

January 2016

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## Recommended Citation

Ezekwem, Ogechukwu. "Carrier, Neil and Gernot Klantschnig. *Africa and the War On Drugs*. London: Zed Books, 2012. 176pp." *Journal of Retracing Africa*: Vol. 2, Issue 1 (2015): 80-82. <https://encompass.eku.edu/jora/vol2/iss1/9>

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**Carrier, Neil and Gernot Klantschnig. *Africa and the War on Drugs*. London: Zed Books, 2012, i + 176 pp.**

Neil Carrier and Gernot Klantschnig appraise Africa's place in the global drug trade. Their book comes at a time when numerous publications call attention to the dangers of drug trafficking in Africa and its challenge to democratic and corrupt-free governance, as well as sustained economic development. These works argue that drug cartels have become interwoven with government institutions and engage in sustained violence against rivals and law enforcement. They connect growing terrorism in Africa to drug trafficking, arguing that the destabilization of the continent by drug-related activities affects investment and poses a threat to long-term economic development in Africa. *Africa and the War on Drugs* challenges these prevalent portrayals of Africa as being in jeopardy due to its new position as a transshipment port for Europe-bound drugs. The authors question contemporary Western views that treat drug use as a recent phenomenon in Africa and depict the drug trade as detrimental to Africa's economic development. They also criticize Western approaches to drug control. Their categorization of drugs go beyond hard substances such as heroin, cocaine, and cannabis to stimulants like kola nuts, coffee, khat, tobacco, and alcohol.

The book is divided into four chapters. The first chapter traces the history of drug cultivation and use in Africa, and focuses on drugs – khat, cannabis - that have been historically present in the continent. Chapter two assesses the link between drugs and development in Africa, while chapter three examines the continent's emerging role as a drug entrepot, arguing that it had a long history of involvement in the international drug trade. The final chapter criticizes current drug policies that are propagated by international agencies and offers alternative approaches to the fight against illicit drugs in Africa.

Carrier and Klantschnig argue that evidence of drug production in Africa dates back to twelfth century Kenya, where El-Ghafeky, a Spanish doctor, recorded the use of kola. Archaeological evidence and travelers' accounts also show that cannabis and khat existed in Ethiopia as early as the fifteenth century. However, these drugs served social, cultural, and practical purposes, such as improving stamina and alertness. In the West, they functioned more recreationally.

Following the rigorous policing of traditional drug-smuggling routes in the 1970s and 1980s, drug traders turned to Africa as an alternative course.

In the process, substances like heroin and cocaine became diverted to local markets, leading to increased drug problems. As a result, the United Nations embarked on a "drug war" in Africa, arguing that drugs posed a challenge to the continent's development. The UN also claimed that African states could descend

to the status of narco-states, territories that are overrun completely by drug cartels, devoid of any law enforcement. Carrier and Klantschnig, however, argue that Africa held a substitutable place in the drug trade, dependent on the policing of routes. The continent's drug trafficking operated in a small-scale, profit-oriented, and temporary structure that differed from the cartels and mafias portrayed in official discourses. The continent did not count as a major consumer or producer of heroin and cocaine, a fact that invalidated any fear of African nations' degeneration into narco-states.

Far from causing underdevelopment, the authors assert that the cultivation of substances, such as the illegal cannabis and quasi-legal khat, offered revenue to many farmers and states like Malawi, Swaziland, Somalia, and Mozambique. Development problems arose instead from the repressive and prohibitive policies enforced in Africa by international anti-drug agencies. These strategies concentrated on strengthening weak African states in their enforcement of suppressive drug laws, to the detriment of research-based, socio-economic, and health approaches to drug control. The funds provided by these organizations, according to the authors, strengthened corruption, state brutality, and human rights violations by African governments. They conclude that Western funders dissociate Africa's drug problems from the global drug market, especially because of the high demand of these substances abroad.

Carrier and Klantschnig dedicate a part of their book to the effects of drug consumption in Africa – unemployment, HIV/AIDS, low productivity, drug abuse by gangs and rebel groups, state destabilization by cartels – and provide detailed examples of the impact of drugs on other societies, such as Afghanistan and Colombia, where they pose grave challenges. However, they conclude that drug consumption in Africa poses no threat to the continent's development. One wonders about their definition of development. Unless they view it as separate from economic and social issues, their conclusion that drug use stands apart from Africa's development is contradictory to the very background that they provide on the effects of drugs. Their statement that, "it must be emphasized that a detrimental effect of drugs and development in Africa has nowhere been demonstrated through sound research," despite their examples of "real dangers and potential dangers" of drug consumption in the continent, is even more disconcerting (56-57).

Though the authors make a strong argument regarding Western exaggerations about the linkage of drugs to Africa's growth, they underplay the real and potential impact of drugs on the continent as well as the increasing complicity of political actors in the drug trade. They gloss over the fact that drug habits in the continent have since shifted. They scarcely acknowledge that youths in Africa employ drugs recreationally as much as their counterparts in the rest of the world. In an

effort to support their argument that drug production in Africa offers revenue to African states, the authors either ignore or downplay the long-term effects that the proliferation of illegal drugs would cause in African economies. Illicit drugs have been connected to violence, lawlessness, and terrorism in Africa and elsewhere. Its tolerance in Africa, as recommended by Carrier and Klantschnig, can only result in further disruption, thereby impeding economic growth and investment. While the roots of violence and state corruption in Africa may have minute connections to the drug trade, drug consumption exacerbates an already bad situation. It also potentially plunges the affected countries into a public health crisis.

The authors raise an important concern about the unreliability of international agencies' statistics on drug trafficking in Africa, which they portray as estimates that lack current empirical research. However, it remains unclear how their methodology differs in this regard or how they navigated the challenge. One wonders to what extent their contemporary source materials – academic dissertations, newspaper and media reports, and online statements – diverge from the unreliable approximations that assail official documents generated by foreign agencies and national governments.

Despite its shortcomings, *Africa and the War on Drugs* contains thought provoking reflections on the campaign against drug trafficking in Africa. Carrier and Klantschnig depart from Western interpretations of Africa's drug issues and offer historical and cultural insights into the continent's drug habits. Their recommendations include important alternatives in drug law enforcement, such as the need to incorporate views from academic and health sectors in order to implement rules that consider the safety and rehabilitation of drug users. They also draw attention to current drug-related threats to Africa, namely, the proliferation of fake drugs and the largely unregulated use of "legal drugs" like alcohol and tobacco. Their work stands not only as an academic piece but also an informational kit for international agencies and stakeholders in the anti-drug campaign.

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