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Democratization via Elections in an African 'Narco State'?

The Case of Guinea-Bissau

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ABSTRACT

Recent development cooperation with Guinea-Bissau, focussing on elections, good governance, state-building and conflict prevention, contributed neither to democratization nor to the stabilization of volatile political, military and economic structures. Both the portrayal of Guinea-Bissau as a failed 'narco state' as well as Western aid meant to stabilize this state through supporting multiparty elections are based on doubtful concepts and assumptions. Certainly, the impact of drug trafficking could endanger democratization and state-building if it continues unchecked. However, the most pressing need is not state-building, facilitated by external aid, poorly rooted in the social and political fabric of the country, but nation-building from below as a precondition for the creation of viable state institutions.

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DEMOCRATIZATION AND PACIFICATION BY ELECTIONS IN AFRICA?

Democratic transition has been on the agenda of African countries since the beginning of the second wind of change in the early 1990. Multiparty elections have been propagated by politicians, the global donor community and academic scholars alike as major means to promote democratic change and to stabilize so-called 'weak' or 'failed' states. The question of whether even flawed elections could contribute to stabilization and democratization has led to controversial discussions. Though, there seems to be a growing consensus among politicians and political scientists that multiparty elections matter, regardless of the quality of their formal procedure. ¹ Staffan Lindberg and others have extended Rustow's (1970) theory that already democratic behaviour produces democratic values (Lindberg 2006:vii; 2009). The learning-by-doing process of repeated elections is said to steadily improve both the stability and quality of democratic institutions in African countries (Lindberg 2006:86; 2008). According to Lindberg, violent breakdowns of states are most likely before and after the first elections, although "even first elections start to create and affect institutions, actors, and processes of change" (Lindberg 2006:119, 121). Contradicting hypotheses of Carothers (2002:17) and others, which maintain that the focus of the international community on elections as means of peaceful democratic transition is misguided, have been refuted (Lindberg 2006: 119, 140).

In my view, these hypotheses on 'democratization by elections' – although possibly reflecting average trends of Africa's democratization process in the past – are based too much on sweeping generalizations, essentialism and exceptions to allow for meaningful prognoses and well-founded political advice in actual country cases of 'weak states'. These misconceptions seem to be influenced often by the apparent lack of feasible alternative concepts for intervention of the donor community, by wishful thinking, and by doubtful dogmas of behavioural science. In order to provide sound political advice based on realistic scholarly analyses, there is no other way than to rely on a comprehensive study of each country's history and its formal and informal social, political and economic institutions and networks, which should be based on established theoretical concepts and methodology.

The case study of Guinea-Bissau (RGB) presented below serves as a step in this direction as an explorative study for the generation and testing of alternative approaches and concepts. It does not represent Africa as a whole, but provides insights into societal and state fragility,

where certain state-supported institutions actually work surprisingly well, e.g. as gate-keepers in producing and consolidating social inequality as one the underpinnings of so-called 'failed states' (Nugent 2010:37, 42-43). My hypotheses, to be tested in the following, run as follows: First, development aid meant to contribute to democratization and stability in African countries by promoting elections, regardless of their democratic quality, is ill applied or even counterproductive. First, because elections do not prevent rent-grabbing but often simply intensify intra-elite competition for these rents, more often than not they are an ineffective barrier against bad governance. Elites benefit from weak governance because of 'perverse incentives' encouraged by globalization (Moore 2010). Second, elections cannot overcome the cleavage between the power elite and regular citizens which is rooted in structural conditions such as gross inequality, socio-cultural barriers, etc. (Moore 2010; Carothers, 2002). In addition, conventional concepts of 'weak' or 'failed' states are heavily biased in favour of global Western security interests. They are equally inappropriate guidelines for political action, orientated at a sustainable peaceful democratic transition. Finally, development assistance as well as international and national political actors who aim to create stable and democratic conditions in fragile African countries could achieve their goals more effectively by designing bottom-up policies to create and consolidate nation-building instead of trying to reinforce top-down formal state structures.

A SHORT HISTORY OF GROWING FRAGILITY IN RGB

The political history of independent Guinea-Bissau has been characterized by an intimate merger of its military and political elite. For decades, the people have given the military much legitimacy because of its decisive role in the liberation war. The army had in fact fought a people's war, which greatly contributed to its success. Therefore, heroes of the liberation struggle like 'Nino' Vieira continued to provide the country's political and military leaders after their victory over the Portuguese in 1974. Yet, although the military had led the people's struggle for national liberation, it gradually became a major factor in destabilizing the democratization process afterwards. Guinea's politico-military elite became increasingly detached from the population in terms of both democratic legitimation and government revenue. Already by the late 1990s, net official development aid constituted about half of the country's GNP (Rudebeck 2001:10-11). In addition, the search for easy money and reliance on external financial resources contributed to the gradual criminalization of state institutions

and of members of the power elite: first by involvement of the army's rank and file in weapons trafficking – notably with their neighbours in the Casamance, Southern Senegal (ICG 2008) – and later-on by the apparent involvement of factions of the power elite in global drug cartels, as I will show further on in detail.

Nevertheless, at the grassroots, particularly in the countryside, the villagers continued to be dedicated to democratization as they saw it, i.e. as empowerment and as a voice in the control of their own resources (Klute et al. 2008; Rudebeck 2001). Certainly, ethnicity (e.g. the question of Balante underrepresentation) played a significant role in the local view, notably because it was instrumentalized by the urban power elite for its own interest (Temudo 2009). Yet, the vision of the struggle of liberation, carried by ideals of solidarity, equality and multiculturalism, was and still is so deeply engrained in the population that the imaginary of cultural multiplicity as a major base of nation-building from below still prevails (Rudebeck 2001:29; Temudo 2008); again, this point will be elaborated upon in the subsequent sections.

The state's lack of integration into the socio-cultural fabric of the nascent nation was most pronounced and visible in two spheres; however, those spheres represented two sides of the same coin: First, it became evident from the fragile formal state structures inherited from colonial times, which had hardly improved after independence (for details see Forrest 2003; Schiefer 2002; Klute et al. 2008). Second, structures of an 'uncaptured' peasantry on the one side and the emergence of a stratum of poverty-ridden urban poor on the other side were promoted by ill-conceived neoliberal structural adjustment programmes of the Bretton Woods Institutions (Forrest 2003; Rudebeck 2005; 2001).

As a consequence of the growing gap between the government and the people, Guinea-Bissau has been ridden with political instability, a violent civil war (1998–99) and numerous coups and coup attempts (the most recent in April 2010). In fact, no elected president in the country's history has served a full term (EU EOM 2009:3). The actual degree of instability became evident during the night of 1–2 March 2009, when the head of the army, General Batista Tagme Na Waie, and the head of state, João Bernardo 'Nino' Vieira were assassinated within only a few hours of one another. Both originally highly popular brothers-in-arms during the liberation war, they eventually evolved into arch-enemies. This most recent political crisis showed the extent to which the Guinean state had been undermined and corrupted by longstanding internal feuds within the politico-military power elite, a process obviously stimulated by transnational networks of drug and weapons traffickers.

EARLY ELECTIONS: A STEP TOWARDS STABILIZATION?

In order to prevent a power vacuum, the interim government – assisted by the international donor community – was at pains to re-establish law and order during the early presidential elections. The prevailing view inside and outside the country was that Guinea-Bissau was in dire need of a functioning state,² and this was not just for the good of the country itself. As will be shown below in more detail, the quest for stable states also served the interests of global Western players in fighting terrorism and in installing stability in the entire West African sub-region, already labelled the Pandora's box of Africa. This was one reason that the European Union and other donors were prepared to finance and observe the elections, which were meant to legitimize the new government and the formal structures of democracy established with the first multiparty elections in 1994. Even so, election assistance was just one of multiple measures made by the international donor community in the last decade intended to prevent the outbreak of new violent conflicts and to assure a functioning state, both seen as essential. This position was underlined by the expertise of scholars in international relations who argued that free and fair elections were vital for post-conflict stability and development (introduction and Lindberg 2009; 2006; Akopari/Azevedo 2007). Unfortunately, there were few, if any, lessons learnt from the outcome of previous similar measures that had been intended to effect a significant turnaround in Guinean politics. One could rightly ask whether the election, as well as its subsequent legitimation by several international election observation missions (UN, EU, AU, ECOWAS, UEMOA, IOF, etc.), was in fact an electoral façade without any positive impact on institution-building, regarding the fact that the same corrupted political and military actors were still involved in the exercise (Monteiro & Morgado 2009:2).³ Hitherto, most democratization aid for RGB has had limited success: Substantial election assistance from the EU for the last legislative elections in Bissau in November 2008, for example, had apparently little, if any, positive impact on the functioning of the current political system. Just three months after the parliamentary elections, highly praised by international observers for its exemplary role in assisting democratization (ICG 2009a:5; EU-EOM 2008), the underlying politico-military conflicts culminated in the extralegal killings in the top ranks of the political and military hierarchy of the country, accompanied by the continuing impunity of the perpetrators.⁴

Nevertheless, the EU extended its programme of electoral assistance for the early presidential elections in June 2009, apparently following the motto 'business as usual'. On 5

June 2009, the eve of the start of the electoral campaign, more high-ranking politicians, among them one presidential candidate, were killed, and others were abducted or mistreated.⁵ The attorney general repeatedly received so many death threats (the latest in August 2009) for trying to hunt down the culprits behind the March killings that he no longer dared to sleep at home. Apparently unimpressed by this 'climate of insecurity, intimidation and fear' (EU EOM 2009:3), or because they thought they had no alternative, the donors, led by the UN and the EU, continued to assist the formal state structures by financing and supervising the early elections on 28 July 2009. Probably for diplomatic reasons, international election observers shut their eyes and attested not only a well-organized, peaceful and orderly voting process, but judged the elections in general to be 'free, fair and transparent' and an 'important step towards achieving political stability and security' (UN-SC 2009a:2, 3, 11). They mainly deplored general voter fatigue and the subsequent low turnout (approximately 60 and 61 per cent of the electorate in the first and second rounds, respectively, the lowest since the introduction of multiparty elections in 1994).^{6,7} In the second round (26 July), the candidate from the ruling PAIGC (Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde; the former socialist unity party), Malam Bacai Sanhá, won with more than 63 per cent of the votes, followed by his rival and the former president Mohamed Kumba Yalá (from the Partido para a Renovação Social, with 37 per cent; EU EOM 2009; UN-SC 2009a). Yet, the question remains as to whether any lessons can be learned and whether there are any alternatives to the conventional way of assistance for formal democratization and state-building.

At least in scholarly international discussion, the general quest for 'good governance' and a functioning state in Africa has been a controversial issue. Whereas the majority of scientists, politicians and aid experts deplore the weakness of the state in many African countries in general and in RGB in particular, calling for the rapid installation of functioning state structures, others contest this view. Based on concepts of cultural African primordialism (Chabal & Daloz 2006; Bayart et al. 1999; Reno 1998) or of the African 'shadow state' (Ferguson 2006), followers of this position point to the fact that apparently political leaders in RGB can be replaced without effecting any political change, rendering Western-style democratic elections increasingly inappropriate. In fact, according to these authors, not only formal multiparty elections, but also other crucial state institutions in RGB seem to be irrelevant to the majority of its citizens, most notably in the countryside. The state lacks basic functions and guarantees: It neither assures a monopoly on violence, jurisdiction and

prosecution, nor provides any other tangible benefits for the people (Bordonaro 2009:36; Vigh 2009). According to this view, a political setting has evolved in RGB which allocates power politics not within or behind state institutions, but outside them, in neopatrimonial political alliances rooted in the country's troubled history as well as in transnational social spaces, including global drug trafficking (Bordonaro 2009:3; Monteiro & Morgado 2009:2).⁸

Unfortunately, each theoretical position apparently covers only half of the truth, as I will show in the following sections of the paper. On the one hand, the advocates of 'failed state' theories tend to ignore both informal politics, which prevail all over West Africa, and the Eurocentric background of their concepts propagated as a one-size-fits-all solution, e.g. structural adjustment and formal democratization via multiparty systems and competitive elections. On the other hand, the primordialist position (and its equivalent, the post-structuralist imaginary) follows uni-dimensional concepts of path dependency which tend to ignore the development chances provided by innovative cultural traits as that of cultural nationalism and the cultural base of nation-building. As a last resort they often end in methodological essentialism, based more on stereotypes than on robust empirical evidence (Meagher 2006 for a more detailed scathing critique). Surprisingly enough, grassroots patriotism developed to a considerable extent even in Guinean villages and in the diasporas of irregular migrants in European capitals (Gable 2009:175-78).

In my view, the most pressing need is not state-building, facilitated by external aid yet poorly rooted in the social and political fabric of the country, but nation-building from below as a precondition for the creation of viable state institutions. Over the past three decades, a new nationalism developed in RGB and elsewhere in Africa. It shows remarkable differences both in its roots and its impact, compared to the national independence movements, a fact that has already been shown in detail elsewhere (Kohnert 2009; 2008a, for a review of literature and development of the concept of 'new nationalism'). Contrary to the 'first' nationalism, the 'second' is less prone to include populations – alienation, xenophobia and its political instrumentalization are its curse. The new nationalism has been shaped decisively by the consequences of globalisation and by the increasing cleavage between the poor and the rich (Barry et al. 2007 on poverty and income distribution). Nowadays, structures of nationalism and nation-states differ more than they did in the past. Frequently, the new nationalism is rooted in populist grassroots movements whose members do not necessarily share the same

interests as those of the ruling class or the state. This makes for its extraordinary political and social ambiguity and brisance.

In short, nation-building constitutes a base for sustainable state-building; it is basically a question of democratic sequencing. However, this should not be interpreted as rigid path dependency, but rather as interrelated factors which can reinforce one another under favourable conditions and block development under adverse circumstances. In any case, neither the sequence method nor a gradual- or twin-tracked simultaneous approach should rely too much on formal conditions of democracy, be it 'good governance' and rule of law, or on other formal democratic institutions as promoted by Western development aid, backed by scholarly expertise (Branch/Cheeseman, 2009). More often than not, these concepts are still imposed on African governments. Patrice Nganang (2010) reminds us that 50 years after formal independence, Africa is in need not just of state sovereignty but also of a “discursive sovereignty” (Bierschenk/Spies 2010:5). This holds particularly true for the initial phase. People's sovereignty should encompass and exploit the wealth of endogenous socio-cultural heritage as the foundation of nation-building and enduring democracy. We shall return to this question in the final section of the paper.

IS GUINEA-BISSAU A ‘NARCO STATE’? DRUG TRAFFICKING AND ITS IMPACT ON POLITICS, ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

In the past decade, West African governments were challenged by an upsurge in transnational drug trafficking from Latin America destined for European markets. The trafficking often follows already established routes of migration or of illegal international small arms trade. It is periodically adapted to changing requirements of camouflage, avoidance of international observation and persecution of transnational criminal trade. This is related, among other reasons, to a gradual shift of the cocaine market from the US to Europe, notably from Colombia, via Brazil and Venezuela, to Western Africa, due to higher profits for trafficking to Europe (Bybee 2009: 6, 11-13).⁹ Cocaine entered European markets mainly via Spain and Portugal because of their long coastlines and their linguistic and historic ties with Latin America. At least 33 tonnes were seized – a good portion accidentally – on the West African route to Europe between 2005 and 2007 (Johansen 2008: 4-5; UNODC 2007a; Mazzitelli 2007: 1075, 1087; Labrousse et al. 2008: 10-11; UNODC 2007: 9-15). Almost certainly, this was only the tip of the iceberg. Because of its clandestine nature, the trade is difficult to

quantify. UNODC estimated that some 40 tonnes, or 27 per cent of cocaine consumed in Europe annually until 2007, went through West Africa (Johansen 2008: 5).

In June 2010, the representative of the UN Drugs and Crime Office in West Africa, Alexandre Schmidt, admitted that drug trafficking via Guinea-Bissau had resumed again on an unprecedented scale, apparently unchecked by Guinean security forces. On 4 June 2010 the Gambian police, assisted by the UK's Serious Organized Crime Agency (SOCA), discovered a huge drug-smuggling ring in neighbouring Gambia. In a raid on a Lebanese timber factory 45 kilometres outside the capital Banjul, they seized 85 bags of pure cocaine, worth 121 million EUR, equivalent to over 1 billion USD at street value, on top of arms and 210,000 EUR in cash. This was one of the biggest cocaine busts ever in West Africa, according to the deputy director of SOCA, Neil Giles¹⁰ (Gharbi 2010). For a long time, Gambia had already been suspected of being another safe haven for international drug cartels from South America and their West African counterparts, closely related to traffickers in Guinea-Bissau.

Whereas Nigeria and Ghana were renowned centres of drug trafficking in the 1990s, Guinea-Bissau has apparently become one of the hubs of the cocaine trade in this region during only the past seven years. Three outstanding seizures aroused the attention of international observers: In September 2006, the police arrested two Colombians in Bissau accused of being involved in trafficking 670 kilograms of cocaine, found at their home. Within hours after the arrest, military officers forced the police to hand over the confiscated cocaine in order to transfer it to a crumbling Treasury building, where the consignment disappeared some days later. The accused were released on the orders of the attorney general by the local judge without a legal explanation, and the case was filed but postponed.¹¹ It was resumed one year later because of the alleged involvement of high-ranking officers of the army and senior government officials in the disappearance of the drugs (UNODC 2007: 6). In April 2007, another consignment of 635 kilograms was seized in a vehicle carrying two soldiers and a civilian. But the traffickers escaped with the rest, believed to amount to 2.5 tonnes, which had been flown to an abandoned military airstrip at Cufar near Catio in the southern part of the country. The soldiers were released because they were allegedly considered hitchhikers who were “simply in the wrong place at the wrong time”, as the army spokesman Colonel Asenio Balde declared later on (Vulliamy 2008: 4). On 12 July 2008, another clandestine plane from Venezuela landed at Bissau international airport and was immediately cordoned off by military personnel. Its cargo was loaded onto vehicles and

driven to an unknown destination. The army again blocked any judicial investigation (US-HRR 2009).

In short, cocaine in transit had obviously increasingly been stockpiled in Guinea-Bissau by Colombian drug cartels since 2004, apparently with the consent of and in close cooperation with parts of the army and high-ranking politicians. Later on it was shipped to Europe, either by boat or overland via Morocco, or flown in by 'mules', i.e. couriers with about 0.8 kilogram each hidden in their stomach or luggage. Often, the 'mules' applied the so-called 'shotgun' method in order to overcome law enforcement personnel at departure and destination. In December 2006, the police at Schiphol Airport, Amsterdam, detected 32 'mules' on a single flight, mostly Nigerians, with cocaine from Guinea-Bissau (Vulliamy 2008: 3). In August 2007, the Guinean air force announced closer surveillance and the deployment of anti-aircraft artillery to some of the 88 islands of the Bijagos archipelago, supposedly a hot spot of cocaine transit, in view of its remote location, the lack of surveillance and reports on the landing of unidentified small aircraft suspected of drug transporting (UNODC 2007: 9). However, high-ranking officers of the armed forces continued to intervene in narcotics investigations conducted by the judicial police. In 2008, the minister of justice, the attorney general and the director of the judicial police received death threats in response to their stance against drug trafficking (US-HRR 2009: 1). José Américo Bubo Na Tchuto, the navy chief of staff who was suspected of being involved in the trafficking, was suspended in August 2008 after an alleged coup attempt. He was kept under house arrest but subsequently escaped to neighbouring Gambia.

The 2009 political crisis following the murders of the chief of defence staff, General Batista Tagme Na Wai and Head of State João Bernardo 'Nino' Vieira, a few hours later on 1 March 2009, was mainly due to increasing factionalism in the military. Yet, it was probably also linked to the surge in organized drug trafficking, in which apparently the former navy chief Na Tchuto, living in self-imposed exile in Gambia after being accused of aiding a coup attempt, had been involved, too (ICG 2009: 1, 3-4). Hardly a year later, drug cartels based in Gambia and Guinea-Bissau were once more suspected of involvement in another abortive coup in Bissau on 1 April 2010. Among the supposed instigators of the coup attempt was again former Guinean navy chief Na Tchuto. He had clandestinely returned from his exile in Banjul to Bissau in December 2009, taking refuge at the local UN mission. At the end of May, Na Tchuto, who had apparently resumed his position as a key figure in the Guinean

army, was acquitted of the charge of being involved in an attempted coup in 2008 by a military tribunal (RFI, 1 June 2010).

The 'narco state': Facts and fiction of a biased concept

Under these conditions, Guinea-Bissau had seemingly become the African country the most completely immersed in the drug trade (Ellis 2009: 191). For some scholars and politicians it has even become the textbook example of the first African 'narco-state' (Kirschke, 2008: 1; Bybee 2009; Johansen 2008: 4). Narco states are perceived as a specific type of failed states, where state failure is mainly due to the power elite's involvement in drug trafficking.¹² The grossly insufficient administrative and political structures that impede the effective control of the territory and the combat of drug trafficking endanger the peace consolidation process not only in Guinea-Bissau. For the US government, other global players, the UN and concerned international NGOs, this posed a potential new global security threat, not least because drug money is said to be closely linked to small arms proliferation and to financing international terrorism.¹³ Organized crime, drug trafficking and terrorism are seen as the "new Achilles' heel of West Africa" (Andrés 2008). Hence, on 25 June 2008, the UN Security Council urged the government in Bissau to stop the trafficking and to "strengthen its international and regional cooperation to fight the narcotics trade and organised crime plaguing the country" (Panapress, 7 July 2008). For the International Crisis Group (ICG, Brussels), one of the leading think tanks on conflict analysis and prevention, state failure is the core weakness at the root of the recurrent political crises and the proliferation of criminal networks in Guinea-Bissau. The ICG sees a real risk of the country becoming a 'narco state', attractive to drug barons as well as to terrorist networks in the Maghreb.¹⁴ According to its analysis, since independence in 1974, no political leader has really tried to establish the structures necessary for a functioning democratic state. Yet, the ICG experts hold that only the implementation of effective state institutions and the regulation of political competition, no longer entrenched in the guerrilla mentality generated by the struggle for liberation, but built upon a functioning multiparty system, could end the current political crisis and provide a basis for sustainable development in Guinea-Bissau. Consequently, the ICG strongly advised the international donor community to urgently support efforts to consolidate democracy, reform the security sector and construct viable state structures (ICG 2008: 1, 24; ICG 2009).

However, international endeavours to assist RGB's democratization process, guided by the 'failed' or 'narco state' concept, are likely to fail as well. An increasingly critical scholarly review of the concept revealed that it is heavily biased in several aspects (Call 2008; Hameiri 2007; Bøås/Jennings 2007; Groves 2008; Hagmann/Hoehne 2009): First, its political use is often inherently based on the global player's perception of security. Notably those states (like Afghanistan, Sudan and Somalia) have been labelled 'failed' where the breakdown of formal institutions was perceived as a threat to Western security interests.¹⁵ Others with similar deficiencies (like Angola and Ivory Coast) were even assisted and hedged, as far as they continued to provide an enabling environment for international capital or hegemonic foreign policies.¹⁶ Second, the focus of the 'failed state' concept on state capacity, notably on order and security, as represented by the assumed five 'core institutions' of the state (military, police, civil service, justice and government), without due regard to other equally important political factors, such as equality, empowerment or human rights, disregards important possible tensions and trade-offs in promoting state-building (Call 2008: 1496-1497). If state reconstruction is analysed in technocratic terms, concentrating on a single panacea (namely 'order') for quite different illnesses, the political economy and social nature of state- and nation-building – as reflected in the different nature of regimes – are likely to be ignored (Hameiri 2007: 122; Call 2008: 1497-1498).

Alternative methodological approaches of statehood in sub-Saharan Africa centre around concepts of the 'shadow state' (Ellis 2009: 195), of 'para-statal institutions' (Trotha 2000), and of the (re-)emergence of non-state political orders (Klute et al. 2008:17-19; Bellagamba/Klute 2008), all inseparably interwoven with more or less stable forms of the 'modern' state. Yet, only a 'modern state' corresponds to the generalized notion of statehood that prevails in Western concepts of 'failed states'. The alternative concepts mentioned above refer to competing political actors and social networks, active at the local, national or transnational level, which – depending on their particular interest – effectively supplement, replace or counteract institutions of the modern nation-state. This is particular important in view of the history of state-building in Africa and the blurred zones of sovereignty and legitimacy in contemporary Africa (Bellagamba/Klute 2008:11, 20), notably the age-old dualism between customary and colonial rule, reinforced by the practice of indirect rule and its repercussions felt even now, particularly in Anglophone Africa: these competing political actors imply also transnational informal power networks and institutions of governance on all levels, from local chieftaincy or the district council to the state house in the capital. Most

often these deeply rooted but clouded political structures are hidden from Western politicians' view. Nevertheless, they are by no means a relic of the past, restricted to remote rural areas, but very much alive, continually transforming and inventing themselves anew, in Africa in general (Bellagamba/Klute 2008; Chabal/Daloz 2006, Meagher 2006) and in RGB in particular (Klute et al 2008; Forrest 2003; Rudebeck 2001; Schiefer 2002). Therefore, it is imperative to consider these 'shadow state' structures both in analyses of 'failed states' and with regard to remedies to overcome state failure.

INCREASED AID: THE MOST PROMISING WAY TO TURN AROUND FAILED (NARCO) STATES?

Even the introduction of multiparty democracy along with relatively strong core state institutions would not necessarily guarantee peace and sustainable development in RGB. Similar to the failure of the socialist development path, applauded and heavily assisted in RGB to no avail by so-called progressive donors in the 1980s (Schiefer 2002; Kohnert 1988), democratization is also likely to fail if primordial informal politics are allowed to prevail unchecked. This has been shown even in the model case of the Republic of Benin, the highly praised 'lighthouse' of democratic renewal in Africa, that showed the futility of formal democratization if pursued within the deeply rooted and revered socio-cultural framework of patronage and rent-seeking (Bierschenk 2009). Under these conditions, additional development assistance (ODA) in countries that are already highly aid-dependent like RGB¹⁷ (also called 'aid orphans') can be easily transformed into a 'sovereign rent'¹⁸ for the politico-administrative and military elite. In fact, Guinea's power elite have increasingly relied on sovereign rents from aid and illicit trade, e.g. fishery, drugs, weapons, in recent decades (Schiefer 2002). Thus, in the worst case scenario, well-meant but ill-applied aid could exert (and probably already yielded) similar devastating effects on the democratization process as sovereign resource rents (for the concept see Collier 2006: 1484). The latter include not just official rents from oil or fishing rights, but also illicit rents from criminal networks and drug trafficking. Altogether, they make patronage politics financially feasible and thus contribute to derail the democratization process.

Nevertheless, Paul Collier and others maintain that aid does not constitute a sovereign rent and therefore is not likely to have effects akin to resource rents. Therefore, they consider international technical assistance, closely supervised within the framework of political

conditioning, to be the most promising way to fund ‘turnarounds’ and to address the problem of ‘failing states’ (Collier 2006: 1492-1496). Yet, there is no robust proof that aid could not act in a way comparable to resource rents. It would depend on the aims and methods of implementation of aid, meant to increase the empowerment of the people. Even *ex ante* governance conditionality of aid utterly failed in RGB and elsewhere in Africa because it did not sufficiently consider the informal structures of the ‘shadow state’. In RGB, for example, aid has been misused over decades as a sovereign rent, not controlled by any political system of checks and balances on the part of Guinean citizens (Djankov et al. 2008; Schiefer 2002; Kohnert 1988). Although international donors’ rhetoric of aid conditionality has stressed time and again the need to curb aid for poor performers like RGB, the provision of ODA has continued on a substantial scale. The donor community was increasingly concerned about the opportunity cost of non-intervention (Einarsdóttir 2007: 107-108), and this not only with respect to felt needs and interests of the local population, but also in view of Western global security and regional stability concerns. Yet, aid strategies based on these interests, focussing on rather technocratic aspects of formal institution-building, do not necessarily have the desired impact on empowerment or democratization from below which is the *ne plus ultra* of sustainable development in Africa (Crawford 2009).

Nation-building as a precondition of state-building

Therefore, the international call for the building of a (strong) state in RGB (ICG 2008) misses the point: As mentioned above, the most pressing need is not state-building without regard to its firm anchorage in society and economy, but nation-building from below as a base of duly legitimized sustainable democratic state institutions. The regime created and sustained by Nino Vieira was detached from the majority of the population and based on ‘narrow power networks’ faithful to the ruler (Temudo 2008:248; Forrest 2002:261). Yet, it should be underlined again: There is no unilateral path dependency or sequencing. Africa’s new nationalism, the repercussions of which have been discussed in detail elsewhere (Kohnert 2009; 2008), has been shaped decisively by the consequences of globalization (not least by transnational networks of drug and weapons trafficking) and by the increasing cleavages between the poor and the rich (Dorman et al. 2007).

Nation-building is the formation of a political community and its struggle for freedom, justice and democracy with the ultimate aim of conquering the commanding heights of state power as the political sovereign. Therefore, nation-building often precedes state-building. By

the way, it is doubtful whether – despite lip service to the contrary by African rulers since independence – nation-building has ever been on the agenda of African states (Chipkin 2007:35). They were mainly interested in state-building. As Patrice Nganang (2010:1, 4-5) put it in a nutshell recently in his key speech to the international African Congress at Mainz, for most African rulers independence and sovereignty meant first and foremost their monopoly on violence, or as he sarcastically put it, the right to kill, and this despite all rhetoric on pan-Africanism, Négritude and authenticity. Whereas nation-building may have still been a major point on the agenda of African freedom fighters, like Amilcar Cabral and Guinea's liberation movement in the early 1970s in order to defeat the Portuguese colonial state 'from below', it was surely not one of the priorities of the subsequent heads of states in Bissau.

However, quite independently from official politics, in many African countries the population created the socio-cultural base of a new African nationalism by themselves. Sport, notably soccer, is a well-known example and a source of newly acquired national pride. Michael Billig (1995), and more recently Paul Nugent (2010a) described how "banal nationalism" became firmly anchored in everyday life in Africa, whether in specific common languages, food and other consumption patterns, music, the video industry, market literature, etc. Certainly, relations of national commensality do not necessarily result in national consciousness (Nugent 2010a), but more often than not they do. Many patterns of national custom even became so deeply engrained in the past 50 years that they were perceived as 'banal' and understood, hardly noticed anymore by the ordinary people. Often they become aware of them only if 'foreigners' do not share their customs. But then the extraordinary power of the newly acquired national pride becomes frequently visible in the outburst of xenophobia (cf. Kohnert 2009). The political history of citizenship in Africa is closely and increasingly linked to accelerated mobility and migration enforced by globalization. This also provides the base for counteracting 'politics of belonging' instrumentalized by particular political elites to their own advantage. There are several examples from other African countries, as shown by the recurrent outbursts of xenophobia in South Africa, Côte d'Ivoire and elsewhere. States may even entirely collapse without disappearing as nations from the social imaginary, as Crawford Young rightly observed in his theoretical contribution to a reader edited by Sara Dorman, Daniel Hammett and Paul Nugent (2007:241). Bissau is certainly not spared from this risk, as the rancour against bi-national Cape Verdeans after independence – or more recently, cleavages between Gambian and Senegalese petty traders and their Guinean

counterparts – demonstrated. However, up to now the common Guinean culture is more a uniting factor than a dividing one, which should provide a solid base for nation- and state-building. The development of a new Guinean identity from below, notably a common Creole language and a truly national Guinean culture, has been analysed in detail elsewhere (Mourao 2009: 95-100; Augel 2007; Rudebeck 2001; Augel/Cardoso 1996). The feeling of national identity of Guineans was reinforced by their successful armed struggle against colonial domination, a common and unifying tradition, including shared language, culture, customs and religion. In short, the basic cultural infrastructure of belonging to a nation remains intact but needs to be reinforced in order to become a sound base for state-building (Rudebeck 2001; Chipkin 2007:200-205).

CONCLUSION: GUINEA-BISSAU IN NEED OF NATION-BUILDING FROM BELOW AS BASE OF RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE WARRING FACTIONS OF THE URBAN POWER ELITE

Far beyond multiparty politics, complex power structures, including informal institutions, need to be addressed. A re-orientation of aid and transnational norm-building networks aiming to empower the people could have a considerable impact on nation-building and the reconciliation between warring factions of the political and military elite in Bissau. However, increased technical assistance of the international donor community does not necessarily foster the required turnaround. To be sustainable, aid needs to be not just massive, rapid and effective – it requires a re-orientation of the overall aims of development assistance in RGB and elsewhere (Moore et al. 2010). Accompanying measures included the curbing of ‘perverse incentives’ for corrupt elites (like ‘tax havens’, sovereign wealth funds, illegal rent-taking opportunities, etc., induced by globalization; Moore 2010: 9, 12-14). Global concerns about stability and security should be balanced against the pressing need for nation-building by bottom-up democratization and integration of cherished informal political and economic institutions into an essentially revised state structure. A piecemeal but painstaking democratization of the fabric of informal politics, including chieftaincy and a meaningful decentralization policy from below (Crawford 2009; Klute et al 2008), would be required to lay a sustainable base for a functioning democracy at the grassroots level, which could eventually lead to a more responsive government. In short, there is nothing that could replace political struggle for real democracy from below.

As Lars Rudebeck (2001) aptly summarized in his study on democracy's sustainability in RGB, more complex power structures need to be addressed, far beyond the multiparty system and conventional election procedures. In this respect, a Sovereign National Conference, following the Benin model of the "democratic renewal" from below, involving representatives from all relevant strata of society (Kohnert 2011; Adamon 1995; Banégas 1995; Heilbrunn 1993), could ignite a true democratization process concerning its substantial and innovative social and political impetus to empowerment.¹⁹ However, this would hold only if the political class and civil society institutions in Bissau take all necessary precautions to avoid the salient negative aftermath of the betrayal of the results of the Sovereign National Conferences, e.g. in Lomé by the ruling class in the 1990s (Nwajiaku 1994). Due consideration should also be paid to the lessons learned from a similar but less sustainable Guinean exercise of a National Conference after the civil war in 1999. In this respect, the most recent endeavour of the Guinean Parliament, backed by the UN, the National Institute of Studies and Research (INEP, Bissau) and the Portuguese branch of the international NGO Interpeace (Aliança Internacional para a Consolidação da Paz) to create civic peace initiatives (Voz di Paz, created in 2007)²⁰ and to convey a true National Conference of Reconciliation in spring 2011, is a step in the right direction. On its agenda are the identification of the causes of conflicts in RGB, the contradictions between state and civic institutions, and conflict prevention strategies. Besides representatives from various government departments, civic and religious organizations, veterans, women, youth and the media are meant to participate, too (UN-SC 2011).

Yet, a successful take-off would require not just 'good governance' in the sense of international donors concerns, but also the incorporation of democratic discourse and institutions at the local level. In order to be sustainable, this must be accompanied by substantial economic improvements in the livelihood of ordinary citizens.²¹ Democratization alone will not satisfy the basic needs of the people, as there is no guarantee that it will lead automatically to pro-poor economic growth (Robinson 1994:610).²² Altogether, the proposed new focus of aid and national politics would probably be more efficient to install enduring peace, security and democratization than the pursuit of multiparty democracy and formal institution-building by foreign aid, without due regard to the underlying informal political setting and its vested hidden interests. This is not to say that economic post-conflict recovery strategies would be useless. Yet, they make sense only as complementary measures, and they

should differ from standard approaches of economic development and poverty reduction in that they give a premium to reintegration of ex-combatants, job creation for young men, and deep cuts in military spending (Collier 2009).

NOTES

¹ "In spite of the nature of elections as 'good in themselves', they also are instruments of a global agenda for a post-Cold War order hinged upon certain values." (Obi 2007:3).

² "Stressing the importance of the upcoming presidential election in Guinea-Bissau of 28 June 2009, and the need to have free, fair and transparent *elections as a crucial and necessary step* towards the full return to constitutional order, consolidation of democracy and national reconciliation" (UN-SC 2009b, author's emphasis) was seen as imperative.

³ Also Issa K. Barry: 'Guiné Bissau: Pourquoi ils ont fait tomber le bonnet rouge'. *L'Observateur Paalga*, 31 July 2009 (editorial): "Beaucoup d'observateurs de la scène politique se demandent légitimement à quoi servira ce passage forcé aux urnes tant qu'il n'y a pas la paix dans les cœurs. Si ce n'est à choisir le prochain mouton de sacrifice."

⁴ However, following the attempted coup of 1 April 2010, the EU mission for the reform of the defence and security sector in Guinea-Bissau suspended its mission on 31 May 2010. It conditioned the resumption of the mission to the liberation of army head Zamora Induta, imprisoned by the insurgents in Mansoa prison, and to the prosecution of the coup instigators. Notícias lusófonas: 'UE condiciona após a libertação de Zamora Induta e a novas chefias militares'. 21 May 2010.

⁵ Baciro Dabó, an independent presidential candidate, although a PAIGC member and minister for Territorial Administration, was slain at his home in Bissau on the eve of the electoral campaign, allegedly because he attempted to resist a detention order (here and in the following ICG 2009:6-7; EU-EOM preliminary report 2009:3, 7). Helder Proença, former defence minister, was also killed, along with two of his bodyguards. Apparently he and Dabó had been accused by José Zamora Induta, the interim army chief, of having been responsible for a coup attempt. Supposedly there were misgivings in high military circles that Dabó, a close ally of murdered president Vieira, would take the masterminds behind the extra-legal killings of the president and his army chief to task if he won the elections. A second presidential candidate, Faustino Imbalí, former prime minister, was beaten and kidnapped by soldiers the same day. A third candidate, Pedro Infanda, leader of the Ecological Party (LIPE), withdrew his candidacy on 23 March 2009 after having been intimidated and beaten by soldiers. Paulo Mendonca, still another presidential candidate, demanded in vain the adjournment of the elections in line with constitutional stipulations which foresee a postponement if any of the candidates dies. However, the Supreme Court rejected his request because of overriding concerns.

⁶ ECOWAS and AU monitors reported (like the EU-EOM) "Eleições transparentes mas com visível cansaço dos eleitores". However, they noted, "de uma maneira geral que houve um certo cansaço dos eleitores', tendo acrescentado 'porquê votar se a escolha será a mesma?'. A União Africana (UA), com 16 observadores saudou igualmente um escrutínio "livre, transparente e equitativo." (Notícias Lusofonas, 28 July 2009). Similarly, national radio stations in Bissau justified the low turnout with the lack of credit of the 'political class' and the lack of new political concepts in the view of the voters: "Campanha eleitoral sem debate de ideias pode aumentar abstenção: "A campanha eleitoral para a segunda volta das presidenciais na Guiné-Bissau está a ser marcada pela ausência do debate de ideias o que pode aumentar a abstenção, referiram à agência Lusa vários directores de rádios guineenses. ... "Há um candidato que se sente confortável com a vitória, fazendo a leitura dos resultados da primeira volta, e não se dá a grandes esforços para tentar convencer o eleitorado com propostas", referiu. ... Para Nelo Regala, a abstenção representa igualmente que as "pessoas deixaram de acreditar na classe política". ... "É o cartão vermelho que o povo está a mostrar aos nossos dirigentes sobre os assassinatos que assistimos na Guiné-Bissau." <www.noticiaslusofonas.com/>; 20 July 2009).

⁷ On general voter motivation in RGB: "The relative high percentage of invalid votes in the 1st round [3.6 per cent] could be explained by the fact that the voting lists still included the names of the two murdered presidential candidates; votes for them counted as 'invalid' (EU-EOM 2009 prelim report). See also Sangreman et al. 2008.

⁸ "...but as the experiences of Nino Vieira and Luiz Cabral [and Kumba Yala, D.K.] showed, the main risk to the country's stability came from the practice of governing outside the country's institutional frameworks." (ICG 2008:15).

⁹ This is mainly due to decreasing effective demand in the US and the depreciation of the US dollar's exchange rate relative to the euro. "According to U.N. figures, two pounds of uncut cocaine can now fetch as much as \$45,000 on the streets of Europe, as opposed to less than half that price (\$22,000) in the U.S." (Kirschke 2008).

¹⁰ A further 60 empty bags of cocaine were found in the hideaway, indicating that this was a major redistribution centre of drugs, and that apparently only a fraction of the drugs trafficked had been discovered. The company, the Muktharr Trading Store, situated between Bonto village and Pirang in Kombo East District, Western Region of Gambia, was owned by a Lebanese-born businessman, Mukharr, a close associate of Gambian Head of State Jahya Jammeh; Gibba, Bakary (2010): Major cocaine 'catch' in Gambia: Lebanese timber factory transformed

into a cocaine zone. *Freedom Newspaper Radio*, 8 June 2010. In another big haul on 28 May 2010, seven foreign nationals, from Russia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Ghana, were arrested on drug trafficking charges in Liberia. Drug enforcement officials seized four tonnes (out of 6 tonnes which were supposed to be shipped via Monrovia to the US) of Colombian cocaine with a street value of 100 million USD in Monrovia, shipped from Venezuela to Liberia for further distribution, mainly to the United States. The arrested members of the drug ring were accused of trying to bribe high-level Liberian officials, including President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's son (who had worked as an undercover agent of the US Drug Enforcement Agency), to protect the trafficking ("US cocaine sting breaks up 100 million dollar Liberia plot", AFP/Breitbart@com, 1 June 2010).

¹¹ For detailed accounts of these and other outstanding cases cf. Dabo (2007); Walt (2007); Pinto/Pereira (2007); Vulliamy/Ferrett (2008); also Vincent (2007); IRIN (2007); Vernaschi (2009).

¹² "A 'narco-state' has been defined as 'an area that has been taken over and is controlled and corrupted by drug cartels and where law enforcement is effectively nonexistent', it is hard to deny that Guinea-Bissau is Africa's first 'Narco-State'" (Bybee 2009: 18). A detailed description of the structures of a 'narco state' is given by West (2006: 10-11), taking the example of Tajikistan.

¹³ According to the renowned Brookings Index of State Weakness, RGB belongs to the most vulnerable countries worldwide, liable to pose serious transnational security threats. In fact, the country ranks in the lowest 20 per cent of the so-called 'critical weak states' (rank 18 out of 141 developing countries, between Burma and Ethiopia, (Rice/Patrick 2008: 16-17)). The Fund for Peace and Foreign Policy initiative ranked RGB as 27th out of 37 states indexed as 'failed states' with an acute security alert in 2009 (Fund for Peace 2009).

¹⁴ According to Antonio Mazzitelli, the West African representative of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, trafficking is at the roots of the menace to political stability and sustainable democratization. "Certainly the major threat that drug trafficking or all other transnational organized crime introduces into the West African scenario at large is the possibility of hijacking and influencing the democratic process. [...] Thanks to the enormous financial and corruptive power of this money, this is a major concern in a country like Guinea-Bissau" (Latham 2009; Mazzitelli 2007: 1087).

¹⁵ Since 2002, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, there has been a remarkable shift in the US National Security Strategy, which concludes: "America is now threatened less by conquering states than by failing ones" (quoted by Call 2008: 1491).

¹⁶ For detailed examples cf. Bøås/Jennings (2007).

¹⁷ About 80 per cent of Bissau's state budget is derived from ODA (Einarsdóttir 2007: 105). The country is second only to the Comoros on the list of most dependent countries worldwide, receiving on average (1970–1999) the equivalent of almost 14 per cent of GDP as aid (Djankov et al. 2008: 173).

¹⁸ For a definition cf. Collier 2006: 1484.

¹⁹ A Sovereign National Conference as a basis for meaningful democratization and stabilization should not be confused with the pledges to install a "national conference" by established political leaders, issued for example by the acting president Malam Bacai Sanhá of the *Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde* (PAIGC) in the election campaign of the presidential elections of 2009 (resolutions and demands of the *Conferência Nacional de Diálogo*, Bissau, 25 to 26 May 2009 (Lusa, 26 May 2009; 'Declaração de Bissau'). A National Conference dominated by the government or the power elite of the country runs the risk of rather serving to consolidate established political structures, as demonstrated by similar events in the history of independent RGB.

²⁰ For details see the website: www.interpeace.org/index.php/Guinea-Bissau/Impact/Results.html; 02 December 2009

²¹ The cost of rice, a basic staple food in RGB, increased on average by 20 to 30 percent over the past year (UNSC-2009a.8), although the government has tried in vain since decades to provide affordable supply of basic food for the poorer sections of the population.

²² For recent examples of studies on the linkage of democratization and economic development with an focus on Africa Rodrik / Wacziarg 2005; Nel 2005; Ndulu et al 2008. Yet, robust quantitative evidence on the linkage is lacking. In view of the predominance of informal political and economic institutions in West Africa, hypotheses or theoretical substantiation on this linkage, based on chronically imperfect quantitative data on economic growth in Africa, are challenged out of methodological reasons (Kohnert 2008 for more details).

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