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Transnational Crime in a Global Community: The Case of West Africa

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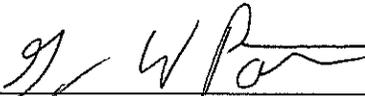
Transnational Crime in a Global Community:

The Case of West Africa

By

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Transnational Crime in a Global Community

The Case of West Africa

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Eastern Kentucky University

Richmond, Kentucky

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family and friends.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to first acknowledge Dr. Gary Potter who greatly contributed to the completion of this project. Thank you for your time, advisement, and patience as I worked through the writing process. I would also like to thank Dr. Victor Kappeler and Dr. Peter Kraska, who together with Dr. Potter, inspired me to continue on with my academic career in the discipline of Criminal Justice. Thank you for helping me to understand the value in asking questions and to never take the idea of “truth” for granted. Thank you to my parents, Stephen Sims and Cheri Stempa, for your words of encouragement and support in my decision to turn school and research into a lifelong career. To my husband, Michaelangelo Bruno, who never ceases to believe in me, I am very fortunate to have a life partner who is both supportive and understanding. Thank you for inspiring me to be a better person each day.

Abstract

This research project is an examination of the organization and behavior of criminal group activity in the region of West Africa. An assessment of the size, structure, and type of criminal enterprises these groups are involved in are investigated. It is also uncovered if and how groups make use of corruption, the legit economy, and influence politicians. The environment in which transnational crime is able to thrive is also of great interest as the social, political, economic, and technological changes that occurred alongside the sudden trend in transnational crime activity are considered. The information is used to generate a discussion about the nature of transnational crime and why it continues to thrive in this particular area. Finally the question is raised if whether there is an alternative way to try and understand the reality of transnational crime and the individuals involved.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In a global economy neo conservative and neo liberal economic ideologies of laissez faire enforce markets to expand in order to maximize profits (Kraska, 2004). The free unregulated competitive market is understood as the ideal model for a social order that supports the freedom of choice, including choice in relation to consumption. There is also a strong emphasis on cost-effective, results based, government coupled with accountability at all levels (O'Malley, 1999). This sort of free market network perpetuates the mass movement of goods and services and the development of business enterprises capable to adjust, function, and compete in a global economy.

This type of free market agenda is the most common economic framework newly independent countries adopt in attempt to construct democratic sovereign nation-states. Western governments believe modernization is a process that brings impoverished countries into a new era of economic growth and prosperity. Neo conservatives and neo-liberals promote the idea if the new nations adopt social and political structures similar to Western industrial economies the tide of modernization will push them along the transformative process (Kraska, 2004). West Africa is made up of a conjunction of very young states including Senegal, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, The Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria, Benin, and Togo all of which since independence from colonial rule have adopted social and political structures similar to

the West. These new sovereign nation-states are then thrust through the process of modernization in which citizens experience urbanization, a decline in agricultural populations, the loss of tribal customs, the rise of the nuclear family and the manifestations of such social problems such as slums and urban poverty. This rapid economic change reduces the stability of the traditional cultures and can cause several conditions, which promote crime (Brillon, 1973). Even though most of these nations have problems with violent conflict funded by the illegal trade of goods, free trade laws enable and encourage people in this region to move freely across international borders.

The National Institute of Justice defines transnational crime as premeditated group criminal activity that crosses national borders. These illicit ventures more specifically may include money laundering, human smuggling, cybercrime, and the trafficking of humans, drugs, weapons, endangered species, body parts, or nuclear material (Voronin, 2000). The trend of planned illicit business ventures conducted by individuals working in more than one country within the region of West Africa is unique to similar activity other places in the world because it is a rather new phenomenon. Law enforcement agencies in West Africa work hard to intercept, arrest, and punish those individuals believed to be involved in transnational crime, but due to lack of collaboration, corruption, and ethnic division law enforcement tends to be weak if not nonexistent (Ebbe, 1999). There is very little research on transnational crime groups in West Africa, which makes this area of particular interest to investigate. Africa, as a whole, is raising global concern, as this area is now a transit point for illicit commodities, as it remains to

have problems with violent conflict and civil unrest (Arquilla, Ronfeldt, 2001). The purpose of this thesis is to try and better understand not only the behavior of the individuals involved in West African transnational crime but also the environment in which it thrives. In the study of transnational crime it is necessary to identify some of the social, political, economic, and technological changes that occurred alongside the sudden trend of transnational crime activity. What has contributed to the sudden increase in the number of young entrepreneurs who engage or will engage in some type of criminal activity at some level that makes it necessary to cross national borders? Why is it also more common and possible for young entrepreneurs to profit both illegally and legally off one or several illicit and legitimate transnational enterprises at once?

It is necessary to conduct a content analysis of the research and available information on transnational crime in the West African Region in order to help determine the sizes and structures of transnational crime groups here, the type of criminal enterprises these groups are involved in, if and how they make use of corruption, the legit economy, and influence politicians. The information is used to generate a discussion about the nature of transnational crime and why it continues to thrive in this particular area. Finally the question is raised if whether there might be other ways to try and understand the reality of transnational crime and the individuals involved. If so, how might an alternative understanding change the way government officials combat transnational crime in not only West Africa, but also other regions of the world?

The next chapter begins with a brief review of some of the literature on organized crime to help to connect previous organized crime research with the current study of transnational criminal activity in West Africa. Since transnational crime involves the collaboration of individuals, what does earlier research on organized crime reveal about criminal collaborative enterprises?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Knowledge on transnational crime with the criminal justice discipline stems from three different paradigms that focus on the structure of organized crime groups. A model, or paradigm, is an effort to draw a picture of a piece of reality in order to understand it better (Albanese, 2007). The very definition of “organized crime” is, however, debatable as the phrase itself is rather generic and includes a wide variety of criminal behavior. How one defines organized crime is extremely important because the definition helps to shape perspective which influences the conduction of research, the creation of laws against it, the investigation process, the conduction of prosecutions, and the provision of mutual legal assistance across national borders (Finckenauer, 2005). The paradigms for organized crime address the characteristics, behavior, and structure of criminal groups in order to define and make sense of their behavior in order to identify a cause or the causes of their actions.

Hierarchal Model

Traditional law enforcement perspectives on organized crime in the United States and Canada in the 1960s reflected ideas of tightly organized, singular, alien conspiratorial groups (Beare, Naylor 1999). The Hierarchical Model of Organized Crime portrays crime groups to arrange in order of rank or grade. This model was put forth

first in these terms by Estes Kefauver, a U.S. Senator who conducted hearings on the subject of organized crime in 1950 but it wasn't until 1963 that evidence was produced to support this theory. It was Senator John McClellan that held public hearings during this time and presented the government's first "insider" on organized crime. The insider was Joseph Valachi who testified organized crime was composed of "family" structures with graded ranks of authority from boss down to soldiers with the bosses being responsible to oversee the activities of family members. A "commission" of bosses handles inter-family relations and disputes (Albanese, 2007). The terms *kingpin* and *mafia* were officially coined to describe a criminal mastermind and a family of criminal cohorts. This paradigm supports the notion the arrest of key individuals will dismantle entire criminal organizations and help combat criminal group activity.

Local, Ethnic Model

Critiques and alternative paradigms began to arise in the 1970s along with a growing body of scholarly research conducted under the subject heading of organized crime. The Local, Ethnic Model of organized crime finds criminal relations to exist among naturally occurring friendships based on cultural and economic ties (Albini, 1975). Studies during this time also found cultural and ethnic ties link organized crime groups rather than a hierarchical structure and appear rather local in nature without apparent connections to a national crime syndicate (Albanese, 2007). This paradigm describes organized crime groups as family oriented business like organizations made up of only those individuals who possess certain ethnic qualities or cultural backgrounds.

The differences between different ethnic backgrounds determine what type of crime a group is involved in and to what extent an individual is involved. This paradigm is often used in unison with the first paradigm because it supports the notion organized crime is “family” based. It is not surprising, however, for families bound with close personal relationships due to kinship or camaraderie to trust one another enough to conspire together and engage in organized crime. This paradigm helps to validate the existence of The Russian Mafia and La Costa Nostra or the Italian Mafia, which alienates certain individuals. It is important to remember, however, this paradigm understands individuals to control their own activities and take partners as they wish, which promotes the idea groups are less strictly structured. The phenomenon of transnational crime as a whole, however, breaks the boundaries of ethnicity. Groups involved in transnational criminal activity often collaborate with individuals of various ethnicities in order to minimize risk, maximize profit, and facilitate market expansion much like any other legitimate transnational business (Potter, 1994).

Business Enterprise Model

The Business Enterprise Model understands organized crime groups conspire just like any other business enterprise. A growing number of investigations find various types of relationships exist between individuals involved in transnational crime. Whether they are hierarchical in nature or based on ethnic commonalities or friendship, interpersonal relationships form the genesis of organized criminal activity. Researchers who adhere to this school of thought believe if the factors that cause illicit relationships

to form are isolated; a determination about the true causes of organized crime can be made. It is the conspiratorial nature of organized crime that makes it so serious. It is not the individual drug dealer or the illegal casino operator that cause public concern, as much as how these individuals organize their customers, suppliers, and functionaries to provide illicit goods and services for profit (Potter, 1994). The same fundamental assumptions that govern entrepreneurship in the legitimate capitalist marketplace such as the necessity to maintain and extend one's financial net worth, also govern the illegitimate marketplace.

Organized crime groups form and thrive in the same way that legitimate businesses do by responding to the needs and demands of suppliers, customers, regulators, and competitors in order to generate a profit. The business enterprise model of organized crime focuses on how capitalist economic considerations, rather than hierarchal or ethnic relationships lie at the base of the formation and success of organized crime groups. Regardless of ethnicity or hierarchy, the Enterprise Model labels economic concerns as the primary cause of organized criminal behavior (Albanese, 2007). Dealers and smugglers are found to operate within an illicit market that is largely competitive and disorganized rather than visibly structured. Disputes are often settled in a spontaneous and unrestricted manner (Adler, 2000). A study on bookmaking, loan sharking, and numbers gambling in New York City finds that economic forces arising from the illegality of the product tend to fragment the market making it very difficult to legally control or centralize these activities on a large scale (Albanese,

2007). The supply of illegal goods is not marketed by a tendency toward the development of large-scale criminal enterprises, due to the illegal nature of the product. Instead, smaller, more flexible and efficient enterprises characterize organized crime (Paoli, 2002). The networking necessary to generate good business in the legit business world is also necessary for the illicit business world.

How involved individuals structure themselves and collaborate to enable international market expansion and profitability remains open to interpretation by the researcher. Since transnational crime is a rather new phenomenon in West Africa, it is important take into consideration the similar criminal activity that has long taken place in some other regions of the world and to see if and how the above three paradigms are reinforced in the descriptions.

Russian Crime

Russian crime groups are defined by the threat and use of violence necessary to gain and maintain control of criminal markets. Retributive violence is often used within and between criminal groups to settle disputes. The distinctiveness of Russian crime groups is the degree to which their influence has become embedded in the Post Soviet political system. The global move from state regulated to an unregulated free market economy has created a challenge to legal systems around the world. The political and economic forces around the globe determine to some extent the nature of criminal activities and with the spread of capitalism, rapid economic change seems to occur along with a surge in the scope of illegal actions carried out by citizens. Privatization of

state property has positioned the current international focus on Russian crime (Beare, 2000). The economic structure of a sovereign nation has a drastic impact on the type of activities carried out by individual citizens such as whether they act alone or in collaboration with others.

Bureaucrats, underground businesspersons, and professional criminals act as key agents and beneficiaries of the economic “liberation”. These three tiers result from an economy in which the government could not ensure the citizenry access to basic necessities needed for everyday survival. The unpredictable economy of Russia created the perfect environment for criminals with similar past experiences from the Soviet Union to flourish. Crime was seen as a necessary means to an end (Finckenauer & Waring, 2001, Beare 2000). This sense of instability is what also makes the structure of Russian crime groups different from groups believed to function like the La Cosa Nostra. It is conceived that Soviet Union criminals operate mostly as individual specialists instead of the traditional hierarchy structures. This suggests that the Russian crime groups are not rigidly authoritarian and those involved do not answer to anyone in particular.

Russia is believed to pose a large threat to the West, the United States in particular, in which roughly 15 groups composed of 500-600 members are currently operating out of. This degree of infiltration into the United States resulted in the US law enforcement strategy for Russian crime groups outlined by the Assistant Attorney General in charge of the justice department’s Criminal Division in 1999 (Voronin, 2001).

These varied criminal groups are extensively involved in a broad array of frauds and scams including health care fraud, insurance scams, stock frauds, antique swindles, forgery, and fuel tax evasion schemes. Russians have also become the principle ethnic group involved credit card fraud in the United States. The laundering of huge profits being made abroad is increasing its penetration into legitimate sectors of the global economy (Waring, 2001). Even though they have the finances to do so, there is no evidence any of these groups have penetrated the United States political system (Finckenauer, 2001, 2007). Russia then, very similarly to West Africa has experienced a rise in criminal activity abroad while attempting to adapt to what are understood ideologically as democratic customs politically, economically, and socially.

Asia and the Pacific Region Criminal Groups

Social disorganization due to large-scale immigration in the Asia and Pacific region has disrupted families and resulted in economic instability and social stress. The unequal distribution of opportunities for legitimate economic advancement combined with the high value given to material gain has fostered widespread illegal activities to increase wealth. Corporate deviance and crime have increased as domestic enterprises have multiplied, foreign investments have grown, and multinational corporations have expanded to Asia and the Pacific. As government bureaucrats increase their influence on economic activities in many Asian and Pacific countries, corruption of public officials follows. The three major drug production bases and the largest drug consumer market in the world are located in this region, making drug smuggling a significant problem.

Human trafficking and illegal immigration are prevalent in the region due to uneven economic development, natural disasters, political instability, military uprising, cultural clashes, as well as social instability (Shaw, 2003). Capitalism advancing and socialism retreating at both national and international levels only seems to cause economic and social gaps which weakens state and societal controls on socioeconomic problems.

The Fuk Ching Chinese crime group, which emerged in New York City in the 1980s, comprised of Chinese individuals seeking to enter into the global economy for their own financial and material self interests. Currently the Fuk Ching is estimated to have approximately 35 members with another 20 members in prison. Experts agree that the Fuk Ching, like other Chinese gangs do not have the connections and sophistication necessary to corrupt U.S. police and judges (Ko-lin Chin & Finckenauer, 2004). Although Fuk Ching has some ability to manipulate the political system through corruption in the Fujian Province with respect to their human trafficking, there is no evidence the Fuk Ching has corrupted the political process of the United States. This group mainly operates extortion and protection rackets in defined neighborhoods in New York's Chinatown, with victims being mostly businesses. The transnational activity of the group consists of the smuggling of migrants across national borders and human trafficking that includes coercion and exploitation in the destination country (Finckenauer, 2006).

The Criminal Groups of the Netherlands

Understanding how criminals are able to work together undetected is the first fundamental step in creating policy to counteract transnational crime. After assessing the evidence of corruption, violence, and intimidation, and the interaction between crime groups and the legal economy in the Netherlands, one may conclude the concept of “mafia type” crime families contradicts the literature on crime groups in the Netherlands. An alternative theoretical framework concerning crime groups widely accepted in Dutch policy and research circles recognizes the primary business of “organized crime” is “transit crime” (international illegal trade, using the same opportunity structure that facilitates legal economic activities). This contrasts with the view that organized crime is interested in controlling economic sectors or regions. Crime groups should instead be viewed as “criminal networks” rather than pyramidal structures (Kleemans, 2007; Kleemans & Bunt, 2007). A study to examine the nature, seriousness, and scope of organized crime in St. Maarten, located in the Netherlands Antilles, found that many individuals on the island are involved in the transportation of drugs. People of different nationalities in St. Maarten are involved and work together in a more or less organized manner making use of long term and temporary collaborations. Legit businesses also carry out roles of specialization in the illicit drug trade (Verhoeven, Bokhorst, Leeuw, Bogaerts, Scotborgh-vn de Van, 2007). Criminal group activity here does not coincide with the theory of the large and highly structured mafia style groups.

Columbian Crime Groups

The Columbian cocaine trade is characterized by a fluid social system with flexible exchange networks that expand and contract in response to market opportunities and regulatory constraints. This durable elastic structure developed over many years as entrepreneurs built their enterprises through the establishment of personal contacts, repeated exchanges, and resources they accumulated gradually. They drew on socioeconomic traditions, such as contraband smuggling, that extend far back into Columbia's colonial past. Nodes that consist of individuals and groups make up Columbian drug trafficking networks. Some nodes consist of brokers who facilitate transactions between various parties, while other nodes are composed of several individuals who function as a unit and engage in various smuggling rings and distribution cells that transport and sell drugs. These social networks of individuals and groups are embedded within and across larger organizational networks. Social networks decentralize decision-making authority and rely on brokers and intermediaries to buffer entrepreneurs themselves from direct complicity in criminal activity. To combat these criminal nodes the Columbian National Police have in fact targeted more than 300 "kingpins" for capture (Kenney, 2007). The fact there are so many alleged bosses is an indication that the cartel concept was flawed from the beginning.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

A content analysis of accessible information and previous research on transnational crime in West Africa is placed under review and considered for this project. This type of analysis is helpful when one attempts to identify patterns, themes, biases, and meanings related to a certain topic (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Neuendorf, 2002). By maintaining the focus on the region of West Africa, instead of Africa as an entire continent, more attention is paid to individual interceptions and arrests to better reveal any trends of transnational criminal activity.

Difficulties of Transnational Crime Research

Transnational crime research has always posed considerable problems for the obvious reasons. Data is extremely hard to come by and is often obtained from police sources that are often less than fully adequate. Also, the criminals involved in transnational crime activity do not easily cooperate in academic research due to their wish to remain anonymous, unknown, and undetectable. This research is primarily a descriptive analysis, which adds to the general baseline of case studies, which will promote a fuller understanding of transnational crime in general. Ideally, by reviewing a good number of previous documented academic, government, and private organizational research on transnational crime and then comparing this literature to criminal records, data, and journalistic accounts a more accurate portrayal of the reality

in which criminals are able to engage in illicit enterprises at a transnational scale is possible.

Little baseline data exist on transnational crime due to the fact law enforcement agencies often do not keep recorded data on arrests or interceptions of illicit goods and in the case of West Africa, even fewer research is recorded in English, so many of the significant details may be hindered by difficulties in translation. A growing body of literature points to the methodological difficulties associated with studying illicit and therefore hidden activities, including those related to transnational crime. These include the requirement to collect data from multiple sources, the difficulties of doing so, and the challenge of drawing conclusions based on fragmentary data (Rawlinson, 1999; Winlow, Hobbs, Lister, & Hadfield, 2001). In regard to transnational crime itself, there is a rather small specialist literature in the academic field of criminology and sociology, but even fewer such works are found that fully engage in the circumstances and experience of transnational criminal activity in West Africa (Ellis, 2003). Past research also tends to make generalizing assumptions about the cause of transnational crime based on the few individuals who are intercepted by police agencies. The individual actors involved become the problem instead of perhaps an inability for new governments to ensure all the basic necessities for life are made accessible to the population.

Sources

In regard to certain types of serious crime, specifically in regards to drug-trafficking, non-African sources of statistics were identified for this project. This is a crime to which governments in Europe and the United States devote a considerable amount of attention to and the type of crime West African groups reportedly play an important role in. For example, in the United States the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) finds that Trafficking groups composed of West African criminals smuggle South East Asian heroin to the United States. Nigerian criminals have been most active in US cities such as Atlanta, Baltimore, Houston, New York City, Dallas, New York City, Newark, Chicago, and Washington D.C. Chicago, just over the past several years, has actually become a hub for heroin trafficking controlled by Nigerian criminals who primarily deal in Asian heroin (Potter, 1994). Various United States government agencies publish both analyses and statistics concerning West African participation in the global drug trade. The Federation of American Scientists report in a British study 65 percent of the heroin seizures of 50 grams or more in British airports in the mid-1990s came from Nigeria (United Nations, 2005). Particularly useful for analytical purposes are documents published by the State Department, many of them available on their website, most notably the annual reports published by its Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs.

The present study makes use of all the above sources but at the same time remains aware of the serious limitations and problems with reliability and validity

official government documents often have. The study also makes use of the country and sector studies compiled by consultants engaged by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (United Nations, 2005). These findings were presented and recorded in Dakar, Senegal, on April 2-3 April 2004. The five country studies of the West African Region consisted of a standard questionnaire which consultants were required to answer, accompanied by country specific views on different issues concerning transnational crime. In addition, papers presented by experts on diamond smuggling, drug smuggling, and arms trafficking provide a large part of the empirical data used for this study in conjunction with official documents found on transnational crime in other parts of the world.

It is relevant to note at this point the growing general opinion among criminologist and other academic specialists is transnational crime and organized crime are both a less clear cut object of inquiry than once seemed to be the case (Williams, 2004). In part, this is a reflection of the growing sophistication with which researchers have viewed the subject, suggesting that the closer one examines transnational crime the less organized it actually appears.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Origins of Transnational Crime in West Africa

Transnational crime in West Africa consists of criminal network enterprises collaborating and coming into contact due to mass immigration and the cultivation of newly independent states in which borders are transforming colonies into sovereign nations. Transnational crime in West Africa is generally perceived to have emerged in the 1970s, in correspondence with the oil price rises of the decade, the de-linkage of the dollar from gold, high inflation, and the rapid spread of debt in the developing world with the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programs by The World Bank, intended to help stimulate the economy. Nevertheless, it would be naive to insist on this exact chronology as the Nigerian country consultant identifies the roots of the new patterns of crime existing slightly earlier (Alemika, 2004). Similar behavior is traced back decades earlier, to the ancient traditions of long distance commerce historically characteristic of the region. There is also evidence of European criminal gangs who pioneered trans-continental crime from bases in West Africa during colonial times. In The Ivory Coast, even before independence in 1960, there were Corsican gangs specializing in cigarette smuggling as well as the recruitment of women for prostitution (Ellis, 1997). When and where exactly transnational crime began in West Africa is then a rather difficult question to answer with great certainty.

It was not only the general economic climate of the 1970s that caused some people to turn to crime as a means of livelihood on a scale previously unseen, but also some of the institutional arrangements that were introduced to stimulate trade. A Sierra Leonean police official, for example, connects the rise of transnational crime in his country to the creation of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975, which facilitated movement between member States (Alemika, 2004). While there had always been movements of people from place to place, the circumstances of civil wars occurring in the late 1970s stimulated some very large population migrations. Before the early 1980s the Nigerian economy was booming and immigrants from other parts of the Africa, most notably Ghanaians, were attracted to come here for financial opportunity. Ghanaians were among the first West Africans in modern times to migrate widely. With the onset of major economic problems in the 1970s and benefiting from the country's generally high standard of education, a large number of people who spoke English were able to compete in transnational labor markets. This created a tradition of migration by young Ghanaian men in search of economic and social advancement but the down turn in the oil economy caused many such migrants to move on in search of new opportunities.

After the end of the oil boom in Nigeria, in the early 1980s, Nigerians were impelled to spread throughout the region in search of economic opportunity. A Sierra Leone police officer notes, "It is now firmly held that transnational crime and the groups involved were first introduced into Sierra Leone by Nigerians" (Lengor, 2004). The Ivory

Coast offered a similar allure to Nigerians in the Anglophone world. Transnational crime and the criminal groups involved are believed to have arrived in the early 1980s when the country attracted large numbers of Nigerian immigrants in search of work. A problem of armed robbery emerged, as bands of immigrants formed that were later joined by Ivorians (Sissoko, 2004). In 1983, Nigeria officially expelled millions of Ghanaian migrants, "...in a bid to rid itself of unwanted guests" (Lenor, 2004; 5). Most returned to Ghana, but a fair proportion of these promptly migrated once again to wherever they believed they might find work and as other foreign job markets became more difficult, many appear to have been attracted to illicit forms of enrichment (United Nations, 2005). In Ghana, transnational crime appears to emerge in the 1980s, connected with the problems and the opportunities offered by mass migration. Some politically controversial attempts to regulate immigration in the 1990s have become inextricably connected to the violence that has now emerged in the country, creating a mix of crime, politics, violence and debates on identity and migration (Aning, 2005). Moreover, wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone facilitate the import of firearms by armed groups, including armed robbers, to The Ivory Coast (Lengor, 2004). A roughly similar development appears to have occurred in Senegal, where armed robbery, marijuana trading, and weapons trafficking is connected to the emergence of a low intensity armed conflict in the Casamance region since the early 1980s. Indeed, it sometimes appears that the conflict in Casamance has lost almost any ideological or political content it may once have had, and has become a pretext for various forms of crime (Evans, 2003). War then becomes a profitable and necessary means to maintain the

illegal markets. Even the Senegalese armed forces are found to be involved in criminal activity such as abusing official procedures to buy and sell weapons illegally. In 2003, for example, Spanish authorities seized weapons on a ship in Barcelona that had been loaded in the republic of Korea and was destined for Dakar. It emerged that the weapons had been purchased by the Senegalese military without providing full information to civilian officials within the defense ministry (Vines, 2004).

One expert believes traces of transnational crime and criminal networks involved may be identified in Nigeria before the 1970's in the form of crime groups involved in falsifying imports in order to transfer funds outside the country, normally in breach of currency regulations. This process involved over-invoicing, or importing sub standard goods for delivery to governmental departments, in return for kickbacks paid to government officials. This may be regarded as a pioneering form of the widespread frauds that were to become a trademark of West African criminal networks in later years. The same expert agrees with many other sources, however, that in general, the 1980s was the decade that first witnessed the flourishing of transnational crime in Nigeria. This is attributed to the general corruption of the civilian government of 1979 – 1983; the introduction of a structural adjustment program in 1986 which resulted in greater poverty, unemployment, an increase in migration, the rapid and ill prepared liberalization of the financial sector, and the establishment of poorly regulated finance houses and banks which all provide new opportunities for money-laundering, fraud, and illegal foreign exchange transactions (Alemika, 2004). From the late 1980s transnational

advance fee fraud became a public issue in Nigeria for the first time, apparently developing from the prior existence of corrupt dealings in foreign exchange and the transfer of stolen funds through foreign businesses and entrepreneurs (United Nations, 2005).

Size of Transnational Crime Groups in West Africa

Research for the present study did not reveal any statistical estimates concerning the overall size and value of organized crime in West Africa. Even if such figures were published, they would need to be treated with great caution. Crime figures are extremely hazardous in all countries because a large majority of crime goes undetected and can only be estimated on the basis of arrests and interceptions. In the case of West Africa, statistics are more than usually hard to come by. No police force in West Africa publishes comprehensive figures on crime seizures or arrests (Williams, 2004). Not only are there no reliable statistics, law enforcement agencies do not collaborate with researchers to investigate the sources, patterns, trends, and organizational structure of criminal groups throughout the region (Alemika 2004). Some tentative observations of the number of people involved in transnational crime within the area can be made, however, on the basis of rather scarce statistics of drug seizures made in West Africa or of cargoes that have traveled across the region.

The West African region does play a significant role in the transnational transport of drugs. It is striking that, with the exception of marijuana, a relatively low-value commodity, and some psychotropic substances that are manufactured locally,

illegal drugs that pass through West Africa are not produced in the region nor are their prime markets here. In other words, West Africa has come to play a significant role as a point of transshipment for cargoes of heroin and cocaine that are produced in South Asia and South America and are destined for markets in Europe or North America. The Ivory Coast appears to be a major transit point for heroin en route to Europe, and Ghana for cocaine headed for the same destination, although why there is such a specialization between these two countries is unclear (Quist, 2004). While the organizers of these narcotics trades are of diverse ethnicities, a considerable number of them are indeed African. Much of the cocaine passing through Ghana and other countries of the region appears previously to have traveled through Nigeria (United Nations, 2005).

In the mid 1980s, the United States authorities estimated that Nigerians made 58 percent of fraudulent insurance claims in their country, and that Nigerian fraudsters were responsible for some \$20-26 billion worth of fraud each year in the United States alone (United Nations, 2005). Notorious Nigerian advance-fee frauds known as “419” letters are estimated to be worth several hundred million US dollars a year (Olukoya, 2002). British police in 1997 received from members of the public 68,000 reports of “419” letters sent by Nigerian gangs, with very many more being circulated but never made known to police (Elliott, 1998). Occasional figures like these suggest little more than fraud of various types is indeed carried out by West Africans internationally and on a substantial scale. Some individual cases can certainly involve huge amounts of money as indicated by the arrest of Emmanuel Nwude and others who were involved in an advance fee fraud of no less than \$240-245 million US Dollars (Alemika, 2004).

While drug smuggling and advance fee frauds perpetrated by West Africans are among the types of activity that generate the most concern internationally, evidence suggests that certain other major fields of criminal activity recorded in the region receive little attention despite (or because of) their clear political importance (Williams, 2004). In regard to “oil bunkering” in Nigeria, for example, the smuggling of crude oil is estimated to account for as much as 35 percent of the country’s oil exports, although estimates vary widely. Senior Nigerian government sources have themselves stated that as many as 30,000 barrels of oil may be exported from the country illegally everyday, although this figure is regarded by officials to be very low (Alemika, 2004). In any event, it implies the occurrence of illegal oil exports amounting to over a billion US dollars annually and perhaps three or four times that figure occur within Nigeria alone (United Nations, 2005).

Structure

Free trade laws and the presence of technology facilitating mass communication allows organized crime groups to fashion themselves like that of any other business enterprise. Collaboration between groups has allowed businesses to stretch across national boundaries giving rise to the new phenomena of transnational crime. Unlike large corporations, however, of hierarchal structure, organized crime groups thrive and multiply through the use of a complex and fragmented networking apparatus. The bureaucratic structure of a large corporation would make crime groups more vulnerable to law enforcement detection. Therefore, instead of crime groups looking to compete

with one another, individuals of different groups with different connections make new connections and/or terminate old business ties to expedite the manufacture, transportation, and/or distribution profitability and limit the risk of detection by law enforcement. The investment of money made through the illicit market is even done with the collaboration of those investors involved in the legit economy (United Nations, 2005).

In attempt to describe the structure of criminal groups in West Africa the business enterprise paradigm becomes the most helpful when trying to make sense of what would otherwise be, a tangled web of permanent, semi-permanent, and temporary networks. By utilizing a social network in which individuals work together, irregularly and on a need to know basis, individuals are able to interact just enough to carry out business exchanges and transactions at the transnational level. The hierarchical, corporation like model is hardly known or even relevant in this region of the world. Groups tend to organize themselves more so in project based type relationships. Whoever becomes useful or has the necessary resources to get a job done is who becomes involved in the functioning of an enterprise at one point or another. Criminal enterprises in West Africa use similar techniques to involve legitimate traders and businesses typically in societies sharing a common ancestry. The standard procedure is as follows,

“...an individual entrepreneur who succeeds in making money in a particular field, as the volume of business grows, will invite one or more junior relatives or other dependents to join him or her in the business. These newcomers

effectively become apprentices to the original entrepreneur. If further manpower is required, other personnel may be recruited for a specific task, but not otherwise retained for permanent employment” (Forrest, 1994; 27).

One of the consequences of this mode of operation is that it tends to form very close ties between different families, ethnicities, and between illicit and legitimate business personnel. First the enterprises usually involve master entrepreneurs and their apprentices who are training to become traders or suppliers in specific goods and services. Second, there is cooperation among the enterprises/entrepreneurs, such that if goods are not available in a given area or shop then they are collected and supplied from another entrepreneur. Third, many of the entrepreneurs have relationships or acquaintances, which facilitate payment for the imported goods for commission (Alemika, 2004). In other words, major drug traffickers, for example, may employ others on a one-time basis to perform certain tasks, such as making a delivery, or driving a car to a given point, or physically carrying illicit goods from one country to another filling the role of the “mule” or courier.

It should be noted that this casual impromptu approach to criminal activity makes detection extremely difficult since groups do not necessarily contain a set amount of actors or individuals that carry out the enterprise. Police services from various parts of the world report the interrogation of an intercepted drug courier from West Africa often reveals very little about the individuals who have employed the courier to carry the drugs across national borders. Typically couriers are employed for only several hundred dollars and are only given information on a need to know basis

and typically know very little about whom they are working for or even who is receiving the smuggled goods. They are often hired by a person using a pseudonym, and given instructions to deliver a package to a certain address, or to await a call, with no further information (Williams, 2004). Hiring personnel for specific projects only, rather than hiring them on a permanent basis makes it very difficult for law enforcement officials to gather any helpful information from individuals placed under arrest for involvement in such illegal behavior.

This project-based mode of networking, often associated with patterns of recruitment based on kinship, has proved itself highly adaptable to transnational commerce in profitable illicit markets. For example, a gang was broken up in January 2004 after Sierra Leone police had arrested a Nigerian at Lungi International Airport in possession of 4.2 kilograms of cocaine. The culprit was one of a network of Nigerians, who lived in Freetown and ran a shop selling spare parts for cars. His role was to receive couriers arriving at Lungi airport, arrange accommodations for them, and dispatch couriers bound for Europe with drugs collected in Freetown. A Nigerian woman living in Lagos, a city in southwestern Nigeria would then smuggle the drug cargoes into Sierra Leone for distribution (Lengor, 2004). Relationships of this sort enable successful drug smuggling groups to become “vertically integrated” having associates at every stage of the trading chain from buying at the source, to the point of retail sale. Every stage in between is handled by members of the same network maximizing profits and enabling

groups to coexist with other competitors such as Columbian criminal groups that deal with much larger quantities of cocaine (Williams, 2004).

Computer crime, which typically involves the use of the Internet and email for various types of fraud, generates its own forms of organization. Most obviously, this activity requires a relatively high standard of education in the sense that people involved need to be skilled at working with computers and does not necessarily need accomplices to successfully pursue their activities. A Ghanaian analyst notes two modes of operation that are typical of computer fraud. In the more hierarchal of the two, an experienced operator provides the initial resources to a small number of apprentices, including access to the Internet. In the second mode, an individual operator sends out his or her own "419" messages to potential victims. A "419" message or letter is an advance fee fraud scam involving a confidence trick in which the target is persuaded to advance relatively small sums of money in the hope of realizing a much larger gain. If the operator succeeds in attracting a response, he then engages other partners for this particular scheme, taking the lead role for the duration of the scam only to return to solitary work (Williams, 2004).

Ghanaian blacksmiths able to produce firearms using the artisan tools and materials at their disposal also work with a small number of people. Research indicates that illegal firearm manufacturing is organized by guilds whose basic structure is of some 10 -15 members, and sometimes as many as 50 members in cases where production has grown to include other goods. As in any major production process,

there are internal hierarchal distinctions, based on leadership, experience, levels of training, and trust. Hence, many individuals involved may only be aware of one part of the process, which involve such aspects as where to purchase raw materials, marketing, and contacts within law enforcement. Normally, such specialized skills are handed down from father to son within families (United Nations, 2005).

Ultimately, with some exceptions and depending on the type of enterprise, criminal groups in West Africa tend to structure themselves in a less strict hierarchal organized fashion to co exists with larger competitive groups. There are very few examples of hierarchal groups with long-term associations. Far more common are the project-based operations, in which a criminal entrepreneur and two or three apprentices hire others for specific purposes, and for a short duration, using a traditional method of organizing a business. Recruitment also takes place through channels of kinship or other association. There is also a high degree of activity by individuals who act alone as well, such as people who try their chance at drug smuggling. West African criminal networks, however, are at the forefront of transnational developments, as academic criminologists and law enforcement officials are currently emphasizing the importance of networks rather than the idea of strict mafia style organizations (Williams, Arquilla, Ronfeldt, 2001). The criminal networks of West Africa are adapting and adjusting quite successfully to the global capitalist age of transnational business and exchange.

The Role of Ethnicity & Social Relationships

The practice of recruiting through networks of kinship, typically based on villages or other region of origin, means that the endeavors of criminal networks are facilitated by cultural codes known to the perpetrators, but more or less impenetrable to outsiders, including law enforcement officers. Relevant examples of this include the practice of administering oaths sworn by reference to religious oracles, and the use of local languages or dialects that make infiltration by outsiders extremely difficult. Western police officers often point out that it is virtually impossible for them to infiltrate a West African criminal network personally for rather obvious reasons, and that it is almost as difficult to find translators who can decipher taped phone conversations in some parts of West Africa, including south eastern Nigeria, noted for the entrepreneurial talents of its people, local dialects differ greatly even in small areas (United Nations, 2005).

The effect of recruitment through personal networks creates an association between certain trades and specific places. Nigerian networks of prostitution, for example, are frequently associated with Edo State and with Benin City because those that pioneered the trade have kept it in the hands of networks of kin and associates, thus excluding outsiders. This inadvertently creates the impression to outsiders that particular ethnic groups dominate certain branches of commerce, whether legitimate or illicit. For example, a Nigerian law enforcement officer noted that drug trafficking networks appear to be dominated by Igbo-speaking people from southeast Nigeria and

Yoruba and by southern minority groups. Such may also be deduced from the names of people arrested and tried in both Nigeria and abroad, from records of the Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and from newspaper articles (Alemika, 2004). An officer of the Sierra Leone police remarks that the Igbos and Yoruba from Nigeria dominate the drug trade in his country (Lengor, 2004). He attributes this partly to the migration of considerable numbers Igbos during the Biafra war of the 1960s, as well to an older tradition of Yoruba migration. The establishment of Diasporas from these groups has facilitated their creation of transnational networks in more recent times (Alemika, 2004).

Transnational Criminal Enterprises in West Africa

After understanding how criminal groups generally tend to operate in this region of the world it is important to know what types of criminal enterprises crime groups are involved in. In this section the known nature, extent, and diversity of the activities of organized criminal groups in West Africa are discussed and presented. This is done to provide some indication as to the complexity of illegal activity in the region. The specific areas mentioned below were selected by the UNODC as the most important. The two areas that create the most concern internationally are the trafficking of drugs and serious fraud carried out by West Africans, either in their own region of origin or outside of it (Williams, 2004).

Drug trafficking

Cases of drug trafficking exist in West Africa as far back as the 1930s but the region's emerging role as a transit point for global movements of narcotics can be said to have become a serious problem only in the early 1980s. Police forces in Ghana and Sierra Leone both allege that largely Nigerian criminals seeking new operating locations introduced drug trafficking to their countries (United Nations, 2005). In seizure reports gathered by the UNODC over the period 2000-2004, more than 1.4 tons of cocaine were seized en route to West Africa or from West Africa to Europe, not including two unusually large seizures of 2.29 and 7.5 tons (Quist, 2004). There is also an import and re-export trade in heroin from South Asia. The key entry points for heroin are Ethiopia and Kenya, with Egypt to a lesser extent. A courier then transports the drug cargoes from East to West Africa, almost entirely by air courier, The Ivory Coast forming the Hub of the trade in West Africa. However, since the outbreak of war in The Ivory Coast in 2002, there may have been a decline in heroin trafficking through the country, with a corresponding rise in neighboring countries (Williams, 2004).

There still remains other evidence to support the view that the drug trade remains a Nigerian specialty. According to West African statistics compiled since 2000, 92 percent of couriers intercepted with drugs transmitting through West Africa were West Africans and no less than 56 percent were Nigerian (Quist, 2004). Law enforcement agencies in a wide variety of countries including the Netherlands, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States, all report the regular interception of

Nigerian drug couriers, and their police intelligence services believe that some Nigerian networks have developed a very considerable share in the global narcotics market. United States law enforcement officers have described how Nigerian networks may collaborate with significant Columbian, Mexican, and Italian groups, in effect receiving subcontracts from these major operators who have tended traditionally to operate in more hierarchal structures than Nigerians (Ellis, 2004). No comprehensive figures for drug related arrests are available, but the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) reported the following numbers of arrests for the period 1994 – 2003: cannabis, 18,775; cocaine, 559; heroin, 598; pharmaceutical psychotropic drugs, 799 (Alemika, 2004).

Several West African countries are used as a base by networks of drug traffickers with international connections. Very large shipments via West Africa tend to be controlled by non-Africans having one or more local accomplices. In addition, there are significant numbers of West Africans who may attempt to smuggle narcotics from Latin America or South Asia to Europe or North America in smaller quantities, not more than a few kilograms, either directly or through West Africa. Typical cases would include, for example, the 26-year-old Nigerian woman who had obtained 815 grams of heroin in Pakistan and flew from Karachi via Dubai and Libreville before being arrested at Cotonou airport in Benin on 30 December 2003 as she left an Air Gabon flight. Another case was the 28 year old Nigerian man arrested on July 25th 2003 at Addis Ababa airport, Ethiopia, en route from Karachi to Abidijan, having swallowed no less

than 1.266 kilograms of heroin (United Nations, 2005). The Ivory Coast has established itself as a major transit point for heroin, although it may be in decline since the outbreak of war in 2002. Figures compiled by the UNODC since January 2000 indicate 22 cases of couriers bound for Abidjan, the largest city in The Ivory Coast, being intercepted in four years. In at least 14 of these cases, one or more of those arrested was Nigerian. Most were carrying heroin obtained in Pakistan, although one interception made at Abidjan airport on July 9th, 2002 was of a Guinean and a Nigerian male traveling together, who had transported 3.19 kilograms of cocaine from Curacao via Amsterdam, some of it in their luggage, and some swallowed (United Nations, 2005).

Although the press often makes reference to “drug barons” and “drug mafias”, there is actually no evidence for the existence of West African drug cartels in the sense of hierarchal, rather permanent, corporation-like structures. Evidence suggests that participants typically start out with small scale legit enterprises. For example, individuals who try their luck as couriers or traders in legitimate goods may diversify into the illegal sector in the attempt to make extra money. In the early 1980s, for example, it was reported that Nigerian students in the United States often doubled as small-scale couriers, perhaps because of the difficulties in receiving scholarship allowances at the time (Alemika, 2004). Those that succeed may recruit couriers, usually on a one-time basis, and join the league of larger operators through a series of networking enabling them to expand market accessibility and profits.

Advance – fee and Internet Fraud

Advance-fee fraud with the use of the Internet appears to be a field in which Nigerian entrepreneurs pioneered and remain prominent. According to one of Nigerian's leading financial regulators, at an Interpol meeting in 2003, 122 out of 138 countries represented complained about Nigerian financial fraud in their countries (Alemika, 2004). Although fraud can take many forms, including for example false insurance claims, the most common type is the advance-fee fraud known as "419", named after the section of the Nigerian criminal code prohibiting the practice. They are by definition attempts to obtain pre payment for goods or services that do not actually intend to deliver. The "419" frauds in the form of paper mail are letters that contain official looking stationary with appropriate government seals, stamps, and signatures. The quality of the letters has evolved over the years, from poorly handwritten letters to more professional products prepared on word processors. Advance fee fraud criminals include sophisticated professionals who are experts in contract fraud, the conversion of hard currency, the sale of crude oil below market prices, the purchase of real estate, the disbursement of money from wills, threat scams, and extortion (Corsun, 1998). One key features of typical of "419" frauds of this type is that the instigator proposes a service that is clearly illegal, such as the laundering of illicitly acquired funds through the target's bank account (Williams, 2003). For this reason, Western police tended to have little sympathy for victims of these scams and did very little, at first, to gather information to identify the culprits. However, in recent years some police forces have

begun to take such crime more seriously, not only on account of their apparent size, but also because of the realization that perpetrators of advance-fee frauds may also be involved in other forms of crime, such as drug smuggling, which police forces do take seriously (Ellis, 2003).

Very little startup capital is required for someone to operate a “419” scam. All that is required are the names and addresses of prospective victims, and access to electronic communications such as a telephone, a fax, or e-mail and internet facilities. Today, these are easily acquired in public internet cafes or business services bureaus. One person can pose as the relative of a known figure, such as a former head of state or minister, claiming that their late husband or parent has left behind a fabulous sum of money that requires laundering in collaboration with a foreign partner, in return for a percentage of the sum (Sissoko, 2004; pg. 25). Frauds of this type have increased in The Ivory Coast since 2000 involving the Nigerians as well (Sissoko, 2004). In one such case, a Nigerian fraud gang working in The Ivory Coast succeeded in cheating an Iranian businessman out of \$80,000 US dollars (United Nations, 2005). In the United States the Internet Fraud Complaint Center, which receives information on Internet crime, calculates in its 2001 Internet Fraud Report that Nigerian letter fraud cases amount to some 15.5 percent of all complaints. The consultant who reports this statistic notes that “while the median loss in all manner of Internet fraud was \$435 US dollars, in Nigerian scams it was significantly higher at \$5, 575 US dollars (Williams, 2004). In this report for 2002, the same organization noted that of some 16,000 complaints regarding Nigerian

fraud communications, 74 people had lost between them some \$1.6 million US dollars (United Nations, 2005).

The anonymity and impermanence of email communications makes it hard for police forces to apprehend “419” fraudsters, but there is some information about them that is fairly well established. Most obviously, “419” operators must be educated enough to perform email transactions that are untraceable, and have sufficient knowledge of international government and business practices in order to trap the greedy and the gullible. Internet fraudsters have been known to work with lawyers, accountants, and even members of security agencies whom they may pay for their services. One of the most notorious cases involved several people and netted \$240 – 245 million US dollars. Dr. Ukeh made initial contact with the victim, who was selected due to his connections with others he was able to bring into the scheme. These connections included one Emmanuel Nwude, an aspiring politician and owner of properties in Lagos, Enugu, and London, who emerged as the main organizer of the fraud which also included a couple, Ikechukwu and Amaka Anajemba, and a politician, Maurice Ibekwe. Emmanuel Nwude, the suspected ring leader and ex member of the board of Union Bank, one of the biggest financial establishments in Nigeria, remains as one of the major shareholders in the bank today. He is also a leading shareholder in a leading construction company G. Cappa. At the time of his arrest Nwude owned houses in London, Lagos, and Enugu, as well as close to a dozen luxury cars. Nwude and his accomplices are alleged to have persuaded a Brazilian banker, the head of transnational

finance at Banco Nordeste in Sao Paolo, to send them money for what they said was the construction of a new airport at Abujua. The Brazilian had first met the men while he was on a visit to Nigeria in 1994. By mid-2001, he had transferred over \$240 million US dollars to fund construction of a non-existent airport. He, in fact, took the funds illegally from his on bank, in several transfers. The Nigerian fraudsters persuaded him he was dealing with leading officials of the Nigerian State. As various times, one of the gang members pretended to be the governor of the Nigerian Central Bank in dealing with the Brazilian while another posed as his deputy (Alemika, 2004). Certain fraud projects, such as this one, may require extra personnel, especially if people are required to act the role of a government official, a banker, an official driver, etc. All of the people involved are typically engaged for a particular task often without being informed of the larger scheme in which they are participating (United Nations, 2005).

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking in the region takes place in a variety of ways. One form is that of agricultural slavery. In the Ivory Coast, it is reported that some of the immigrants from Burkina Faso who work on cocoa plantations in the west of the country are actually slaves (Sissoko, 2004). Cases of imported slave labor reports from Sierra Leone describe how Lebanese or Indian businessmen traffic Indians (Lengor, 2004). The traditional system in West Africa, whereby an adult may place a child or other young dependent with a distant part of an extended family as an apprentice can also be exploited for monetary gain (Williams, 2004). In Ghana, the internal trafficking of

children is one of the biggest challenges. Many Ghanaian children are trafficked from their home villages to work in the fishing industry. The depletion of stocks is one of the key reasons children are needed to work in this industry. They represent cheap labor and are often used to dive and untangle fishnets (Johansen, 2006). Again the tradition of parents sending their children to work as apprentices is what makes this crime so prevalent and so severely underreported.

West Africa is also a transit point for people seeking to avoid international controls on migration. In 2003, a Nigerian citizen was arrested in Sierra Leone in the company of six Chinese nationals whom he was helping to travel to the United Kingdom. The organizer was working in partnership with a Chinese entrepreneur based in Nigeria (United Nations, 2005). Both Nigerian and other international groups are said to use Sierra Leone as a place of transit for labor migrants under the guise of refugees (Lengor, 2004).

Human trafficking is also done for the purposes of prostitution or sex slavery. In Sierra Leone, it is reported that members of the country's influential Lebanese community have taken local girls to Lebanon, mostly under 18 years of age, supposedly to work as maids. These same girls, however, are allegedly put into the prostitution business in Lebanon. The traffickers pay money to the girls' families to divert attention away from their children (United Nations, 2005). There was a noticeable increase of human trafficking of various types in Sierra Leone during the war of 1991 – 2002, as young people went abroad to Libya, Burkina Faso, and The Ivory Coast all located in the

region of West Africa. Men went to be trained as fighters, often lured with false promises of education or employment. Women were forced to work for armed movements as forced laborers or sex slaves. Throughout the armed conflict in Sierra Leone that lasted from 1991 – 2002 thousands of women and girls were abducted by the rebels and subjected to sexual slavery in which they were forced to become sex slaves for their rebel “husbands”. The main perpetrators of sexual violence, including sexual slavery were the rebel forces of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the Armed Force Revolutionary Council (AFRC), and the West Side Boys, a splinter group of the AFRC. To date there has been no accountability of the thousands of crimes of sexual violence or other appalling human rights abuses committed during the war (Cornell, 2007).

A particularly flourishing trade in prostitutes exists in Nigeria. Many of the women or young girls involved are from Edo state, and the main destinations are Europe – especially Italy – and the Middle East (Alemika, 2004). Nigeria’s international trade in prostitutes is believed by analyst to have grown in the 1990s as prospects for employment in Nigeria deteriorated. The organizers of the trade are often women who are former prostitutes that succeeded in making money and graduate to the status of madams. These madams, however, still depend on men for travel documents and to escort the girls to their destinations. A successful madam must attend to all aspects of her business. She must organize the recruitment of prostitutes in West Africa, often on the pretext that they will find jobs in agriculture or the hotel business in Europe, but

must also provide false or forged travel documents for the girls. She will need to bribe immigration officials, both in Nigeria and in transit countries; she will need to have a network of operators in hotels or hostels; she will need to be in touch with fetish priests, who administer an oath of secrecy on prospective prostitutes, and with lawyers who can draft agreements binding a prostitute to a madam. Typically, a madam may claim to have invested \$40-50,000 US dollars for the costs of travel to Europe, the prostitute is then required to repay (Williams, 2004). The large numbers of people deported from Italy and other European Union countries in recent years suggests that this is a flourishing field. Press reports indicate 1,116 people are deported for the trafficking of prostitutes in 2001 alone, the majority from Italy, with others coming from the Netherlands, Spain, Germany, and Belgium (Alemika, 2004).

Diamond Smuggling

The smuggling of diamonds has become something of a specialty in parts of West Africa. This is due largely to the occurrence of high quality alluvial diamonds in Sierra Leone that can be mined with no more equipment than a spade and a sieve. Deficiencies in government permits the smuggling and other evasions of official regulations on a massive scale. The most profitable part of the diamond trade is not the extraction of the stones, but their export to wholesale and cutting centers overseas, most notably in Belgium. Foreigners dominate the export business, especially Lebanese and Syrians (many of which have been established in West Africa for generations) and to a lesser extent, Israelis (United Nations, 2005).

The mining and export of diamonds overlaps with crime groups in at least three aspects. First rebel groups use diamonds to finance their war effort. While the most notorious example is the RUF in Sierra Leone, the same has been done by the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) in Liberia and by groups within the Ivory Coast. It is reported that there is a connection between Al-Qaeda and the illicit diamond trade in West Africa. Agents of Al-Qaeda allegedly systematically bought diamonds from Sierra Leone as a way of laundering money, and there is substantial evidence that diamonds may be used for financing a variety of political or guerilla movements in the Middle East (Farah, 2001& 2004). In the 1980s, the leading diamond dealer in Sierra Leone, Jamil Said Mohammed, developed considerable influence in Lebanon, which was at the time in the state of civil war, through his Lebanese connections in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Sierra Leone diamonds were undoubtedly a significant source of financing the Lebanese civil war (Ellis, 1988). Secondly, diamonds are smuggled even from areas that are not prone to conflict. Statistics covering the diamond trade are full of discrepancies suggesting that, particularly during the war of the 1990s, diamonds mined in Sierra Leone could be smuggled to neighboring countries before being sent onto Belgium, so that Belgian import figures often bear little relation to the export statistics of other countries. This illegal trade is not new, with one study being completed in the 1950s judging the smuggling of diamonds from Sierra Leone to be "the greatest smuggling operation in the world" (Fleming, 1960). In short, the existence of a huge, barely regulated diamond sector in Sierra Leone increases the likelihood many countries and networks in the region function illegally especially since

the unofficial diamond trade is deeply rooted in tradition, having existed for over half a century within this area (Williams, 2004). Third and finally, organized crime groups may engage in the illicit diamond trade partly to cover illicit activities elsewhere, in other words as a form of money laundering. When Sierra Leone's economy declined in the 1980s, a shortage of foreign exchange through formal sources – banks – meant that Lebanese diamond traders were able to provide foreign exchange which they acquired through diamond sales. Some also obtained import businesses so to complete an import – export cycle. Some experts in West Africa believe that some diamond companies use diamonds to settle accounts in a form of “Hawala”, or an informal value transfer system, so as to minimize the necessity to use banks or other conventional financial mechanisms that would expose them to tax obligations. Some diamond merchants who are prominent in West Africa also have diamond interests elsewhere, notably in Central Africa, suggesting the existence of very complex movements of goods and diamonds covering several different countries (Dietrich, 2004).

Cigarette Smuggling

The smuggling of cigarettes is recorded in several countries of the region, including Sierra Leone, where the existence of a higher rate of excise tax on cigarettes than in the neighboring republic of Guinea provides an incentive to smuggle cigarettes. Although the trade is not inherently violent, it flourished in the conditions of the late 1990s civil war and has been recorded to occur between The Ivory Coast and Ghana (Williams, 2004).

An example of a cigarette smuggling group is the Wansa group, operating from Sierra Leone. The head is a Fula businessman known as “Guinea Wansa”. Regarded as the head of the syndicate, he operates from Sierra Leone but has close links with an official trader in Guinea, who imports cigarettes from abroad. Having been brought into Guinea by legal means, the cigarettes are exported under the cover of darkness in local boats known as pampas, avoiding custom controls. In Sierra Leone, Wansa has a team of four major distributors strategically located in Freetown, Bo, and Kenema. The cigarettes are moved between these two locations by truck, generally covered by legitimate merchandise to disguise them. Membership of the organization is secretive and is dependent on kinship and ethnic bonds. It is notable that members of this group in many ways do not display some of the characteristics commonly associated with professional criminals. They are pious and other wise law abiding Muslims, who respect the authority of Islamic religious authorities, such that any dispute between them is generally settled by established social authorities rather than by the resort to violence (Lengor, 2004). Those most highly specializing in cigarette smuggling are believed to have begun as traders in legitimate goods but have branched out into cigarette business as a means of investing capital earned elsewhere. It is most common for Fulas, who are typically minorities in any country they live in, to smuggle small quantities at a time, often no more than 20 cartons. One of the consequences of is, as a Sierra Leonean police officer notes, that money gained from the illegal smuggling of cigarettes is protected and covered by the genuine general merchandise business they operate between Guinea and Sierra Leone (United Nations, 2005). This makes it incredibly

difficult to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate profits in their overall turnover.

Money Laundering

Some of the world's largest banks are known to have been complicit in such schemes, including the notorious Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), which had more branches in Africa than in any other continent, as well as some private banking operations (Kerry and Brown, 1992). Experienced eyewitnesses of [Nigerian banks] consider that money laundering was greatly facilitated, at a time when the drug trade in particular was in rapid expansion, by the growth of unlicensed financed houses, especially in the period of 1988-1991. Other businesses regarded as particularly suitable for money laundering include second hand car dealing and fashionable clothes boutiques favored by female entrepreneurs (Alemika, 2004). Throughout West Africa, almost all car purchases are of second-hand vehicles, often with few or no documents attached. This clearly offers possibilities for money laundering through the motor trade. The diamond trade is also widely regarded as a particularly suitable medium for money laundering as was mentioned in the previous section. A report issued in March 2004 by the United States State Department's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs lists several countries as "vulnerable" to money laundering via the diamond trade, including Liberia and Sierra Leone (Facets, 2004).

Arms Manufacturing

Several countries in the region, but especially Ghana, have a flourishing arsenal industry of arms manufacture. Such arsenal manufacture in Ghana is increasingly transnational, as arms are smuggled outside Ghana for use in violent crime (United Nations, 2005). Iron-working technology has been known in West Africa for many centuries, but the manufacture of guns was made a criminal offence during colonial rule. However, local smiths have not lost the skill of making guns, and recent research indicates that local processes have become increasingly sophisticated. In one seizure of illegal weapons in Nigeria in April 2004, the goods confiscated included not only foreign made guns and ammunition, but also a locally assembled AK-47 assault rifle as well as 13 locally made revolvers, four double barreled shotguns, one single barreled shotgun, and other pieces as well. The police arrested 19 illegal manufacturers (P.M. News, Lagos, 2004). In Ghana there have also been manufacturers able to produce pistols, shot guns, revolvers, and even in one case an AK-47 (Aning, 2004).

Ghana, in fact, appears to be the region's most sophisticated capacity for manufacturing firearms. According to research carried out by a leading Ghanaian academic, all 10 regions of the country have a manufacturing capacity, concentrated in small workshops that are able to produce 200 or more guns per year. Middlemen export these to other parts of West Africa, including The Ivory Coast, Togo, and Nigeria (Aning, 2004). Within Ghana, guns are sometimes used in cases of land conflicts between leaders of the people within a tribe or for certain ethnicity disputes (Williams,

2004). A study of 5 of Ghana's 10 regions identified no less than 70 towns in which a manufacturing capacity existed, with some 2,500 manufacturers in Brong-Ahafo region alone, suggesting a total production of 40-60,000 guns annually (Aning, 2004). On April 1st 2004, Nigerian police arrested a man coming from Benin with 16 firearms purchases in Accra, Ghana. His intention had been to sell them in the market at Onitsha, the largest market in West Africa. The police considered they were definitely destined for criminal use in Nigeria (Vanguard, 2004). Furthermore, similar reports of arsenal weapons manufacturing have been received from Senegal, Guinea, Benin, Togo, Mali, and Nigeria, although in none of these cases has the subject of arms manufacturing been so extensively researched as it has been in Ghana (Vines, 2004).

Arms Trafficking

It is common cause that West Africa contains large quantities of illicit small arms, although the estimates given – the figure of seven million is sometimes encountered – appear often to be exaggerated. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) ordered a freeze, or a delay, on imports in October 1998, with a condition that Member States wishing to import weapons must notify ECOWAS of their intention to secure exemption from the moratorium. However, freeze on the importation, exportation and manufacture of small arms and light weapons in West Africa has not worked well. The Ivory Coast, Liberia, Burkina Faso, and Guinea have all violated it supplying non-State actors with freshly imported weapons and ammunition while at the same time, violating the United Nations arms embargoes, or trade restrictions, on Sierra

Leone and Liberia (Vines, 2004). In 2002 and 2003, for example, The Ivory Coast allegedly received several deliveries of military equipment by air that went unreported to the ECOWAS. For Liberia the figures for the same two years were 49 and 25 deliveries respectively (Williams, 2003). One international broker based in West Africa, who has organized several deliveries of weapons by air and sea told a UNODC consultant that he had never heard of the ECOWAS Moratorium (Vines, 2004).

In addition to the import and distribution of light weapons by governments, there is also an unregulated non-State trade. Virtually every country in this region has a problem in this regard while The Ivory Coast and Nigeria probably are the largest importers at present. Nigeria causes particular concern because of the fierce armed conflicts in the Niger Delta Region – which is already in the “high intensity conflict” category with over 1,000 fatalities a year. The availability of weapons interacts with illegal oil bunkering, widespread corruption, high youth unemployment, and social disintegration to produce a highly dangerous mix (Vines, 2004). In Senegal too, the existence of low level, armed conflict in the Casamance region has contributed to the illicit circulation of light weapons. Insurgent forces in Casamance are known to have imported weapons from Guinea and Guinea-Bissau. Light weapons are traded illegally and with only ineffective attempts at regulation by the police in the town of Touba, regarded as the holy city by members of the Mouride Islamic brotherhood. There are some other locations in Senegal too that are known as centers of illegal weapons trade (United Nations, 2005).

Oil Bunkering

“Oil bunkering” is a specialty of Nigeria, and for a long time the region’s only oil producer (Vines, 2004). “Bunkering” is the process of filling a ship with oil, which is increasingly done illegally. According to the Nigerian Federal government, some 300,000 barrels are illegally exported per day. Although oil bunkering on this scale requires sophisticated organization, and the complicity of state officials up to a very high level, it also flourishes amid the poverty and a sense of injustice in the Niger Delta area. People in many communities feel that they derive no benefit from the oil trade, and may therefore collaborate with criminal networks in the illegal export of oil (Williams, 2004). The Niger Delta provides illicit networks with unemployed youth and armed ethnic militias who know the terrain well. They also face a corrupt or ineffective law enforcement efforts and a weak judicial process. These criminal networks also enjoy support from senior government officials and politicians, who use bunkering as a source for political campaigning (Vines, 2004).

The oil bunkering syndicates are highly international, including not only other West Africans, but also Moroccans, Venezuelans, Lebanese, French, and Russians. By these means, oil-bunkering links to wider patterns of organized crime, with cash, drugs, and weapons, all being traded in exchange for illegal oil. A typical oil bunkering case was reported in a Nigerian newspaper on April 22nd 2004, reporting the arrest by the Nigerian navy of a ship loaded with 8,000 metric tons of crude oil without valid papers. Its crew of eight foreigners where also arrested (United Nations, 2005). Such cases

reveal the possible extent of the problem. However, relatively little is known as to the nature and over all extent of the problem.

Armed Robbery

In The Ivory Coast a serious problem of armed robbery grew in the 1980s in which armed robbers would identify business offices harboring cash and hold employees hostage. The war since 2002 has favored armed robbery of various types. Some criminal gangs in Northern Nigeria have included demobilized ex combatants from neighboring countries (United Nations, 2005). In Sierra Leone too, demobilized fighters are recorded as forming armed gangs such as the West Side Boys. Some such groups may receive arms from the regular armed forces. They may sell stolen goods in neighboring countries, and are also reported to have developed connections as far away as Gambia, Mali, and The Ivory Coast (Lengor, 2004). Senegal's crime shows an extraordinary emphasis on all types of theft. Senegalese police report groups of up to 15, armed with automatic weapons, including Guinea-Biassauans, Liberians, and Sierra Leoneans, involved in transnational crime. This is also the case in Casamance and close to the northern borders of Senegal with Mali and Mauritania as well. Individuals are believed to be involved in cattle-rustling, smuggling, and armed robbery. In 2000-2003 the Senegalese authorities prosecuted 2,400 members of crime groups, 1,500 of those were charged with armed robbery. Armed robbers do, in fact, use violence; hence, a large amount of attention from police is focused on such groups resulting in higher arrest rates (Niang, 2004).

In Benin, one Harmani Tidjani led a multinational-armed gang that specialized in car jacking and car theft through several West African countries and even in France. The gang's activities were so notorious that the Nigerian government closed its border with Benin to accentuate its demands for action by the Beninese authorities. Tidjani, however, escaped to Mali, using bribery to facilitate his escape. He was, however, subsequently arrested, extradited to Benin and finally Nigeria. As a result, the President of Benin fired 13 senior security officials, including from the Presidency, the Defence Ministry and the Ministry of the Interior (Williams, 2004).

Use of Corruption

Analyzing crime in West Africa also requires one to consider the controversial topic of corruption. While there is no single, comprehensive, universally accepted definition of corruption, it is generally considered to be the illegitimate use of public resources for private gain and with no doubt it exists in all countries world wide in some shape or form. Corrupt conduct typically includes bribery, embezzlement, theft, and fraud, extortion, abuse of discretion, favoritism, and discrimination, the exploitation of conflicting interests, and improper political donations. These conducts all pertain to crime committed in the context of a public-service occupation or responsibility (Shehu, 2004). As researcher Abdullahi Y. Shehu concluded, corruption in Nigeria has become a way of life under socioeconomic conditions that not only facilitate corruption but make it necessary for economic survival for even the most conscientious citizen. Military rule has been blamed for allowing corruption to grow unchecked. When President Olusegun

Obasanjo was inaugurated as a civilian president of Nigeria on May 29th, 1999 he identified corruption as Nigeria's most pressing problem vowing to fight it at every level. Despite these reform efforts, corruption in Nigeria has not declined, and there is some evidence that it is occurring at high government levels (Shehu, 2004).

Widespread corruption has many horrendous consequences, including inefficiency, mistrust of the government by citizens, discouragement of enterprise, and political instability. A high level of corruption stems from a wide discrepancy between the attitudes and objectives of a government and those of the society in which it operates. Pre-colonial West African society had a primitive bureaucracy and money played a minor role. According to an article released by the University of Keele of the United Kingdom, traditional customs such as exchange gifts and extended families, contributed to corruption only when they came into contact with colonial society. The most important areas of divergence between the colonial government and the West Africans were the operations of a literate government in an illiterate society and conflicts between laws and popular attitudes. When only those who can read and write are admitted into public service, the illiterate majority often resorts to bribing the lowest public functionaries in order to cope with regulations that they do not understand. In turn, minor public servants can use power over illiterates to increase their pay. Laws made in attempt to prohibit activities favored by the public are vulnerable to corruption. The colonial government imposed many regulations, which conflict with traditional attitudes and these conflicts have not disappeared with the

coming of independence. According to this particular piece of research, West Africans show no resentment toward proven corruption among high level officials as corruption works to soften conflict, reduce friction, and cements relationships between power holders and those who control the wealth during the initial stages of national development (Fleming, 1957).

While this argument may very well explain some of the root causes of corruption occurring in this sector of the world it does not emphasize the role that Africans themselves played in solidifying the problem. While European ideas of proper governance and public administration heavily influenced the formation of newly independent African states, the new governments were also formed to a considerable extent by the actions and ideas of Africans that fulfilled the hierarchy, most particularly in the systems of indirect rule (Bayart, 1993). Hence, if the historical roots of modern systems of political corruption and of political violence can be traced back to colonial times, this has to be studied not only in terms of the formal arrangements made by European colonial officials, which generally entailed unjustly harsh powers of taxation and coercion, but also the formal and informal practices of African agents who participated in the colonial system (Williams, 2003). It has become commonplace for African authors to attribute a high degree of responsibility for modern day corruption to the African elites that have governed their countries since independence (Ayittey, 1996). The suggestion; however, that corruption in modern West Africa is a result of

ruling elites who inherited authoritarian colonial systems of governance fails to consider the degree to which corruption may be a product of patron-client systems of politics.

The Patron-Client system is the name given to a particular way of structuring a society such that it is organized in a roughly hierarchical structure. Each person in the hierarchy has a "patron" above them (perhaps more than one) and a number of clients below them. Basically in the patron-client system, people seek to make mutually beneficial alliances, with the less powerful people seeking out the more powerful people and offering allegiance in exchange for protection and benefits. So if an individual found a person he or she wanted as a patron, that individual would offer his or her allegiance to them as a client, promising to do what he or she can to enhance their patron's honor. In return for service their patron might grant his/her client or a friend of the client's to a position in government or some other favor the client wants. Hence society is made up of this huge web of tree-like structures of Patron-Client relationships. The clients offer their *faithfulness* and the patron responds by granting *favours*. Clients could ask particular favors of their patrons, or alternatively a patron could shower their clients with gifts, and the client was then expected to praise in extravagant terms their patron's generosity to others thus increasing the patron's honor. Of course if one client has a reputation for extravagantly praising his or her patron for their gifts, other patrons would seek that particular client out, wanting to effectively invest in that client, giving him or her gifts in exchange for being publicly praised. Thus corruption was used by individuals at all levels of society having roots deep in the history of Africa, and not only

in the apparatus of colonial control (Williams, 2003). At what point then does this type of activity no longer classify as corruption, which suggest certain behavior is out of the ordinary and instead qualify as a description of business as usual?

The work of crime groups is facilitated if they are able to enlist the complicity, active or passive, of state officials and without a doubt this occurs in West Africa (United Nations, 2005). For example, the January 2004 arrest of an international smuggling gang in Ghana that had imported no less than 675 kilograms of cocaine, with a street value estimated at \$140 million US dollars, led to the suspects being released on bail of just \$200,000 US dollars, causing a great outcry in the press. Both the Minister of the Interior, Hackman Owusu Agyeman, and the Attorney-General, Paapa Owusu Ankomah, objected, demanding the incarceration of the suspects. A leading Ghanaian researcher reports that even those who work for the narcotics Control Board are scared to confront the levels of corruption in the criminal justice system (Aning, 2004). There are other examples from Ghana suggesting that criminals are able to bribe judges. The Ivory Coast minister of justice has hinted at a very similar state of affairs, referring to the country's justice system as "wrecked" (Sissoko, 2004). The anti-corruption organization Transparency International publishes an annual Corruption Perceptions Index. In its 2003 index, Ghana ranks at number 50, Senegal 66, The Ivory Coast 71 (the same as the Russian Federation and India), while Nigeria was ranked at 101, deemed the second most corrupt country in the world (Williams, 2004).

The interface between crime and politics, or crime and legitimate business, straddles the grey area of corruption. Although there is a considerable amount of literature on corruption, only a small part of the research that has been done seems useful for addressing this issue as it actually occurs in West Africa (Williams, 2004). Corruption is often hidden, or at least is not openly admitted by its perpetrators and is rarely proven to a legal standard in a court of law making very little information available to assess the extent of to which criminal groups make use of it.

Political Influence

In Ghana, a former head of the Narcotics Control Board has indicated drug dealers are able to influence certain politicians (Aning, 2004). But perhaps the most blatant case of political involvement with criminal networks in the region of West Africa concerns the late Maurice Ibekwe, a member of Nigeria's Federal House of Representatives arrested for financial fraud, forgery, and conspiracy. He had served as Chairman of the House Sub-Committee on Police Affairs (Alemika, 2004). Most security officials in Ghana, however, reject any suggestion that drug dealers may influence certain politicians, although some do make such allegations. There are cases, however, where people in authority try to stop the trial of people accused of selling drugs. K.B. Quantson, former National Security Coordinator and former head of the Narcotics Control Board, recounts that in one case, in between the arrest and trial of one particular suspect "tremendous pressure was exerted on me from all over to drop the case". He also accused the Attorney General's Office of dragging its feet in confiscating

the property of the same drug dealer, as stipulated by the law at the time, after they had been found guilty and imprisoned. Some members of the law enforcement agencies in Ghana indicate their frustration at the failure to prosecute drug traffickers when it is revealed that one particular judge keeps releasing suspects under very strange conditions (Aning, 2003).

In Nigeria, politics are considered highly corrupt by financial enticement. Many wealthy patrons in politics exhibit enormous wealth that has no obvious origin (Alemika, 2004). However, only in small number of cases has it be shown beyond reasonable doubt that senior political figures like Maurice Ibekwe have been directly implicated in the activities of criminal networks. More common is the ambivalence attributed to some politicians in Ghana by an investigator, who noted that many of them are tempted to turn a blind eye to crime, believing that it is preferable to the type of war that has disfigured some other countries of the region. This could be taken to suggest that criminal interests have become so powerful in some countries that they pose a potential political threat. More realistically, it indicates that some powerful people consider crime less as a menace to combat than as a form of activity that at least generates income, and therefore may help to alleviate the misery that helps stoke the fires of civil war (United Nations, 2005). Similar attitudes may very well prevail throughout the region.

In regards of political involvement in advance fee fraud, the advance fee fraud involving Emmanuel Nwude can again be used to illustrate political involvement as this

case suggests a strong connection to Nigerian politics. Several of those involved were connected with the country's ruling Popular Democratic Party (PDP). Emmanuel Nwede was a prominent supporter, and one of his key accomplices, Dr. Ukeh, was a PDP candidate for the position of governor of one of the Nigeria's states. It was Dr. Ukeh who had first made contact with the Brazilian bank manager who was to be their victim. Also involved in the scheme was Maurice Ibekwe, a member of the Federal House of Representatives – Nigeria's lower house of parliament – from 1999 until his arrest. Ibekwe even served as chairman of the House's Subcommittee on Police Affairs, and has been reelected in the 2003 parliamentary elections as a candidate of the PDP, the ruling party (Alemika 2004, Eriye 2004).

Overall, then there is little evidence – with some alarming exceptions – to suggest that politicians may be directly involved with criminal networks, but much of the evidence suggests they may be complicit in various ways ranging from an unwillingness to contemplate the issue of transnational crime and criminal groups involved, to a complicity that is hard to distinguish from corruption. There may be, however, some major cases of direct political involvement in crime that are covered up due to their political sensitivity. For example, in Nigeria the illegal export of oil, or oil bunkering, is said by observers to be facilitated by political authorities at very high levels (Ebbe, 1999). It has become common practice for politicians to benefit from the profits of oil bunkering by using money to help fund political campaigns (Vines, 2004).

In countries where full-scale war develops, such as Sierra Leone and Liberia, it becomes difficult to distinguish between the activities of criminal networks and political violence. There are now disturbing signs that a similar evolution may take place in The Ivory Coast. The robbery of a bank in Bouake, the second largest city in The Ivory Coast, under control of the rebel Forces Nouvelles movement, was reportedly organized by one of the leaders of the rebellion, and a major bank hold up in Abidjan in 2002 is also believed to have been organized by a future leader of the insurrection, make clear the close connection between political violence and crime (United Nations, 2005). This also suggest the formation of a nexus of political disorder that provides a suitable environment for crime, creating a triangular logic of disorder, violence, and crime in which each become a consequence of the other.

A similar phenomenon has been noted in Senegal where reports the export of marijuana from the Casamance region towards other parts of Senegal is favored by conditions of low intensity conflict (Niang, 2004). Not only does the organization of armed struggle require financing, which increasingly may come from criminal activity, but in extreme cases the state itself may become under the control of professional criminals (Napoleoni, 2003). Some observers would have considered this to be the case of Liberia under the presidency of Charles Taylor, from 1997-2003. The rebellion of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone has often been presented in such a manner. A Sierra Leonean police officer notes the significance in this regard of the RUF's having obliged the legitimate government of the country to share power, allowing

the RUF's leader, Foday Sankoh, to occupy a position equivalent to that of a vice president and gaining control of the precious minerals department of the government (Lengor, 2004). The Sierra Leonean president, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, has represented the war in his country as a criminal enterprise on a national scale (Lengor, 2004). Indeed, the Sierra Leone police report that members of the Armed Forces Ruling Council, the group of military officers that had power 1997-1998, themselves pioneered the use of Sierra Leone as a transit point in the transnational drug trade (Lengor, 2004). In such cases distinctions between crime and political activity become difficult, since the authorities responsible for enforcing the law of the land may themselves be organizers of criminal activity (Williams, 2004).

Connection to Legitimate Entrepreneurs & Investors

Different groups of individuals tend to cooperate instead of compete in order to more successfully complete business transactions. It appears that, whereas the old established "mafias" were thought to have the ability to transport very large quantities of narcotics to the United States, the most successful West African syndicates import smaller quantities but enjoy an exceptional range of contacts and an impressive flexibility of organization that enables them to exploit market niches that the major mafias cannot always reach. It is by these means that West African drug traders have managed to gain a major stake in what is, literally, the world's most cut throat market, without the need to use violence (Williams, 2004). Ad hoc relationships created within the criminal networks of West Africa allow groups to collaborate sporadically and

sometimes anonymously to avoid detection from law enforcement and to refrain from infringing on market territories of larger more powerful groups. In a way, West African crime groups have found a way to penetrate market opportunity by offering larger groups with a means to an end in manufacturing, transporting, and providing goods and services illicitly.

Specialists in different aspects of crime in West Africa claim long-term specialization in a particular field or commodity is rather rare. An entrepreneur who has been successful in one field of operation may move into another field if the opportunity presents itself, including that of legitimate commerce. For example, an entrepreneur who has been successful in the drug trade may invest his or her profits in a legitimate business, not purely as a form of camouflage, but simply in pursuit of a commercial logic. By the same token, an entrepreneur who has become established in a field such as the import of cars or spare parts may use the capital, the infrastructure and the commercial contacts thus acquired to move into some branch of illicit commerce. In The Ivory Coast too, the police find that individuals of legit business enterprises may be members of one or several crime groups simultaneously. In the 1980s and 1990s, such groups were involved in armed robbery and drug trafficking, according to Ivorian sources (Sissoko, 2004).

Massive illegal transactions take place in the field of foreign exchange fraud, often involving international companies that may conspire in false accounting, thus allowing well connected Nigerians to move large amounts of money to bank accounts

abroad. This became a major activity during the 1970s, when practiced by Lebanese, Asian, and European companies such as Johnson Mathew bank (Alemika, 2004). The scale of this activity may be appreciated by reference to the billions of dollars stolen by senior officials, including a former head of state, General Sani Abacha, much of which ended up in western banks (Nwankwo, 1999).

Transnational Operations

Overall, transnational crime in West Africa may involve persons of West African origin collaborating with others from outside the region – for example, Russian and other foreign nationals have been arrested in Nigeria in connection with oil bunkering – or it may involve West Africans based in their home region maintaining relations with refugees who have since become scattered. In general, it is difficult to separate the regional dimension of transnational crime from its global dimension. For example, a Nigerian-dominated internet fraud group such as the Kakudu group works out of Sierra Leone, and has links to Guinea, Gambia, and the Ivory Coast as well as Nigeria, but identifies many of its potential victims outside of Africa. Heroin imported from Asia and cocaine from South America may be moved from one country to another within the West African region to evade law enforcement detection, but the ultimate destination is almost invariably in a country outside of Africa (Williams, 2004).

It is not possible to capture accurately all the cross border movements of goods within the region, but a number of points may tentatively be made. First, the classic smuggling trades are in goods that have a high international value relative to their bulk,

with drugs and diamonds being obvious examples. They are rather easy to transport in quantities that can be carried by a single person and even hidden on the body, and yet can be exchanged for very large sums of money upon delivery to a trader based in Europe, North America, or elsewhere. Second, in order to facilitate the transport of goods, smugglers may well move them within the West African region. Nigeria is so well established as a source of drugs that Nigerian smugglers clearly prefer to use other countries as staging posts. This may also apply to diamonds, illegal immigrants, or other cargoes. Although such trade can be considered as internal to the West African region, it is also linked to other parts of the globe. The main exception of this concerns goods that have low international value relative to their bulk, and therefore are not traded outside the West African region. Examples of these types of goods would include cattle, which are smuggled across Senegal's borders into Guinea-Bissau, but no further, and locally manufactured firearms, which are made in Ghana and smuggled into neighboring countries, but rarely further than Nigeria (Ebbe, 1999).

Combating Transnational Crime

To alleviate the problems facilitated by transnational crime and the actors involved previous research calls for a higher level of international law enforcement cooperation and communication. Transnational criminal operations – such as drug smuggling, human trafficking, terrorism, and internet-related crimes – have increased the need for criminal justice personnel and institutions to establish structures, policies, and procedures of cooperation (Lewis, 2007). This is necessary in order for jurisdictions

in which crimes occur to pursue and interview suspects and witnesses in other jurisdictions, as well as to have access to documentary evidence that exists in jurisdictions other than where victimization occurs. Currently some of existing institutions and structures of international cooperation in addressing transnational crime are the United Nations, Interpol, Europol, and the European Union (Aroma, 2006). All international bodies have fallen short of the challenges posed by transnational crime. This has set the stage for the possibility of the creation of an international coordinating body composed of countries whose citizens are most at risk for victimization by transnational criminals and terrorists.

Other strategies for combating transnational crime include the provision of more effective protection for witnesses who have inside knowledge of those engaged in transnational crime. Reversing the burden of proof so that the offender must prove assets of high consumer value were not acquired through criminal proceeds is another tactic used to crack down on illegal markets. The interception of communications along with intrusive surveillance is also argued necessary to identify and develop profiles of key members of criminal organizations (Aroma, 2006). While this has raised some concern in regard to privacy rights, there is a need for legal administrative measures designed to prevent criminal groups from infiltrating and developing legitimate businesses by using capital from criminal enterprises. Some researchers suggest host-nation governments, with the support of the United States Government Special Forces, are an even match for criminal/terrorist organizations.

“Through a deliberate process of detection utilizing United States and host nation assets, network structure and ties can be assessed accordingly. A process of dynamic attenuation, where network ties, and not the actors in the network, are targeted should replace the current United States strategy of killing or capturing individual criminal agents. By dynamically attenuating instead of destroying the ties between and among criminal actors and criminal organizations, the United States can effectively reduce the capability of criminal and terrorist organizations from operating and achieving their missions” (Serena, 2007; 87).

The process by dynamic attenuation actually means to resolve the problem of transnational crime through the “energetic shrinking” of the groups involved. This shrinking is brought about by more or less the same tactics, which include arresting individuals believed to be associated with organized crime. Resolutions such as this one seem to fall short of the big picture. To focus mainly on how crime groups function in order to weaken network ties to, in effect, shrink them, distracts one from addressing the reasons for which transnational crime is able to thrive and why it thrives in the first place. Regardless of the wars waged against crime, drugs, terrorism, etc., all attempts to disrupt criminal networks have failed in the overall grand scheme of what has yet to come as transnational crime continues to thrive and remains a seemingly permanent component of the capitalist lifestyle.

Most of the causes of transnational crime are similar to the factors that drive crime in general. The globalization of the economy, increased numbers and diverse nature of immigrants, and improved communications facilitate crime or provide criminal opportunities, but they do not cause transnational crime. There have been eight

different issues identified all relating to the structures, strategies, and tactics of transnational crime and to the law enforcement efforts to address this form of criminality:

- The interaction among politics, the media, and resource sharing and the resulting tendency to characterize the problem inaccurately while making policy and resource allocation decisions that have little to do with the control of smuggling of crime of any sort.
- The need for less rhetoric and more empirical research as a basis for policymaking. Additional issues include
- The need to focus on criminal markets and conduct a market analysis,
- The sparse and often unreliable information evaluating the impact of transnational crime and the impact of law enforcement efforts to address it.
- Lack of clarity about the concepts of organized crime and organized transnational crime.
- The need to focus on the local bases of transnational crimes
- The organization of policing for enforcement related to criminal groups
- Consideration of alternative policing options for law enforcement related to transnational crime (Beare & Naylor, 1999; 11).

The challenges involved in the prevention and control of transnational crime can stem from varied cultural and societal conditions and from the various national orientations for laws and law enforcement (Finckenauer, 2000). The laws enacted can actually do more to facilitate and benefit transnational crime markets rather than hinder them, even if the networks involved are countered by “dynamic attenuation”. This is why policy made to counter transnational crime is extremely critical. The final section addresses the economic and political climate of West Africa and how the current circumstances of this world region do not allow for reactionary individual arrests or “dynamic attenuation” to hinder the global problem of transnational crime.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The Structural Adjustment of Africa

In the first chapter the concepts neo-liberal and neo-conservative politics were mentioned as the driving force behind the process of globalization. Neo-conservative politics share in the ideals of neo-liberalism by advocating a free market model economy and a disdain for social welfare (Kraska 2004). In regards to the present day reality of transnational crime in West Africa, Structural Adjustment Programs enacted in West Africa by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were founded upon neo liberal principles. The structural adjustment programs most certainly contribute to social and economic problems faced by countries becoming involved in transnational crime. Many African states trying to establish a capitalist economy with the help of loans issued by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have been struggling to pay back debt due to strangling economic effects of the Structural Adjustment Programs. These loans were only issued if borrowing states would abide by certain guidelines entailed by The World Bank and the contract of the loan issued by the International Monetary Fund. Under a plan devised by President Reagan's Secretary to the Treasury, James Baker, indebted developing countries were offered World Bank and IMF "servicing" loans in return for the "structural adjustment" of their economies. This meant that the economic direction of each country would be planned, monitored and

controlled in Washington. “Liberal containment” was replaced by *laissez-faire* capitalism known as the “free market” (Pilger, 1998).

The IMF has prescribed the same medicine for vulnerable state economies for over two decades which includes:

- *Monetary austerity.* Tightening up the money supply to increase internal interest rates to whatever heights needed to stabilize the value of the local currency.
- *Fiscal austerity.* Increase tax collections and reduce government spending dramatically.
- *Privatization.* Sell off public enterprises to the private sector.
- *Financial Liberalization.* Remove restrictions on the inflow and outflow of international capital as well as restrictions on what foreign businesses and banks are allowed to buy, own, and operate (Hanhel, 1999).

President George Bush Jr., will claim that rules based global mechanisms are needed, the mainstream media, however, often does not ask what the rules themselves are, and whether they are most appropriate. The IMF/World Bank plans are actually devised in secret and are not open for discussion or dissent (Stiglitz, 1999). Since the introduction of the IMF structural “assistance” Africa's income has dropped by 23 percent (Colgan, 2002). The basic assumption behind structural adjustment was that a free unregulated market would bring benefits to both the poor and the rich. In the Darwinian world of international markets, the strongest would win out. This would encourage others to follow their example. The development of a capitalist economy with an increase in the

role of the private sector was thought to be the ideal way to stimulate economic growth (Hahnel, 1999). African countries do, in fact, require essential investments in health, education and infrastructure. The World Bank and IMF instead require countries to reduce state support and protection for social and economic sectors. They insisted on pushing weak African economies into markets where they were unable to compete with the might of the transnational private sector. These policies further undermined the economic development of African countries (Colgan, 2002). The key issue with structural adjustments of this kind, however, is whether they build the capacity to recover and whether they promote long term development. The adjustments dictated by the World Bank and IMF did neither (Stiglitz, 1999). In these ways then, the IMF and World Bank encouraging new states to open up for foreign trade and investment is too aggressive. While this is often described as putting new states on a level playing field with wealthier countries, wealthy countries are usually far more powerful and with more resources at hand, create anything but an even playing field. Most new states transitioning into a capitalist market system rule will lose. Because some of the poor nations are not as aggressive in privatization and other conditionality's, as the IMF or World Bank would like, they face continual delays of debt relief fueling the spread and profitability of markets conducted illegally at the transnational level.

The epidemic of transnational crime in the region of West Africa could perhaps be a consequence of the economic hardships endeavored by countries finding themselves locked economically and politically by the confines of Structural Adjustment Programs. The economic policies encouraged by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund

do much to foster a hospitable environment for transnational crime by deregulating the market and encouraging free trade across the globe. The economic desperation that occurs when profits from exports are unable to keep up with the price of imports needed for basic necessities of human survival fosters not only a hostile environment, but also a criminal environment, by making the fast hard cash of illicit markets even more appealing.

Most importantly transnational crime, as it exist in West Africa, and in comparison with other regions around the world, is prevalent not as a result of evil, conspiring, large corporate entities looking to monopolize illicit markets, but as an ending result of poor economic planning and the implication of condemning foreign economic policy. The actors involved have structured themselves to function just as any other capitalist business enterprise would, through a series of networks involving as little or as many individuals necessary to finish a job. The use of the term “group” when describing the collaboration of individuals should be done with extreme caution due to the fact individuals often conspire together on a one time basis only to involve other partners when another business opportunity arises or specialization in a specific area is needed.

Structural Adjustment Programs encourage corruption and undermine democracy by making elected governments accountable to Washington-based institutions instead of their own people. In some cases, corrupt governments have borrowed money from these institutions and/or directly from various donor nations and ended up using that money to pursue conflicts, for arms deals, or to divert resources away from their people. However, in most cases that has been done knowingly, with the support of

various rich nations due to their own “national interests” (Colgan, 2002). While the conditional terms of loans issued by The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund may be described as “reforms”, “adjustments”, “restructuring” or some other benign-sounding term, the effects on the poor are the same if not worse than those inflicted by transnational crime. While the illicit enterprises and criminal activity associated with transnational crime may have devastating effects on the stability of governments and their ability to effectively meet the basic necessities of their people, the infractions do not compare to the devastation inflicted by the Structural Adjustment Programs based on neo-liberal politics. A critical interpretation of structural adjustments and other trade related policies could see them as forms of transnational crime or terrorism in and of itself. Transnational crime helps to illustrate how the injustices occurring at the macro level trickle down to effect society at the micro level in which a rise in crime, corruption, and armed conflict will inherently occur. It is such trade policy implemented by the World Bank that inadvertently has given rise to illicit international markets, armed conflict, and high levels of international fraud that have become not only necessary and vital components for economic survival, but favorable in markets that thrive on unrestricted, unregulated expansion and profit potential.

Conclusion

Transnational crime, according to the information gathered for the purpose of this project, appears to be an unintended consequence of the process of globalization, the creation of not only one world capitalist economy but of one uniform culture.

Transnational crime, then, cannot be hindered by individual interceptions of smugglers

caught at the border or by the arrest of alleged crime group members. Instead of asking whom to arrest in order to hinder illicit transnational markets, it may be more beneficial to examine how capitalism, criminal policy, prohibition, war, and politicking all collaborate to create the environment in which it is extremely profitable and worth the risk to engage in transnational crime. If the focus of transnational crime research continues to only consider the individuals involved in order to better intercept and arrest them, the problems associated with transnational crime will never be eliminated. This practice only serves to legitimate institutions whose mandate is set on criminal interception. Transnational crime does not appear to exist due to the isolated activity of various transnational criminal groups. Instead, it seems to be a consequence of capitalism which promotes a free unrestricted market, the consumption of goods, and a profit driven enterprise. The capitalist notion of the accumulation of large sums of money drives entrepreneurs to seek out profit potential in alternative ways. A sovereign state carries with it the burden of enacting law through the interpretation of the few who wish to maintain the legitimacy of their rule and will set up institutions in order to reinforce those rules and standards of conformity. A class struggle occurs in the continuation of the process of globalization and its inflictions on the division of labor and the material conditions for which those members of the state have available to them. When the material conditions do not meet the vital necessities for life and the governments are unable to guarantee vital necessities to ensure the liberty of life, alternative means will be made to see such needs are met.

Conflicts with market demands and the material conditions within a sovereign state prevent a free market from flourishing legitimately, especially when involvement in legitimate commerce does not make the basic necessities one needs to survive accessible. Young entrepreneurs eagerly look for new opportunities to invest in markets outside of the law to make up for a decline in stock. To encourage new states whose borders are not yet stable to engage in free trade inadvertently promotes alternative markets, especially when there is the potential to make large amounts of money fast and laws enacted against such markets only maximize profit potential (Williams, 2004). When such large amounts of money are at stake capitalist culture and ideology help perpetuate markets that generate a substantial profit, whether they are licit or illicit, national or transnational.

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