades of the 21st Century, most West African countries came under attack as areas where prostitutes and drugs were passing through to Europe and United States. To better understand and appreciate these happenings, it will be imperative to place them in a historical perspective. Consequently in what follows I will sketch the mobility of prostitutes in the sub-region. The second section will focus on drugs showing the routes which these drugs take to enter West Africa. The third section examines the measures that had been taken by the national and international organisation to combat these crimes. The last section will be the conclusion.

The Mobility of Prostitutes in West Africa: A colonial Approach

Prostitution over the world is one of the oldest professions and has attracted quite interesting studies in recent times (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1997; Lukman *et al.* 2011; Barritz, 2000; Barrera, 1996; Spaulding & Beswick, 1995; Aderinto, 2007, 2010; Naanen, 1999; Taylor-Brown, 2002; White, 1990). The subject has been handled by sociologists, anthropologists and to a lesser extend historians. According to Louis White, in prostitution is about women accumulating money and property; It is a strategy for survival a desire, a device against oblivion" This case study answers some of the questions regarding who, why, and what is involved in female migration in West and Central Africa. The prevalence of HIV infection is very high among Ghanaian prostitutes in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. As many as 80% of Ghanaian prostitutes in Abidjan are from Ghana. It is reported that almost 40% came from the Eastern region of Ghana, 24% from the Ashanti region, and 8% from the Central region. Data from this 1986-87 Abidjan survey indicated that most Ghanaian female migrants were younger than their male counterparts and mostly into prostitution recruited by using a complex network which involve pimps and relatives of the prostitutes. It is documented that structural adjustment programs have contributed to negative impacts on female prostitution. Almost all women surveyed reported that before departure, their incomes did not meet their needs, and their quality of life was deteriorating. Migrants emigrate with the help of relatives and friends, but decision making is an individual affair. Although Ghanaians speak English and migration is to a French speaking country, language is not considered a barrier to migration. Most female Ghanaian migrants are from urban areas. Conditions in the Ivory Coast are conducive to the sex trade. A hierarchy based on community, township, and women's groups and ethnicity determines the social organization in Abidjan. Migration is circulatory, and most maintain family ties and send remittances home. These are recent trends in the mobility of prostitutes, but it is again what has been going on in the region during the colonial period.

Colonialism advertently /inadvertently created avenues to attract prostitutes. In fact, colonialism created an ambiguous situation. Yet the colonial administrators observed that prostitution was despicable and morally bad. Writing to the Resident in charge of, Calabar, Cameroons, Ogoja, Onitsha and Owerri, on 14 July 1943, the Secretary of the Eastern Provinces, Enugu, D.A.F. Shute, said *inter alia*: "...I am to add that the problem of child prostitution in Lagos is growing daily and more serious, and health and morals of more and more children are being ruined. His honor will therefore be very grateful if the widest publicity be given to the contents of this memorandum..."¹. It is no little wonder that colonialism saw such a profession as being immoral since colonial venture was out to moralize Africans as they claimed. 'Spreading the glad tidings' was one of

1 Sf (1943)2 Child Prostitution in Lagos (NAB).

the motives justify for colonizing Africa. As this paper will demonstrate the sooner or later between the 1930s and 1950s the British colonial administration and Native Administration code name Native Authorities worked 'day and night' to discourage prostitution but with little success.

In some parts of West Africa, the colonial administration placed quite lenient laws on prostitution in the 1940s. The colonial administrators argued that most Africans were so promiscuous that their sexual behaviour could only be regulated by prostitutes. In the Gold Coast (Ghana), the attorney general, H.W.D. Blackail implied that West African prostitutes safeguarded the European womanhood from the alleged sexual licentiousness of Africans.

Social Urbanisation and Prostitution

The causes of prostitution have been largely over exhausted in the literature. Naanen (1995) noted the economic factor and maintains that prostitution thrives and workable because there is a market for it. The author draws from the Victorian England to demonstrate that although it had all its modesty of civilized values it had 'had a soft underbelly as far as sexuality was concern...' while citing Hyam the author further holds that colonial administrators did not fail to take advantage of prostitutes to flirt with them as well and satisfy their carnal desires (Naanen, 1995:67).

Cities were important and relevant for the growth of prostitution. African cities born out of colonial policies became important joints for the growth of prostitution. In a very broad sense, Lagos became a magnet which attracted prostitutes from the hinterland and from thence they radiated to most parts of West Africa including, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Niger, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Sierra Leone, The Gambia and Mali. The famous Nigerian novelist, Cyprain Ekwensi, touched on very relevant issues about the city of Lagos. Cyprain Ekwensi documented fairly well and accurately the attitude of women who reached Lagos from the hinterland. In *Jagua Nana* the protagonist of the novel is a devotee of the

... 'gay life of Lagos is deserted by her lover and falls on evil days. Returning to her own tribe up-country, she is offered security and a good home by an elderly admirer, but the city's hold over her is too strong. Better from her point of view, the squalor of a Lagos slum so long as there are sophisticated people around her, the bright lights of a night-spot, a 'light-life' band, and the chance of picking up a young and well-to-do patron (Ekwensi, 1961:109).

Ekwensi simple put is showing the sophisticated life of Lagos and modernity. The 'modernists' nature of Lagos attracted women. A life band in a night spot, street lights viewed by somebody just coming out from the rural setting was enough to lure women. These women who trooped into Lagos were most of the time, not with any intention

to get marry. They were out to enjoy the niceties of the city, exchange their bodies for few 'pieces of silver' after idling the whole day. Ekwensi (1954: 63) again captures the situation graphically. One of his heroines is the 'City' girl. According to him the city girl 'would be content to walk about a Mayfair-type of neon-lit shop all day, hang about the city hotels, the ice-cream bars with not a penny in her handbag, rather than marry a farmer with a thousand pounds, a year for his income, and no spice of life than the prospect of security and raising children" The city-girl is contrasted with a village husband in the village.

In a broader perspective, prostitution in colonial West Africa was a consequence of the socio-economic and political dislocations affected by European colonization. As a matter of fact it flourished in cosmopolitan centers such as Lagos, Abijan, Cotonou and Accra (Ekpo-Out, 2013:72). Areas where European companies like United African Company, Miller Brothers and John Holt had opened factories also attracted migrant labour. The pool of Wage earning single males created new markets for sexual services that prostitution offered.

Nigeria took the lead in supplying prostitutes to such areas. The Cross River basin which straddles Cameroon and Nigeria became a major exporter of prostitutes. This was particular noted in the Upper Cross River which included the Ogoja province. The official statistics of the Odubra division in Ogoja Province show that 12 percent of the female population in the Nta clan was involved in the prostitution. In the Bahumunu clan about 15 percent had migrated for the purpose of prostitution. Consequently, the colonial era witnessed the proliferation of transnational prostitution along the West African coastline to Gold Coast, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, and Ivory Coast. Commercial centres sprouted in the Gold Coast such as Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi and Tamale. Ghana became the destination of most prostitutes. This was because following the Gold Coast Criminal Act Section 435 (1) only none west African prostitutes were persecuted. By implication, any West African including Nigerians could engage legally in sex trade. The rationale behind this was to protect white women from alleged depravities of African men (Ray, 2007:67). Prostitution especially in West African coast were implicitly criminals as the mobility of drugs in the sub-region came to be identified with them. The colonial administration spent her colossal energy attempting to stamp out the activity.

Combating prostitution

Because of the ills that were unleashed by prostitution both the colonial and post-colonial governments attempted to stamp it out of West Africa. As already discussed elsewhere in the paper, this was because human trafficking especially prostitutes took in almost the whole of West Africa. This was mainly around Benin, Nigeria, Ivory Coast and Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso).

Colonial administration spent time passing ordinances to outlaw prostitution and sometimes using outright force with the exception of Ghana, which had become the *el dorado* of West African prostitutes. The campaign against prostitution was undertaken by both the native authorities and colonial administration. As early as 1928 the District Head for Victoria Division launched the campaign in the following words:

Sir,

I have the honour to report that I had a few village Heads in my last sitting in Court when I brought the subject of prostitution before them. It has been agreed that such loose women escaping from their villages and other countries could be ordered to go back to their own villages or countries. I was against the practice of many women coming from different villages and hiding themselves in New Town, then asking the sub chief Itutu to send for their husbands to refund dowry during which time they move about and living with different men. For the good and welfare of this place I agree with the proposal of the Divisional Officer and will order that such women vacate and go back to their homes².

Meanwhile the Native Administration which had become the pillar of British colonial administration in British West Africa, took the relay baton from the colonial administration and became more rigorous in the campaign against such undesirable acts. In 1933 the Native Authority Ordinance passed a series of measures against prostitution in the territory. The 'Ten Commandments' forbid such a profession. Amongst other things it stated the following:

1. No landlord is entitled to keep a prostitute into his house as a tenant. If he does, he will be guilty of an offense
2. No husband and wife are entitled to keep an unmarried woman who is a prostitute into their house. Anyone found transgressing this law would be guilty of the offence
3. No man is allowed to keep a prostitute with him into his house as a lover. If the parents of the woman find any such person one of them he or she should report to the Native Authority whereby the man and the woman would be guilty of the offence
4. Parents who will intentionally allow their daughters to go for prostitution and welcome lovers with little or more presents will be guilty of the offence
5. Prostitution is strictly forbidden and all women of such as offenders will be guilty of the offence and repatriation is allowed to their native homes and villages.³

This was a tacit way of showing their disenchantment with the women who had taken up prostitution as a profession. Advertently or inadvertently, the native authority as conservative as ever appeared not to have noticed the changing times and also the

2 File Sf (1938) 1 Measures Against Prostitutes (NAB).

3 File Sf (1933) 2 Native Authorities Ordinances as a fight against prostitution (NAB).

women's wish for political, economic and social autonomy. The amount of money which was to be paid as fines in times of faulty was a bit exaggerated. To make up a sum of £10 or 12 at the time was to milk a dead cow. The money was too much for any individual to pay when there were no jobs that could fetch such amounts. It is not clear in colonial reports whether such iron hand check yielded any dividends to the Native Authorities.

Despite the contrasting views between the Native Authorities and the colonial administration, the former did not relent in getting prostitutes put under control. In 1952, there was a general tour in most parts of British West Africa to discourage prostitution. During the post-colonial period which led to the formation of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) the fight against prostitution continued. Trafficking in persons was defined in Article 3 of the Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons especially in prostitutes (Oche, 2009).

From Prostitutes to Drugs in West Africa

If there is any organised crime in West Africa in addition to prostitutes, it should be concerned with drugs. So many kinds of drugs have passed through this region to Europe and America brought in by various cartels. Large scale seizures of cocaine, heroin, cannabis, and methamphetamine was recorded in West Africa as far back as 1960, but the laying of Latin America-West Africa illicit trade in drug pipeline pre-dates 2004. West Africa has been well known to Latin America during the slave trade which lasted for at least 300 years (Manning, 1990; Austen and Derrick, 1999; Northrup, 1994; Klein, 1993; Iliffe, 1995). During this period, West Africa was quite strategic in the trade as West Africans were transported across the Atlantic ocean to work in the American plantations. It was because of such connections that Latin American traffickers recently relocated a share of their wholesale distribution from the Western Hemisphere to West Africa. During this relocation West African sub region moved from being merely a short-term transit point to becoming a storage and staging area for wholesale repackaging and re-routing drugs (Brown, 2013).

The importance of West Africa in organised crime needs to be well harnessed and analysed. Ellis (2009:190) maintains that "not only is West Africa conveniently situated for trade between South America and Europe, but above all it has a political and social environment that is generally suitable for drug trade. Smuggling is widely tolerated, law enforcement is fitful and inefficient and politicians are easily bribed or are even involved in the drug trade themselves...". Historically, South America, Europe and Africa have been linked through the triangular trade for a very long time. Smuggling could be explained from the fact that West Africa is made up of members of ECOWAS economic block. Members of ECOWAS hardly put on borders to restrict fellow members from entering.

The economic situation made West Africa more vulnerable for illegal trafficking in drugs. The 1980s witnessed a period of rapid economic decline in West Africa. Consequently,

West African countries were found in financial quagmire because of the world economic recession. West African countries were forced to borrow from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). The Bretton Woods institution as they are known forced West African countries to undergo economic liberalization known as structural adjustment which required deep cuts in public expenditure and laying off of substantial public employees. Above all, there was to be drastic reductions in public budgets which, as a result, sent many people into financial difficulties. This forced many people especially the youth generation to seek for ways and means to make money.

West African role in the mobility of drugs is not a new phenomenon. The historical evidence shows that trade routes for illegal goods have existed for thousands of years in this region and are further ensconced in local traditions especially in the Sahel and Saharan areas. Pre-colonial and even colonial economies of West Africa were characterised by shallow economies and was also characterised by a multifarious variety of illicit goods.

One of the illicit goods which had crisscrossed West Africa stretching far back to the beginning of the 20th Century was cannabis. It is a drug which is made from the dried leaves and flowers of the plant that is smoked or chewed for its effects on the mind and body. The trafficking of this drug dates back to the 1920s, and it is still widespread today. Kelly (2012) maintains that cannabis production in West Africa totals 3,500 tons per annum. Quite recently, in 2011/12 a good quantity of cannabis was intercepted and seized in Northern Niger in Toyota en route to Europe (Champin, 2012).

The first documented use of West Africa as a staging post international drug smuggling dates back to 1952, This was when the US officials noted that to parcels of heroin drugs were transported by a Lebanese syndicate from Beirut New York. This was done via Kano, Nigeria and Accra, Ghana (Ellis, 2009:173). Just like heroin, the cocaine trade has also become recently, a focal point for international attention on West Africa. The total transformation of this region into major international illegal trade hub in drugs could conveniently trace to the 1960s when the first reports emerged of locally grown cannabis were being exported from Nigeria to Europe in significant proportions. From the 1980s the production, distribution and consumption of cannabis provided pathways for the incorporation of heroin and cocaine into West Africa. Nigeria and Ghana were taking the lead in the distribution and exportation of drugs in the entire West Africa.

Nigeria and Ghana and the Mobility of Drugs in West Africa

Nigeria is the hub on which the mobility of drugs in West Africa rotates. Not only is this country the super power of the region, it is also the most populated region. As early as 1982, records hold that the United States Embassy in Lagos confirmed the role which Nigeria was playing in drug mobility. It stated categorically that it was playing a very significant role in the marketability of narcotics and dangerous drugs in the United

States. This was coming at a time when the US authorities had arrested 21 Nigerians for narcotics and dangerous drugs in the US. It will appear that since then statistics were to rise exponentially.

In 1983, a ship from Nigerian port of Lagos carrying cocaine, heroin and marijuana docked at Hamburg and in 1984, the director of West Germany's customs service, the then George Wolt stated that Nigeria was one of the top six importers of cocaine to Germany, Nigerian smugglers had started sending courier from Pakistan to Nigeria where it was re-packaged and re-exported to the United States. Nigeria continues to play a significant role in the international heroin trade with the intercepted stocks amounting to about 70 kilograms seized per annum. Besides new networks have emerged involving Ivory Coast and Senegal (Wyler & Cook, 2012; Akyeampong, 2005; de Andres, 2008).

By the 1990s, Nigerian drug traders had largely finished the process of internationalising their illegal drug business. The drug traffickers had not only developed the means to make bulk shipments of narcotics but had also become fully global by having headquarters (home) country business association in both producing and consuming countries and facilities in countries outside Nigeria. Within the sub-region, Nigerians established operational centers in Cotonu, Benin and Abijan, Ivory Coast. Going beyond the continent, the illegal drug smugglers established sales networks in major US, European. And post-Soviet Union cities, including Geneva, Switzerland where they were active in cocaine trafficking and places as far as Moscow, Russia where they took over heroin railing (Champin, 2011; Ellis, 2005). In Asia large Nigerian networks have air couriered some bringing heroin transiting or stopping in West Africa and others transporting cocaine and methamphetamines, ecstasy and ketamine from West Africa towards Asia. These often transit via Malaysia or Indonesia to Japan, Korea, China, Thailand and Singapore. Since 2009 Nigerian and Ghanaian diversified into trafficking crystalline methamphetamine through links with other West African countries such as Benin, Ivory Coast, Guinea and Senegal (Champin, 2011).

Apart from Nigeria, Ghana too has been playing a significant role in drug mobility. In 1982, it was reported by a West German official of the Interior Ministry that Hamburg was importing significant quantities of drugs from West Africa including one and a half tonnes from Ghana. Ghana and Nigeria have played significant roles in the organised crime in West Africa. They have so much in common and also have many dissimilarities.

At the beginnings of 1970, the Ghanaian smugglers joined the Nigerians in the exportation of African grown cannabis to Europe on a scale that was large enough to attract and sustained official attention. By 1990, Accra the political and administrative capital of Ghana became a transit point for the international cocaine trade and it was public knowledge which houses were constructed with using cocaine money and which flashy cars were bought with cocaine money.

That notwithstanding, West Africa drug gangs have certain peculiar characteristics which facilitate their work. They are usually small, compartmentalised cells of between two and ten members. They are mostly kinsmen sometimes and not always from the same ethnic group or indigenous area. They possess the ability to communicate mostly in indigenous African languages. They are smart at making deals and then dispersing, regrouping at a later date as needed, they often adopt false identities for its members including changing their nationality. Finally, they refrain from the use of violence in order not to attract the attention of law enforcement officials (Williams & Haackle, 2008). It is relevant to note that the mobility of these narcotic drugs follow particular routes from their areas of origin, transit and ultimate destination. The table below shows the countries where the drugs originate, nodal points of transit in West Africa and destination in America, Europe and Asia.

Table I. The origin and destinations of Drugs

Drug	Country of Origin	Nodal Points in West Africa	Transit if at all	Destination
Heroine	Afghanistan Pakistan	Nigeria Ghana Ivory Coast		United States of America
Methamphetamine	South Africa	Nigeria Ghana Benin Ivory Coast Senegal		Japan USA Korea Malaysia Thailand Cambodia Vietnam
Cocaine	Colombia, Bolivia Peru Venezuela	Mauritania Nigeria Guinea-Bissau Guinea Benin Ghana Togo Cape Verde	Brazil	Europe

Source: Compiled by the author

A careful of observation of the above table speaks volumes as far as the mobility of drugs and transiting in West Africa is concern, It first suggest that much of cocaine transiting via Venezuela and Bolivia move to east Africa through Brazil. Historically, slave trade and colonial discourses suggests that there are linguistic links as well as geographic for the Brazilian connections. Gunea-Bissau and Cape Verde, two of the most active transshipment hubs are Portuguese colonies like Brazil (Champin, 2011). The table also shows that West Africa have become an important and significant distribution centre

for the cocaine drug. Abderrahmane (2012) and Ellis (2009:193), suggests that traffickers have stockpiled cocaine before distribution in Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Cape Verde and Mauritania. One of the routes involves cocaine entering Guinea Bissau that is then routed to Senegal, Guinea, The Gambia and Mali for onward transport. In all these airports have been known to play crucial roles. Leopold Sendat Senghors International airport has been well known to be a departure point in West Africa en route to Europe while the Bamako International Airport has also become another important transit point for drug traffickers especially Nigerians transporting drugs to Europe. Nine Latin American drug cartels have already established bases in at least 11 of the 16 West African states, The same Latin American drug trafficking organisations transporting cocaine via West Africa to Europe are also responsible for cocaine shipments via Mexico to the United States (Grassly, 2012; Regan, 2010; Harrigan, 2012).

This calls the role of West Africa again into question. Quite very recently, West Africa has grown exponentially from a minor drug trafficking route for drugs exports to a major significant hub; in 2004 large scale cocaine trafficking through West Africa was detected in Accra, Ghana. Before then there had been annual cocaine seizures in West Africa but had rarely exceeded one metric ton per year. By 2008 cocaine transshipment rivalled stolen crude oil for most valuable smuggled commodity in West Africa. 50 percent of non-US bound cocaine goes through West Africa and this makes up 13 percent of the total global flows. Containers which are shipped with provisional goods play important roles as well. Drugs are hid in containers and this has been a new strategy. In 2010 a container with 450 kilos of cocaine was seized in Lagos on a vessel arriving from Chile. In January 2011, two other vessels seized in Nigeria had a total of 275 kilos of cocaine, one of which contained 110 kilos arriving from Bolivia. Another tactic was to route an increasing number of containers through Argentina and Uruguay towards West Africa. In November 2012 authorities in Guyana seized 350 kg of cocaine hidden in a shipping container filled with soap powder destined for Nigeria (Grassly, 2012; Regan, 2010; Harrigan, 2012; Felbab-Brown, 2010; Feinstein, 2012; Champin, 2012, 2011a and b).

The role played by West Africa in the importation and exportation of illicit drugs cannot be over emphasised. Antonio Maria Costa, executive Director of the UNODC office accurately captured the situation when he said inter alia:

Drug planes do not have to fly below the radar because in most cases there is no radar (or electricity). Soldiers sometimes help smugglers by closing airports and unloading the cargo. Police cars run out of gas when giving chase or are left in the dust by smugglers. All season terrain vehicles. There are no local navies to intercept ships coming from Latin America or to chase 2000 horse power boats that speed drugs up the coast to Europe. Traffickers are seldom brought to trial in some cases there are no prisons to put them in. Even when they are charged they

are usually released because evidence is not collected or needed laws are not in place (Costa, 2008:45).

It is not certain how Maria Costa arrived at such conclusion but it can also be speculated that there are some reasons why West Africa has been much linked to illicit drug trade. It has been suggested that most of the illicit drug business find its way through West Africa because of the fragility of some of its states. The UN has maintained that all but three of the 16 West African states are on their list of least developed countries including the five countries with the lowest levels of human development. Ten of the top forty one country in the 2012 failed states index was from West Africa. As a matter of fact the 2012 Failed States Index Fund for Peace and Foreign Policy magazine lists the following West African States along with their ranking with Ivory Coast being the worst example of a failed state. Others included Guinea, Nigeria, Guinea Bissau, Niger, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mauretania, Togo and Burkina Faso.

Combating Organised Crime in West Africa

Organised crimes have not gone on *sine die*. Its activities in West African region have met with stiff resistance from international organisations. The international organisations include Economic Organisation of West African States (ECOWAS) which appears to have played one of the most significant contributions in this direction

ECOWAS

This section of the article focuses on ECOWAS one of the largest regional organization which is made up of the former British and French colonies of West Africa. One of the distinguishing features of Africa's political chemistry is its many protracted social and political conflicts and always attempts to mediate and stamped out the organised crime so that security, peace and development could be establish in the region.

For the readers who might not be familiar with West African politics in the post independent period and economic blocs it will be relevant to recapitulate a brief history of ECOWAS. ECOWAS was formed on 28 May 1975 in Lagos, Nigeria. There were fifteen members initially which included amongst others: Benin, Ivory Coast, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sao Tome and Principe. Cape Verde later on joined to make the sixteenth state. The main aim for which this organisation was established was to promote the development of the region through economic, social and economic cultural cooperation. The headquarters of ECOWAS is in Lagos while that of the fund is in Lome, the capital of Togo.

The organization has the following aims: to eliminate duties on imports from member countries; removing quantitative and administrative restrictions on trade between mem-

ber states, establishing common external tariffs, removing all restrictions on the free movement capital, services and persons among member states, harmonizing agricultural policies and the promotion of common projects in the member states, harmonizing the economic, social and cultural policies of member states; creating a fund for cooperation, compensation and development and evolving a common policy in, and the joint development of transport, communication, energy and infrastructural facilities. These objectives did not remain static. They were constantly revised by the member states. During the crisis that rugged Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s the organisation tug under their objectives another objective which was to intervene in member countries during the periods of conflict and crisis. It was also during those crises that ECOWAS formed a military wing known as ECOMOG. This was because ECOWAS group had felt the effects of the civil war to a much greater extent than did countries outside of the region. In response to both regional instability and a heavy refugee flow, ECOWAS created the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), a force aimed at resolving the conflict, restoring order and establishing a democratically-elected government (O'Neill, 1993). The ECOMOG force was the first African sub-regional peacekeeping body to mediate in another state. ECOWAS has since the Boko Haram crisis intervened in several ways to bring the insurgency to an end and to give Nigeria the stability it deserves.

Condemnation and resolution in meetings on organise crime

In a broader spectrum, ECOWAS have adapted several mechanism as well as instruments. Some of these instruments were aimed at collective suppression of these challenges include the protocol on non Aggression and mutual Assistance in Defence which came into operation in 1978 and 1981 respectively. In 1999, ECOWAS also adopted the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Crime Prevention, Management Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security. This was carried out for a greater efficiency in its approach to check terrorist activities in the region. Three years ago (2011) ECOWAS went ahead to adopt the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance to ensure the development of law and consolidation of democracy thereby out lawing the circulation of drugs and prostitutes in the region (Onuoha, 2013:107). What appeared quite crucial recently, was that ECOWAS adopted the Political Declaration and Common Position against organised crimes. Such a declaration provided for a regional Counter Crimes Strategy and Implementation Plan to help member states fight terrorism. Besides, such a strategy ECOWAS also adapted strategies to smooth the progress of the implementation of regional, continental and international instruments in combating terrorism. It further provided a common operational framework a community-wide action to prevent and exterminate all terrorists' related acts (Onuoha, 2013:108; Bolaji, 2010). It is still not very clear in research circles whether the efforts at combating and suppressing organised crimes have achieved or reached its desired effects. It might be a subject of further research.

In Conclusion

Conflict analysis and management are not a new phenomenon to students of history and social sciences the world over. Conflicts either on organizational or international scale have received mediation and/or alternative dispute resolution in different parts of the world..This article focuses on West Africa as a zone where organised crime has been going on since the first decades of the 20th Century although much attention has been paid to terrorist organisations like the Boko Haram, AQIM and Janjaweed only recently. Using secondary and primary sources the article examines more detail the way crimes have been organised in the region in the colonial and post colonial periods. It examines the mobility of narcotics and prostitutes trafficking and y in the sub-region. More crucial to this article is the way regional and international organisations have attempted to mediate and bring to an end such conflict situation. From the sources gathered so far, the article maintains that narcotics and prostitution mobility have made West Africa the hub and the middle passage where drugs and prostitutes passed through to other parts of the world. This article while adding to the budding of literature of organised crimes has concluded that in order to better appreciate such a phenomenon. It is relevant to historicize it. The interconnectedness of West to the rest of world goes far beyond a thousand years. Within this period the region has been vulnerable for the mobility of drugs and prostitutes. This article has examined why and how this region became quite topical in mobility of drugs from other parts of the world.

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