

# The Risk Factors of West Africa Illicit Drug Trade

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**Abstract-** West Africa region has seized to be the traditional warehouse and transit routes for illicit drugs from the Andean stable to America and European drug markets. The influence of the culture of hard drugs has taken a more than a foothold in the region as production, manufacture/processing has passed the experimental stage and consumption is highly potent. The fear is that, the region may turn into theatre of conflict, crimes, violence and lawlessness which is even more favourable condition for the trade. Most scholars and extant literatures has focused on poor economies weak rule of law and corruption as the endogenous causative factors that has made the region vulnerability and flourishing of illicit drug trade, but importantly, deliberately overlooked the exogenous underpinnings such as high demand for drugs, and the vicious, desperate and determined traffickers to feed on this demand. The West and Europe comes to terms with reality, take responsibility, and develop a genuine and pragmatic approach to the issue of drug abuse without which the problem will persist for to eternity. One key area is refocusing on the current repressive drug control policy is imperative to a more humane approach is ideal. Caring for the needy and monitoring of children from onset and giving them proper training - the gap which has that led to the culture of drug abuse is important.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The current pattern of drug trafficking has not only turned West African transit axis into a key warehouse and a hub for the transshipment of regulated drugs from the Andean and Asia countries to America and Europe with inelastic demand but, where the production/manufacture, trafficking and abuse has become potent. This development is akin to the role Mexico played and continued to play in pushing drug to the US, and the greater and greater height reached, closed connection and alliance that Russia helped Columbia to distribute drugs in the 1990s to Europe, laundered drug money through their banks in the Caribbean and supply guns for the prolonged multi-sided civil war that kills an average of 3,000 Colombians a year as noted by Bruce Bagley an Andean specialist at the University of Miami (Juanita, 2000). Today, it is estimated that about 50 tons of cocaine with street value of US\$2 billion from Latin America are smuggled by boat or commercial flights through West Africa to the main entry point into America and Europe countries such as France, the UK, Spain and etcetera (UNODC, 2007).

Beyond the notion that West Africa is a transit zone the production and processing of illicit drug has been identified in some West African countries. For instance, in 2009, the authorities in Guinea Conakry alerted the UN drug office to the existence of elaborate laboratories and a vast cache of precursor chemicals, which could have been used to manufacture ecstasy drug worth as much as US\$ 170 million as well as to refine

cocaine (Nayanka, 2012). In Nigeria, the productions of banned substances such as Methamphetamine and Ephedrine type have been added into the illicit drug phenomenon calculus in the country. Only recently, NDLEA in collaboration with the USDEA discovered and destroyed clandestine laboratories at the monkey village in Iba area of Lagos State and some cities in the southeast of Nigeria. The new pathetic twist in this trend is that in Nigeria, a new dimension of abused has been added into the illicit drug abuse calculus. There is the availability and preponderant use of unconventional drugs hitherto unknown and uncovered by the United Nations (UN) classification. They include drugs such as 'soak and die', rubber glue, petrol, lizard dung and zakimi (a local tree plant) and sniffing of pit latrine early morning by youth especially in the northern part of the country.

The major well known global heroin production has been from two regions. First, the Golden Triangle in countries such as Burma, Laos and Thailand, and Second the Golden Crescent encompassing countries such as Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. Cocaine is produced in South America countries such as Columbia, Bolivia, and Peru among others, but Mexico serves mainly as a bridge to America markets. Similarly, West Africa states do not produce cocaine and heroin however its geographical location made it an attractive opportunity for South America traffickers to push this class of drugs through its region to America and Europe. The most prominent West African countries affected by international drug trafficking include, Cape-Verde, Guinea Conakry, Guinea-Bissau, Benin, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria, among others. This is a proof that drug smuggling is inherently flexible, moving and spreading from one country to another and from one region to the other and depends on the security measures in place, economic environments and the political will of states.

One adverse consequence of the region's illicit drug trend is that it has led to a rise in local consumption as a result of the spill-over effect from the transactions. Most times traffickers pay for drug service functionaries with products and not cash which they must necessary sort for buyers to sell and convert to cash. Thus the erstwhile traditional role of being a transit status has given way to a disturbing trend of production, or manufacture of amphetamine type drug in West African states. Atenga (1998) pointed that Africa has transformed from being a drug transit point because of its porous borders into being a large production and consumption region. This indicates that not only is the drug trade expanding, it has also created a veritable domestic consumption market in the continent. The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon noted that: West Africa is no longer just a transit route for drug traffickers but a growing destination, with more than a million users of illicit drugs. Rising consumption aggravates an already challenging public health environment and threatens socio-economic development (David, 2014).

The huge production, desperate distribution and excessive consumption of these illicit drugs are the greatest modern blights and threat confronting both advanced and developing countries. This however, does not preclude societies that do not produce them as they are equally experiencing exponential and ubiquitous rise in this insidious trend. The volume and magnitude of illicit drug activities has become alarming in West Africa and has posed a serious threat to humanity. The production and processing, the trafficking and even consumption of prohibited drugs were naturally the exclusive preserve of some countries. However, most countries in the region have now acquired the notoriety. Most designated illicit drugs today find their way to far and remotest parts of other societies that do not produce them. This robust underground commerce is undertaken by international drug traffickers in collaboration with local distributors.

The common features of these countries that are germane to the development of this trend include and not limited to these countries' proximity and their being sandwiched between producing and consuming countries; their weak and soft rule of law, near absence of government (power vacuum) lack of institutional power, poor and a desperate hopeless citizenry. It also includes porous and poorly managed borders, ill-equipped, undertrained, and venal law enforcement officials. This means that the region offers everything the traffickers require to conduct their business relatively free. The Colombian economist Francisco Thoumi aptly captured the scenario when he succinctly stated that:

Profitable illegal economic activity requires not only profitability, but also weak social and state controls on individual behaviour... a society where government laws are easily evaded and social norms tolerate such evasion". West Africa's high level corruption makes effective law enforcement difficult to occur, since the continent suffers from hunger and unemployment (Akyeampong, 2009).

That West Africa countries have become an epicentre for drug trafficking and abuse is not a new phenomenon, but the capacity and degree which these narcotics rings have grown into is still a matter of conjecture due to the clandestine nature of the transactions. There are many reasons for the region's attractiveness to drug trafficking. First, most of these countries are poor, have opened business climate, some are weak and soft and unable to acquire the apparatuses required and empower their state institutions to effectively monitor illicit drugs and control their territories that has led to drugs to flow in torrent. The region has since changed from being just a stockpiling/warehouse into a key hub where banned drugs are traded. Taken for example, Nigeria's history in involvement in drug trade is a long and soured one. Moreover, Ghana which was seen as one of African's brightest star, its story has changed. The once known gold coast has turned into coke coast where traffickers use cash to corrupt and peddle illicit drugs. Kwesi pointed that apart from West Africa becoming a major trans-shipment zone for narcotics, local production and consumption is also on the rise.

Further, Guinea Bissau's case is pathetic. Because of poverty, traffickers have infiltrated both the military and government whose officials are neck deep into drug trade. The

case of Mali is not different as Al Qaeda has long been suspected of using drug money to finance its operations.

The deviant culture and unguided use of drugs and the different patterns of dependence is a source of worry to many responsible governments of some countries due to their pernicious effects to the society. Though different measures have been taken by state authorities to limit the rising negative effects of illicit drug activities such as strict prohibitions, custodial sentences to offenders and fines in some cases, nevertheless, the problem persists. The preponderance of abuse of these drugs has resulted to several issues which include human health related problems, threat to social peace and security, and impediment to sustainable economic development. It is in this view that the United Nations (UN) General Assembly on June 10, 1998 identified and adopted a political declaration which stated thus:

Drugs destroy lives and communities, undermine sustainable human development and generate crimes. Drugs affect all sectors of society in all countries. In particular, drug abuse affects the freedom and development of young people, the world's most valuable asset. Drugs are a grave threat to the health and well-being of all mankind, the independence of States, democracy, the stability of nations, the structure of all societies, and the dignity and hope of millions of people and their families (Diane and James 2003).

The above declaration depicted the negative influences of hard drugs and society's perception towards it and concerns such as moral degeneration, economic disempowerment, and threats to social tranquillity and political stability they cause to societies. Although, governments of most West African states assumed they understand the problem of illicit drug activities in their countries and its magnitude, and politician use it as a campaign strategy during electioneering period however, their passive attitude towards it after gaining political power give course for concern. The aim of this paper therefore attempt to deduce why illicit drug production, distribution and abuse are so potent and why various governments in the region have failed to eliminate or curtail illicit drug activities in their states.

### **Factors that Influences West Africa Drug Trafficking**

Illicit drug activities in West Africa is reinforced and exacerbated by a large range of transnational dynamics and internal regional key challenges which include and not limited to the following:

## **II. PERSISTENT HIGH DEMAND FOR HARD DRUGS**

One major factor that has led to sustainable illicit drug trade is that the demands for these drugs have continued to soar. The elementary economic theory which has global resonance but varies in local emphasis and scale typically fit into illicit drug trade. It stated that the higher the demand so also will be the need to push supply. The high demand for hard drugs has led to a correspondent push in supply and consequently a higher profit for traffickers. The consumption of illegal drugs worldwide has reached an alarming rate. For instance, in 2006, there was an estimated 3.5 million cocaine users in Europe, which increased to 4.5 million in 2007 and further increased to 5.5 million in 2008, and is still growing daily.

The large consumption and demand for drugs worldwide has given a wide opportunity for traffickers to be deeply involved

in the trade which give them lucrative returns by servicing end users around the world. Davin (2000) Opined that cocaine traffic might prove to be a fixture in West Africa and transshipments emerged because demand is growing in Europe. Cannabis use has doubled and tripled in some parts of Western Europe since 2000. Traffickers are not only shifting traffic to service pre-existing demand, but are also establishing new routes for the growing drug markets. Interestingly, the UNODC (2007) noted that: Even if the entire supply of drugs could be eliminated at the source and seized along trafficking routes, there would still be millions of drug addicts looking for a way to satisfy their addiction (UNODC: World Drug Report 2007). Antonio (2008) observed that European countries consume large amount of cocaine. It is estimated that about four million people used about 36 thousand kilograms per year cocaine in Europe in 2006, on average. Based on these figures, European cocaine users would have to import a total of about 146 tons of cocaine from South America. Bruce (2008) noted that the heightened levels of drugs trafficking in Africa was due to the increase demand in the European Union from user population of 3.5 million that rose to 4.5 million over just one year, due to the geographical practicability of the trade. And that the annual global production increased to nearly 700 tons in recent years. For instance, the United States of America (USA) continued to consume by far more cocaine than any other nation in the world. The World Health Organisation (WHO) underscored this point that 16 percent of all Americans has used or tried drug at some point in their lifetime compared to New Zealand 4.3 percent the next country rated.

While the consumption of cocaine in US has remained more or less stagnant since 1995, on the streets of European cities drug use has continued to soar to an unprecedented level. UNDOC (2008) estimated that of the 14 millions who used cocaine annually more than 4 million live in Europe alone which tripled the number 10years ago, and 20 percent of them have tried cocaine at least once in their lifetime. Antonio Maria Costa opined that:

Drug traffickers found these new users in Western Europe. From the mid-1990s, cocaine markets in several European countries began to grow. In some areas, cocaine has become the drug of choice, as ecstasy and related substances become passé. For example, according to the British crime survey, the prevalence of cocaine use increase more than four-fold in the last decade, from 0.6% of the adult population in 1996 to 2.6% in 2007. Spain, Italy, and France have all seen cocaine use levels double or triple in recent years (UNODC, 2008).

This new trend has made drug traffickers to actively shun the dollar for the Euro as evidence by the confiscation of vast amounts of Euro from cocaine traffickers by drug enforcement agents across the world. The International Narcotics Control Bureau (INCB, 2007) noted that cocaine use has doubled and tripled in some parts of Western Europe since 2000 as cocaine market in the US matured, drug traffickers have turned to Europe. And that, over the past decades, cocaine use in Spain, the United Kingdom has grown three and four-fold respectively. For example, one kilogram of cocaine in Europe now sells for twice as much as in the US whose consumption has remained stagnant since 1995. However, on the street of European cities its use has continued to soar to unprecedented levels. The appetites

of local and western consumers for illegal drugs are creating some of the most dangerous situations in the society.

In Nigeria like any other West African country, historically, illicit drug trafficking became robust due to increased demand for it in America and Europe in the 1960s. For example, there was a period of time that the beetles came on board and a swing in London and smoking marijuana became particularly fashionable. In Nigeria local scene for instance, cannabis remains the consumer's delight which encourages its cultivation for both local consumption and for export. Lagos is one of the states that marijuana and other banned substances markets thrive. There is always a deluge of students, teenagers, prostitutes, streets urchins, police and military officers as well as foreigners (blacks and whites) flocking into dealers' stalls for their daily fix of the stuff. Illicit drug merchants cherish their business and it has not failed them. Most salary earners cannot live like them. They live like kings, big, loud and proud.

### III. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

The geographical location and the littoral status of some West Africa countries such as Cape-Verde, Guinea and Guinea Bissau, and Nigeria among others along the Atlantic coast that have open and direct high sea routes to drug source countries has particularly attracted drug traffickers to exploit it to their advantage. Most West Africa states are conveniently located and sandwiched between the Andean suppliers and Europe consumers. The close geographical proximity of West Africa countries to European markets which is about six hours away from Europe, and about 1,600 miles across the Atlantic from Latin America the source countries makes it strategically ideal location for drug smuggling. These created favourable condition which encourages and facilitates the flourishing of the resourceful and potentially violent South America cartels to push drugs with impunity.

Many West African states have myriads of coastal islands that are unguarded and unpatrolled with numerous hidden bays and beaches. Their land borders (most of it jungle areas) are porous and seaports and poorly managed, and airports lacked required personnel and security equipments to monitor movement of persons and goods which allows for the easy transshipment of drugs. The point being made here is that, illicit drugs crosses the Atlantic from their source countries in planes including turboprops outfitted extra bladder of fuel such as the Boeing 727 that took off from Columbia land in Mali desert controlled by terrorist and later burnt is an example (*New York Times*, 2011). Also, speed boats are used which goes to high sea and collect drugs from cargo ships and commercial fishing vessels and distribute to owners before they berth at the seaport without the knowledge of the state policing agents.

### IV. POOR ECONOMIES

The emergence of drug trafficking groups is a function of (global) economic imperatives. Many countries in West Africa have experienced and are ravaged by internal conflicts and wars; exploitation and depletion of its natural resources by imperialist masters and have become poor and weak. Others have been

made poor by the low prices of their agricultural products, and sometimes outright theft. Again, the devaluation of their national currencies and the introduction of structural adjustment programmes (SAP) which most of their leaders at the time knew little or nothing about left them worst. Today, some of these countries lacked viable economic alternatives especially among impoverished rural communities and are facing deep economic stagnation with serious governance gap. For example, Guinea-Bissau has continued to languish in extreme poverty since its independence from Portugal in 1974 and in 2013 ranked 176th out of 184 countries poorest by the U.N. Development Programme's 2013 Human Development Report. Therefore, drug trade is seen as mitigating opportunity or a panacea to their economic poverty. While some of these countries are said to be poor (naturally), that cannot be said with a country as Nigeria. Despite its abundance natural and enormous human resources, the Human Development Index (2006) ranked it the 154 position among African countries in terms of development assessments. It is clear that the large number of people live below (US\$ 1 dollar per day) poverty line. Since its independence, there have been great economic decline brought about by profligacy, inefficiency, mediocrity in the management of the economy by both military and civilian regimes. Consequently, there was a breakdown in essential social infrastructures and devalued national currency resulting to falling wages, increasing poverty, massive unemployment and general lack of opportunity for viable economic activities. The quest for survival against the background of limited employment prospects in the formal economy made undertaking in the informal economy inevitable. This is one of the things that drives illicit drug trafficking in Nigeria. Gail (2005) averred that Nigeria have been turned into humanitarian tragedy characterised by grand corruption, brutal civil conflicts, and criminal anarchy. Dictators have plunged the country into underdevelopment and poverty and natural resources have been turned into dirty affairs. Though, there was global economic convulsion, but specifically, owing to official profligacy, institutionalised corruption and recklessness in the management of state affairs in earlier times, the situation became worse.

Further, West Africa region is regarded as third world countries and its primary mainstay is agriculture conducted in most obsolete methods. Their economies are weak and poor compared to the advancement seen among their western counterparts. In Nigeria for instance, the ground-nut pyramids and cotton production in the north got vanished with the discovery of black gold. Cocoa production which proceeds was used to build the first and tallest building in Ibadan is given little attention. In the south-south and southeast zone palm oil and kernel were produced in enormous quantity however, this did not last long as the sector started suffering from neglect. There was the general mismanagement of the economy, inconsistent and poorly conceived agricultural policies, and corruption in the distribution of farm inputs such as fertilizers and lack of basic equipments such as tractors and storage infrastructures. The lack of storage system for preservation, and processing factories to convert these produce to finished products for future use, most of them are sold in haste and cheap to minimise waste.

Most economic trees turned over aged and obsolete varieties, some became stagnant and unproductive. Even when

good yield are harvested, they suffered from the vagaries and manipulation of foreign buyers who imposed competitive prices in both extracted raw materials, crude oil and gold and agricultural products such as cocoa, coffee and cotton from the region.

In addition, imports constraints limited the availability of many agricultural and food processing inputs for the whole sector. Most critically, in Africa land tenure system does not encourage wide and long-term investment in technology, and modern production system does not inspire the availability of rural credits. Kym (2009) opined that agricultural sector suffered from extreme low productivity that reflects reliance on antiquated methods. Equally, changes in consumption patterns (the slow growth in consumption of farm products, and the middle-income countries moved away from grains and other staple foods towards livestock and horticultural products) that also altered the net trade situation of developing countries has affected production. Again, this sector failed to keep pace with the country's population growth. For some Nigeria farmers, the move from cash crop production is attributed to failing income from primary commodities and high production cost in that area. Because of the volatility of prices in cash crops such as cocoa in the world market, farmers turned to grow cannabis as an alternative seen more profitable.

Moreover, with the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) as a means of economic constriction that requires deep cut in public spending as advised and imposed by the Briton wood institution – the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to Ibrahim Babangida that lacked understanding of the program and the intrigues involved brought more hardship to the citizenry. Akeampong (2005) pointed that most West African countries including Nigeria had collapsed due to economic recession by 70s, 80s and 90s after the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). This condition dispossessed the society of jobs as both public and private employees were laid-off. It aggravated the already worsened economic problems and plunged many individuals into acute financial problems. The formal sector employed few indigenous people and many educated people emigrated. Small and medium businesses and traders found it difficult to compete in an environment where inflation was high and competitors from the informal sector undercut prices. Within this scenario the economy of Nigeria became informal and progressively dominated by criminal networks.

Further, by the 1980s, the Nigeria state has reached a stage of virtual collapse economically and where the national currency (the naira) had collapsed, and free trade had open up the economy to cheap importation of goods from Asia, Taiwan and Dubai and all had become sources of Nigeria traders. The manufacturing industries in Nigeria collapsed as goods become uncompetitive and businesses had problems with liquidity, and people who had achieved their dreams of owning their own business were in danger of going down. Several small business owners and some big ones turned their attention to drug trafficking as well as others illegitimate trade to survive (Akeampong, 2005). Since then Nigerians started struggling economically while feeling the squeeze of poverty. Those who worked, their average salaries were low (underemployment) and unemployment became high. It is these conditions that created

desperate plights in its citizens and rendered them vulnerable to exploitation by foreign drug trafficking syndicates in collaboration with the locals. Cockayne and Williams (2007) noted that during the time of Nigeria economic downturn in the early 1980s, many students studying abroad were no longer able to receive support from their families so they turned to drug business which provided them with alternative source of funding for their school programmes. It was at this time that the West Africa global drug trade developed and took roots.

#### V. PERVASIVE CORRUPTION AS A SOCIAL CONTEXT PHENOMENON

Corruption is now an ingrained social phenomenon in West African states therefore, it is difficult for employees from within the system to act outside the context. Pervasive corruption (though many scholars have argued that it was never part of the regions cultural heritage but the influence of foreign culture) has played an important role in its flourishing and remained one major challenge in stemming illicit drugs activities in the region. Drug dealing is very lucrative so therefore traffickers will make irresistible monetary offer to public officials to enable them conduct their trade. It is the gains made from the drug trade that make traffickers viciousness and their modus operandi characterised by one deadly philosophy which is: plata o plomo (silver or lead). In Columbia it means “take the bribe or take a bullet (Winifred 1999). This has come to permeate all facets of illicit drugs societies. If given an open choice among those in line of policing, the silver will be more preferable and in fact has been more preferable. Cockayne and Williams (2009) asserted that West Africa exhibit a level of corruption which suggests that government official are willy-nilly once they are provided with the right carrots and sticks. They collude with both local and international drug trafficking organisations. With little oversight and accountability many officials succumb to traffickers’ inducement. International Narcotics Control Board (INCB, 2010; 2011) averred that powerful and wealthy organized crime groups corrupt and intimidate public officials who facilitate the illicit drug trade. Corruption undermines global efforts in the fight against the illicit drug problem. Despite the best efforts of individual governments and collective actions, drug trafficking remains a serious cause for concern worldwide. This is because primarily, corruption undermines international efforts to eliminate the multi-billion dollar illicit trade in narcotics. The police and other criminal justice officials despite stepping up the war on drug trafficking, they find the odds stacked against them when they confront some of the wealthy and powerful syndicates involved in this organised crime. It is this scenario that Akeampong noted that:

The truth is that corrupt government begets a corrupt society and vice versa. Nigeria official’s corruption is legendary. When Abacha died in a dramatic fashion, members of his family held huge amount of money. His son reportedly had \$800 million in \$100 bills packed in suitcases. This was not legitimate wealth. Ordinary Nigerians who do not have access to the resources of the state, and who are struggling to get by in a decline economy by desperate measures in desperate times have to indulge in such measures which included internet fraud, prostitution, and drug trafficking” (Akeampong, 2005).

He further noted that with the rot starting at the top and spreading across the social fabric many Nigerians feel fully entitled to try their luck where any opportunity arises. According to Tullis and Painter (1994), the fourth dimension to be added to this standard analysis is the connection of corruption and criminality which occurs when administrative and political personnel such as drug enforcement agents become allied to the drug trade. Since government monopolized the law the traffickers will seek the non-enforcement of the law. So those in charge of the law must be bribed because they cannot be entirely bullied, ignored or by-passed.

#### VI. HIGH PROFILE CITIZENS’ INVOLVEMENT IN DRUG TRADE

Generally, the success of illicit drug transactions depended on the political leaders’ will, the ethical dispositions of the society, and individual’s entrepreneurial skills and capacity to crime. The current nature of illicit drug war is not the type that can achieve anything because at a significant level, it is being made difficult by the very persons who ought to fight against it.

And given that drug trafficking groups have the ability to change dynamics, form alliances and reshape relationships with the political class, high level elected public officials and security personnel and their ability at cooptation, developing diplomatic relations with the business community, and equally have skills in maintaining relationships with ordinary citizenry in countries and across the region, the case is made worst.

Since the beginning of illicit drug business the best-known drug traffickers have been related in a special way to the elites or high-ranking politicians at the corridor of power. This was the precursor of drug trafficking that emerged in larger scale in the region. It is difficult to think that illicit drug trade can succeed without the compromise of the elites or those at the top echelon of government. The successes in drugs smuggling by individuals/groups are those that have connection with the agency’s senior or government officials. Successful illicit drug trade cannot emerge from the ordinary rung of the society but most seriously developed from within the power structures which include the political class and the elites with the protection of law enforcement agencies. Indications have also emerged that major involvement in illicit drug trade involved high profile figures, privileged and influential citizens of the country including senior military officers and the elites. This gives credence to the assertion made by Micheal Chossudovsky that:

The trader can only prosper if the main actors involved in narcotics have political friends in high places. As legal and illegal undertaking are increasingly intertwined, the dividing line between business people and criminals, politicians and members of the international establishment has tainted the structure of the state and the role of its institutions, including the military (Global Economic Crisis: The Great Expression of the XXI Century, Montreal: Global Research, 2010 pp. 195-196).

Thomas Friedman noted that a hidden hand in the drug market will never work without a hidden fist or as the Russians will puts it: ‘krysha’. Meaning a web of protector-and facilitator-drawn from business, finance, organised crime and secret world of intelligence (Thoumi, 2009). Robert Gelbard the Assistant Secretary of State for international narcotics matters said Nigerians that are involved in the drug networks are not random

mules, or individuals who are doing this on a freelance basis. Rather, they are people working for well-organized groups with the protection of government officials Niki (2008).

The state of Guinea Bissau offers a paradigmatic and unprecedented insight into an explosive state of West Africa drug trade involving high profile political elites and military measured from any perimeters, and it shed light on the nature and spread of the phenomenon across the region. It is an example where alliances between drug traffickers and state authority are commonplace, and has been labelled narcostate by the UNODC. For example, when planes arrives loaded with cocaine, it is the presidential guards that secured the cargo and most of the deals are conducted inside the first lady's private residence or the president's VIP salon car at the international airport to avoid detection. The cocaine is then sent to Europe in the country's diplomatic pouch. High-ranking military and government officials have been directly involved in the drug trade (drug have been found at military bases and seizures made by police disappeared).

In Ghana, Sarpong the Executive Secretary of Narcotic Control Board (NACOB) is worried that Ghanaians with contact in the Foreign Ministry could obtain a pass to the lounge from the State Protocol Office that entitled the traveller to be driven from the lounge to the plane in a protocol vehicle without their persons or luggages undergoing security screening. He accused the government of complicity in drug trafficking noting that traffickers are using the airport VIP lounge to avoid searches. He had questioned why these middle class travellers such as bank managers, pastors, and their wives being given service passports and access to the lounge that was traditional privileges reserved for cabinet ministers (Furuta-Toy, 2009).

The case in Mali is not different as many of its citizens from north and south are deeply angry that notables local figures from the political class and the military were believed to be involved in the lucrative drug trade whom they suspected working with jihadist group in the areas they control in the north and also passes through the parts of the country under government control especially in the region near the border with Mauritania. Mali political system is rotten from the head-down before the tipping of the state collapse. For example, its soldiers are directly involved or complicit in at least two cocaine flights that landed in Mali from 2002 - 2010 (Andrew, 2013). Again, the former president Amadou Toumani Toure was the first to benefit from the drug trade with the hope to leave the country to enjoy the fortune he has amassed. There are ample evidence that the Boeing 727 scandal dubbed 'air cocaine' that landed in the northern desert and drug offloaded was done with the complicity of local government officials and even mayors. The rot set in when the local and national elites started benefitting from drug trafficking and kidnapping for ransom. Though illicit drug trade existed in northern Mali and the Sahel region even before the rule of Toure, but the drug trade became ingrained in the very fabric of the Malian state when the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) the forerunner of AQIM, was implanting itself in the north. The organisation and its commanders such as Mokhtar Belmokhtar had social ties to local populations including illicit drug trade (Andrew, 2013). At this, they concluded that Salafism only served as an ideological cover for

organising drug trafficking which is cocaine and hashish that added to the profit from taking western citizens hostage.

The case in Nigeria is not different as very senior and high ranking official in the military have been implicated in the drug trade. For instance, Ellis (2009) revealed a significant case from the early period of West African marijuana trafficking which involved a 33 years old Nigeria woman called Iyabo Olorunkoya found guilty and convicted in 1974 of importing 78 kg of marijuana. The woman was connected to Lagos high society members and named her accomplices to be two Nigerian army officers. One of them was retired Brig. Benjamin Adekunle known to the press as 'black scorpion' and was a hero in Nigeria army during the Biafra war. Although he was suspended from duty because of the case and never resumed his military career however, his alleged role was not revealed. Furthermore, among the many scandals of Gen. Ibrahim Babangida was the murder by parcel bomb of the Newswatch Editor Dele Giwa. It is believed in Nigeria that his death is connection with a former drug courier one Gloria Okon who had worked for her principals in very senior positions of the state bureaucracy or for their families. It is noted that from 1985-1993, the country's role in global narcotics trade grew tremendously.

Furthermore, a former member of Nigeria senate was arrested in New York for heroin trafficking and consequently convicted. The said senator had earlier purportedly offered \$20 million of his own money as a patriotic gesture to pay a debt owned by Nigeria airways bus. It could also be recalled that in 2008, Senator Nuhu Aliyu a retired Assistant Inspector General (AIG) of police raised an alarm on the floor of the Nigeria senate that he could identify a handful of his colleagues in the house who had been involved in drug deals and whose cases he had personally investigated as a senior police officer (Etagene, 2010). In Sierra Leone, drug trafficking has since become part of the society culture and is difficult to estimate the volume of drug being trafficked there by high profile citizens. This situation was made worst during the countries' civil war. The ECOMOG soldiers were figured very well in the trade. In 2008, a minister of transport and aviation was dismissed for his alleged involvement in the landing of an air plane carrying 700 kilograms of cocaine in Lungi the only international airport. Mezittelli Antonio head of United Nations of West Africa said the amount of drug trafficking in Sierra Leone is not known but the 700kg seized indicated that it is a major hub and noted that the seizure was only a tip of the ice bergs (Alpha, 2008). Further evidence that senior citizens are involvement in narcotics trade is when Gilbrilla Kamara travelled under protection in the convoy provided by Guinea Bissau president's wife – Zainab (Robert, 2010).

Similarly, in the republic of Guinea, President Lansara Conte established an interest in drug trade after a successful coup in 2008 (Ellis 2009). The existence of elaborate laboratories and vast cache of precursor activities used for the manufacture of ecstasy drugs as well as refine products are abound (New York Times, 2011). More precisely put, politicians are suspected of being directly involved in illegal trade, controlling it or receive protection fees for the business to thrive. Within the context of this scenario, freelance or outsiders would not have any chance to build up their own networks and succeed. Again, because the drug trade has infiltrated the highest level of government and the

military officials are directly involved earned it its name as narcostate (Gilbert 2011).

## VII. DEARTH OF LOGISTICS

It can hardly be controverted that the West Africa states are experiencing booming illicit drugs activities which is a reflection that the task is more than what these countries can handle. Their antidrug agencies are plagued by litany of problems such as shortage of dedicated workforce, logistics and poor budgeting. The organisational and logistical assets that drug syndicates can potentially bring to bear in operations are extensive and sophisticated in comparison to those available to antidrug agencies. The war on illicit drug trafficking at the local streets level is almost impossible due to the huge discrepancy between the available resources and that required by policing agencies so it is needless to discuss the maritime front giving the assets needed and the recurrent costs involved in undertaking and maintaining such ventures.

Jonathan (1996) noted that among other failings, the government did not properly fund its own national drug control strategy in 1995. The inability of the agency to function effectively and brings under control the menace of illicit drug is because it is undermanned, under-equipped, and under-budgeted avertedly or inadvertently by the federal government. It is blunt and unwieldy, with platoons of untrained and poorly trained officers with mix and uneven level of skills, knowledge, perceptions, motivations and interests. It cannot confront local street drug traffickers needless to mention international organised trafficking groups. The institutional wellbeing of these organisations continues to be of extremely low priority for the government. Candace (2008) opined that shortage of resources, limited dedicated counter drug forces, and a lack of consistent adequate pay forces the officers to accept bribes to facilitate drug shipments for traffickers. Peter (2008) noted that lack of funding for interdiction and interception is a problem in combating the drug trade. He noted that whereas the number of illicit narcotics vessels and illicit aircraft sorties – one hundred and sixty respectively, the two thousand eighty hundred nautical miles (nm) of coastal line from Nigeria to Cape Verde would demand intensive surveillance and monitoring of these zones. Liana (2009) added that traffickers are likely to face relatively lower risk of monitoring and apprehension by policing agent due to lack of operational logistical such as transport and communications systems. There is also limited maritime, airport, and land surveillance interdiction equipments and human capacity for border post security and goods shipment controls. All these impede tracking and monitoring of illicit drugs.

While Ghanaian security officials lacked capacity in obtaining and analyzing intelligence, surveillance techniques, and ability to investigate and prosecute complex cases such as financial crimes (US embassy cables, 2010), their Nigeria counterpart has the basic training, but are hampered by issues of sentiments such as ethnicity and religion which influences promotions and postings and are only given to loyal officers/relations that most times do not have the competence for such responsibility thereby inducing mediocrity in official functions.

Further, given Nigeria resources, it is difficult to explain why its antinarcotics agency is deliberately being hamstrung. For instance, in 2013, the sum of 100million naira (about US\$611,000) only was allocated to the entire drug agency with formation across the thirty six states of the federation including the capital city Abuja and it was given in piecemeal over the year. Further, akin to the Nigeria problem, the Ghana drug czar Sarpong said that the Mills Administration has so far failed to provide adequate resources to NACOB. He underlined that Ghana's drug force is understaffed, underfunded, and under-resourced. All branches of Ghana's civilian law enforcement community are under resourced hence its capabilities are limited. There is lack of equipment and training and the ability to adequately compensate personnel. He is worried that each time he arranged a controlled delivery in Cote d'Ivoire, the drugs would quickly return up back to Ghana. Similarly, drugs originating from Guinea could travel through Mali, Burkina Faso and enter Ghana from the north undeterred. All these cases typified and clearly illustrate the difficulty in effectively policing the inflow of drugs across and highlight the region's nature of illicit drug trafficking. The enormous cost of policing this zone presents a real the security challenge either through the maritime sector, air and land borders. It is by far beyond the capability of individual countries to undertake.

In the 21st century, logistics touches on every aspects of the organization's operational specialty. It is the process by which an organization understands and makes use of strategic planning and coordination, making use of new and better tools, good common sense to achieve its goals. It also means acquiring those things that are necessary for the survival and prosperity of the organization, making certain that each step of the process has all of the prerequisites needs fulfilled for the delivering of services to the citizens. By this it means, the purchase of those components, acquiring or procuring any material provisions or supply such as office equipments, vehicles, work uniforms and paraphernalia that comprise essential tools for delivering its services. Logistics goes beyond strategic planning and resource management, but also includes how organization goes about their day-to day running of the organisation. This enormous task requires an intimate knowledge of the process, design, and process control.

In very recent times, there have been increased in policing by Britain and America antidrug forces in the traditional Caribbean routes curtailing it's used by drug traffickers. Nonetheless, the South America cocaine traders may be reacting to the saturation of the North America markets which has resulted in the strategic shift in drug movement, or increased police patrolling the Caribbean in Central America and in the Pacific Ocean that have made those routes significantly more perilous by interstates cooperation that improved maritime and aerial interdiction as noted by UNODC (2007), and notwithstanding the versatility of transnational criminal organisations for their well known penchant in finding and exploiting vulnerable regions of the world to further their illicit activities, the growing importance of Latin America drug gangs would not have succeeded in taking advantage of and making use of West Africa weak political environment if the necessary logistics and human resources were put in place.

### VIII. WEAK STATES AND RULE OF LAW

The legacy of a soft or weak state pervades West Africa countries. A major characteristic of a weak or soft state is the near absence of the rule of law. A weak state is one where formal rules (laws officially stated, administrative rules and practices) are applied capriciously and in a lax rather than in a rigorous and consistent manner. They experience weak social control on individual behaviour, government laws are easily evaded and social norms tolerate such evasion.

Often, policies decided on are not enforced and the authority even when framing these policies is reluctant to place obligations on people to obey them. Within this context, illegality generates competitive advantage where weak rule of law exist and has provided a fertile ground for all manners of crimes including illicit drug trafficking. The inability of these nations's judicial system to decisively deal with drug offenders is obviously one of the reasons for its resurgence. Generally, there is a reluctance or inability of government to apply effective measures against crimes, and the weakness of the criminal justice system hampers response to crime.

Myrdal Gunner in his study of poverty noted that incompetence of leaders is a major problem. And that some people assumed government responsibilities in poor (West Africa) countries they cannot resolve. Most countries in the region lacked sufficient resources to ameliorate poverty and advance national development. Weak or soft state comprises of all the various types of social indiscipline manifested in legislation deficiencies particularly in law observance and enforcement, widespread disobedience by public officials on various levels to rules and directives handed down to them, and often their collusion with powerful persons whose conduct they should regulate. There is always a discrepancy between law and practice. Further, he opined that such softness is related to corruption. Corruption reduces government effectiveness by undermining the legitimacy of public authority, generating political instability, disrupting public planning and policymaking, and aggrandizing an incompetent and corrupt bureaucracy which further reduced government effectiveness. Presumably, any state exhibiting social indiscipline, lawlessness and public impropriety could qualify as a soft state (Barbara, 2010). Usually, there is no consequence for wrong doers or absence of severe punitive measures especially against high profile citizens and those connected to the political class no matter the gravity of the offence. Antonio Maria Costa opined that:

On the part from their source to destinations, illicit drugs do not necessarily follow the most direct routes. Factors other than geography enter into the calculus of the most 'efficient' trajectory to take. Weak states have a gravity of their own. Law enforcement in these nations are typically under-resourced and subject to corruption. For a variety of reasons, Africa is home to some of the weakest states, in terms of their capacity to enforce the rule of law in their territories, in the world (UNODC 2008).

Cockayne (2009) pointed that the relatively weak state capacity, weak-drug control and low law enforcement capacity of Nigeria have made it a soft target for drug trafficking organisations from Columbia, China, and Lebanon. Drug trafficking is rooted in weak rule of law were genuine lack of capacity to function effectively is identified. A country where the tax based is minuscule and corruption flourishes in an

environment where incentives for obeying the law are sparse and the likelihood of detection is minimal, crimes flourish.

West African countries lack a functioning criminal justice system to respond to either the drug trafficking or other criminal enterprises including official corruptions. In some instance, it could be as result of shortage of highly skilled personnel needed to assume the roles of prosecutors and judges and the shortage of funds to retain them or outright lack of courts for crime adjudication. In some other cases, courts faces large case loads, poor pay, and difficult working conditions which most times results to strikes, some in the local judiciary are lured or coerced into cooperation with well resourced drug trafficking hence they have many instances of questionable judicial decisions in drug cases over the years. Those judges who remain honest are avoided through side payments to the clerks in charge of case allocation. Equally, judicial oversight is difficult to maintain in a states that do not have Federal High courts and barely afford judges themselves. As a result of all these shortcomings, the dilemma is, even assuming the ability and the will to arrest drug traffickers is little, and the capacity to successful prosecution is weak.

Furthermore, law enforcement agencies and prosecutors in this region generally lacked the capacity to undertake most complex investigations and prosecutions. Particularly, while judicial and prosecutorial capacity is very limited in Ghana, judges in Nigeria abuse of its discretionary powers is rampant. However, the case of Guinea Bissau is worst because of the absence of the essential infrastructure for arrested traffickers to undergo a successful procedural justice system. Sandra Valle observed that when they arrest a suspect they have to take the person by car to the police station since they do not have official vehicles. The states lack the capacity to conduct a trial due to lack of the necessary infrastructure and trained personnel. Even when a trafficker is sentenced, such a person might not serve jail term as the country does not have a functioning prison. What they have is simply an opened house without security that is passed for a prison in Guinea Bissau (UNODC 2008).

### IX. AMORPHOUS AND ANONYMOUS DRUG TRAFFICKERS STRUCTURE

Another characteristic of West Africa drug traffickers that posed a major challenge to antinarcotics agencies is the amorphous and anonymous structure in which they operate. Their modus operandi is diverse and complex which enables them to play and continue to play active and extensive role in the global illegal drug business unnoticed. They are highly adaptive individuals and organisations which varied in structure, hierarchies, networks or self-contained independent cells. There are vertically integrated or nimble independent traffickers which make them much more difficult to detect and be infiltrated. They constantly change and employ new tactics which enables them to flourish and expand locally and internationally.

West Africa drug trade is characterised by a distinctive structure developed over the decades. They have highly flexible mode of operations that constantly form and reformed their business relationships from among a wide pool of acquaintances. The modus operandi closely resembles adhococracy system. It is the ability to fuse experts drawn from different fields into

smoothly functioning adhoc project teams particularly suited to the modern business environment. This system is in contrast to the more corporate style relationships of classic American mafias that have exerted powerful influence or popular ideas about how organised crime works.

Drug syndicates in West Africa do not only operate underground but remained loosely organised. They are not large and hierarchically structured but, are in small groups or individuals revolving around loose and fluid network based on personal contacts. Various drug cartels specialised in separate processes along the supply chain which is often localised to maximise efficiency and minimised damages cause by law enforcement. The chain ranges from low level street dealers who may be individual drug users themselves, through street gangs and contract-like intermediaries, up to multinational empires that rival government in size (Wikipedia). Even when interdiction forces make the necessary efforts to counter certain of their directional patterns they developed more complicated and varied travelling methods. MajiriOghene (2008) noted that what is significant about the cartels is that the criminal networks do not have structured identities as those in South East Asia and Latin America. Their identities are usually vague and operate through a complex system where actual carriers are never exposed to barons. Most of them tend to operate alone or in small groups resulting to the expansion of illegal drugs activities with a worldwide distribution system. For instance, those dominated by the Nigeria traffickers, their models are seen as being distinct, highly flexible individuals and dominates West Africa networks. These models eschewed the traditional hierarchical forms associated with the Italian mafia and other loyalty, kinship, and ethnicity based criminal organisations (such as the Japan yakuza) in favour of a higher risk higher profits system of one-off joint ventures and transaction-based partnerships. This approach is the dominant paradigm in a highly connected transnational illicit economy. The model emerged from inter-ethnic relations in an informal economy conducted in hinterland that is beyond the reach and observation of colonial powers of the state.

Many Nigeria drug barons keep a low profile in order not to attract attention. At another level, a drug baron may work with a second layer operator known as striker (usually, is one who can organised or strike deals quite likely or a former courier who has entered the business at the lower level and work his way up and acquiring an excellent networks of contacts). The use of independent specialists provides a vital cut-out between the top level of operation and the humble courier. A courier is normally ignorant of the name or even the very existence of the baron who is the real initiator of the deal. This is one of the features of Nigeria system that makes effective drug detection difficult and most times impossible (if the courier is arrested, s/he cannot be prevailed to give vital information to law enforcement agents). In Sierra Leone, traffickers operate undercover as business tycoons uses different types of business ventures such as airlines, fishing and ferry services as fronts to move drugs to their destinations which might not be known to the public but, not without the compromise or conspiracy of the security force such as the police.

## X. YOUTH BULGES AND UNEMPLOYMENT

The demographic composition of the youth in West Africa is growing at astronomical rate and is inversely related to the availability of employment opportunities in the region. Most of them live under precarious situation with little or no family support or guardians and are homeless, left to fend for themselves scavenging for food from the dustbins a situation that devalues human life. They receive little or no education or acquire useful skills that would enable them engage in viable economic activities and contribute to national development.

West African youth bulge is coming against the against the backdrop of endemic poverty, ignorance, global economic downturn that has resulted to declining overseas aids, private remittances, increasing impact of climate change, coupled with corruption by the governing elites. These conditions are the reasons for the whirlpool of unemployed youth that have become a market and recruitment grounds as foot-soldiers to perpetrate crimes hence they are ready and willing to undertake risks and work for a price that undercuts meaningful labour value. It is this situation that has created desperate times for many young men and women leading to desperate measures including participation in intercontinental drug trafficking. Wealth created encourages the creation of additional wealth so also poverty tends to be self-reinforcing. The region has low level of foreign investments, and economic opportunities have remained limited. Under this circumstance many citizens see the development of indigenous drug trafficking organisations and influx of illegal transnational networks as a major boon. The influx of drug trafficking in the last several years coincided with periods of economic dislocation and recession.

Over two third of these youth do not want to live in their places of births, frequently migrating to fast growing urban cities in search of better economic prospects even when unschooled and lacked the necessary skills to secure well-paid jobs. These influxes (rural-urban drift) to towns and cities have resulted in the shortages of accommodations, and have put pressure on social infrastructures and services such as electricity, transportation system and security. Consequently, it has led to the growth of slumps, camps and squalors alongside these urban areas with substandard conditions, and has become hotpots for crimes, preying on other local dwellers. For instance, in Nigeria, the numbers of ghettos and hotspots have developed and keep increasing everyday in urban areas such as Kano, Maiduguri in the north to Port Harcourt, Warri, Benin down south, through Onitsha and Aba in the east, and areas such as Mushin, and Lagos-Island in the west. Similarly, in Sierra Leone, Lumley Street in the centre of Freetown and Krootown in the west have become ideal places where bored and frustrated idle youth use drugs. These Lumpen youth formed the bulk of the fighting forces during the war which amputated people's limbs, burning down houses and looting properties (Alpha, 2008).

Equally, anonymity of city life has developed thereby dissolving the erstwhile bond between people. The pristine traditional social organisations have been weakened resulting to immoral and delinquent behaviours such as human trafficking and ritual killings, kidnappings and armed robbery in the cities including selling of banned substances such as cocaine, heroin cannabis. The point here is that since most of these settlements are unplanned, it is difficult for the law enforcement officers to

police and monitor these areas that lacked access road infrastructure. Again, the chaotic expansion of urban space has significantly reduced the capacity of national governments and security agencies to police most of these areas. Richard Norton termed these as 'feral cities' that are characterised by the inability of the state to exercise control, impose law and order, or make adequate provision for the citizens. Crowded areas of Mushin, Agege, Lagos Island, Aba, Kano, among others in Nigeria is an example. Cockayne and Williams (2009) remarked that urbanisation has opened up fissures that drug trafficking has rolled in with ease. This rapid and large-scale urbanization broke down traditional norms and values which govern social relations in rural life. Different forms of delinquency became permissible, lowering barriers to deviance and leaving anomic youth seeking source of fellowship and identity. Gail (2005) noted that rapid and unplanned urbanisation creates conditions for the escalation of crimes. In many West Africa countries despairing young males living in terrible conditions are the 'shock troops' of crimes and political instability which is a security threat to societies.

#### XI. PERCEPTION OF ILLICIT DRUG TRADE AS NORMAL BUSINESS

There is a liberal group in the world cum West Africa which holds the view that drug trafficking is an enterprise conducted like any other business in society that involved both willing buyers and sellers and therefore should be allowed to thrive according to the dictate of market forces which is an essential aspect of capitalism. In other words, drug trafficking is seen by this group including some government officials as creating wealth and providing employment opportunities to people rather posing a national security threat to their countries. Interestingly, there is little or no stigmatization attached to drug producers, traffickers and dealers. To them, they could not rationalise why somebody should be punished for simply carrying drugs from one part of the world to the other in an effort to earn a living. Ellis (2008) noted that some people hold the belief that since the drug trade involves willing buyers and sellers at every stage of the chain, it is essentially a legitimate form of commerce. As for the fact that it is illegal, they viewed the black market as the only way to redistribute wealth from those it is concentrated. They argued further that, since the mainstream commercial channels are effectively occupied and job opportunities are highly constricted to a few privilege ones with connections they should be alternative strategy for survival. They could not rationalise the criminalisation of drug trade and the drive to end it. They also viewed the drug war as nothing but a cover for an all attempt to keep less developed countries within the ambit of the super powers' control. But, they propped corrupt and brutal ruling class which owes much of their wealth to illicit drug trade and other forms of underground transactions. Deirdre (1999) opined that for decades the drug trade is a product of capitalism. It attracts capital in the same way any other business does by promising a generous return on investment. It is nothing more than an extreme form of profiteering – one that ranks along with arms trade, prostitution, illegal oil bunkering, slavery, and human trafficking and is directly profiteering from human misery which the western countries perpetrate.

That narcotic trade have grown into a huge industry that relies not only on desperados characters portrayed in movies but even more importantly on the prosaic administrators and managers of legal businesses like banks and brokerage houses. They laundered hundreds of billions that are made from illicit drug profits. Drug money laundering organisations are established to ensure the cash flow to these illegal businesses.

Besides, economic benefits are generated from drug industry. The production of illegal drugs like any other commodity requires a series of activities and processes to convert raw materials (coca, marijuana leaves, poppy) into final consumable goods that can be delivered to the consumers. This production chain passes through several stages including the growth, manufacture, transportation, and distribution. During these processes it generates economic benefits that affect the entire economy. Employment is the most visible outcome of drug business opportunities, cash flows and investments. There are labour intensive because when they are ready for harvesting peasants farmers have to guard the drug fields to avoid being robbed. Again, the harvesting of these crops requires a large amount of workers because it has to be done by hand without the help of modern agricultural technology. Besides the peasants farmers the other common drug-related occupations include chemists, lawyers, managers of laboratories, merchants, transporters, private security. Vigilant agents are hired by the drug industry in order to guarantee not only the appropriate completion of contracts but, also to protect and give personal security to drug smugglers.

#### XII. DOUBLE STANDARD/HYPOCRITICAL ATTITUDE IN DRUG WAR

Many scholars, journalists, policing officers and global trend watchers are privy (regardless how activities are hidden or information suppressed) to the fact that those that have championed the war on illicit drug activities are found complicit in the trade. For instance, for over time, America has been in the forefront of illicit drug war spending trillions of dollars of tax payers' money to prosecute. However, indications have emerged that its first class citizens (presidents), top companies and their top executives, respected security outfits such as Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the military and police are involved or found complicit in the illicit drug trade around the world and they have not been able to shirk the various allegations against them. For example, the Bush family involvement in drug trade is an open secret however it is little known that some major American companies are used as fronts to push drugs. A good example is the Halliburton Corporation's Brown and Root is the Bush and Cheney drug empire which played a key role in maintaining dominance of half a billion dollar a year global drug trade and its profits. Dick Cheney the CEO of Halliburton and largest shareholder (US\$45.5m) saw to it that the success is maintained by providing non official cover for CIA agents (Michael, 2001). Further, the testimony of the Assistant Treasury Secretary Salvatore R. Martoche on October 5, 1989, report to the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics, and International Operations noted that Bush administration officials admitted that US banks laundered an enormous sum of \$110 billion a year in drug money (New York Times, 1989).

However, the investigation of Citibank's private banking practices never found the word drugs or controlled substances in the article, which lumps together private accounts the bank set up for a number of wealthy people. At least one of the cases mentioned was an offshore account that Citibank setup for drug cartel leader Raul Salinas, which was for the laundering of his drug money. But, the SWAT teams never broke into the offices of these white-collar dope pushers or other successful bootleggers and charged them. It is also known that Kennedy's millions originated from the illegal liquor trade. However, that kind of treatment is reserved for the street dealers who take the risks and get peanuts.

Furthermore, even Reagan's administration that launched the drug war in 1970, they were several testimonies in 1986 of trials of drug traffickers that revealed innumerable instances that drugs were being loaded on planes flown from Central America after delivering arms to the Colombia Contras and unloaded at military bases in US with the cooperation of the military and CIA personnel. One such group was Adolfo Chamorro's Contra group supported by CIA and helped transport drugs into US (Potter and Bullington, 1987). Again, the most respected former president Bill Clinton was seen as a strategic when he eliminated the wasted travel time for heroin with the destruction of the Serbian and Kosovo and installed the KLA as a regional power which opened direct line from Afghanistan to Western Europe. The lesson is that Columbia grown opium could be smuggled to New York through the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico – a virtual straight line that shortened the traditional smuggling routes, reduce costs and increase profits and eliminate competition (Michael, 2001).

In addition, many people do not see any difference with today's drug trafficking from that conducted by British merchants that resulted in the opium war with China in 1800 to correct its trade imbalances of the period. The horror, carnage, destruction of human lives and properties and anguish of the war can only be best imagined. The United Kingdom forced China to allow British merchants to trade in opium with the general population of China. Drug was illegal by imperial decree but, smoking opium became common in the 1800s due to increasing importation by British merchants which an estimated two million Chinese became addicted to drug. The British have not offered any apology or set any reparation to the Chinese people till date.

### **Way Forward**

The impetus for the criminalization of individuals and other states involved in drug production, trafficking when the same structural economic conditions that prompted the British to go to war with China (worst in recent times) to sell drugs and balanced it economic deficits, and for the Americans (state and non-state actors) to push drug as part of capital accumulation leaves a sour and disgusting taste in the mind of intellectuals. The inherent contradictions for the West and Europe not to criminalize their involvement in drug trafficking while criminalizing other's involvement is untenable and can never be a solution to the problem. It undermines every rational ideology and morality to criminalize, condemn and punish the activities of others while permitting graciously such acts within its folds.

The issue of drug and its use has been in the world as old as the world itself or at least not less than 5 thousand years ago

around the global and it is only in the late 20th century that Africa became affected with the trend as a result of global dynamics such pattern of people migration, globalisation and economic liberalisation. Africa may be affected by the trend, and drug syndicates posing peace threat to the region as drug and arms are having symbiotic relation. In many areas where they operate, they end up inciting and arming disgruntled elements to launch a rebellion against government or groups and because the drug trade becomes more lucrative in an atmosphere of instability where security mechanisms are weakened.

Illicit drug problem is not created by anybody and is beyond any person, group or countries in the region. So drug trade will always thrive no matter how heavenly the system of rule adopted, or how angelic are the rulers or security systems in place. Until and unless the West and Europe countries admits that they are the root cause of the drug problem anywhere in the world due to their unquenchable appetite for drugs, greed for money and luxurious life style, the problem will persist for eternity. Also, drug trade has thrived courtesy of capitalism in the same manner arms and human trafficking including illegal oil bunkery that has done so much harm to the region.

West Africa region do not have and will never have the needed recurrent financial capacity, equipments and human technical expertise to monitor its vast region from the infiltration of drug traffickers especially given its current (precarious) fiscal austerity against competing needs. Therefore, what needs be done is for the West and Europe to brace up to genuinely take the challenge and responsibilities to address the issue. Shifting blames and derogative names calling such as criminal gangs and corrupt official will not solve the problem, or developing and promoting 'viable economic alternative' will not sufficed, and is prone to exhaustion. They are window dressing that will not solve the problem.

Illicit drug trafficking have thrived because of lack of genuine and committed fight against the trend, and the repressive policy adapted to address the issue will never work. What needs be done is a total policy shift in drug control measures such as more liberal measures that exclude slightly, the strong long arm of the law against citizens by caring and encouraging them to live within socially accepted norms and formally stated rules as in Africa pristine period. Further, the international communities and bodies should redouble their efforts by bolstering the various law enforcement agencies in the region by providing training needs, and equipment that will effectively monitor crime corridors. For the wealthy citizens/countries that are idle and bored, the government should open up frontiers and encourage them to embark on humanitarian services locally or overseas to occupy their time that will sublimate their instinct for drug use.

Further, the leaders of the region should have a conceptual clarification of the trend and the implications of an illicit drug economy is the first and necessary condition. This is necessary in order to give the needed support in the fight against the trend. Terrorism that has become the region's albatross after decades of warning but ignored is a good lesson. There is the need for ECOWAS which is the regional body to go beyond rhetoric and match words with actions and aggressively pursue its action plan timely against illicit drug activities in the region.

Vigorous enlightenment campaigns against illicit drugs use that will reduce the demand for drugs are imperative such as that

of HIV/AIDS' campaign success. Monitoring of kids from onset and de-emphasising their human right for proper training is important. There is the need for synergy that will strengthen crime information network from countries of origin of these drugs through transit and destination points.

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