

**Patrick Chabal and Toby Green, eds. *Guinea-Bissau: Micro-State to 'Narco-State'*.**

London: C. Hurst & Company, 2016. Distributed by Oxford University Press. xxvi + 290 pp. Map. Forward. Note and Acknowledgements. Glossary and Acronyms. Biographical Sketches. Timeline. Notes on Contributors. Bibliography. Index. \$34.95. Paper. ISBN: 978-1849045216.

The transshipment of narcotics from South America into Europe via West Africa is a matter of international concern. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, traffickers warehouse cocaine along the West African coast, with local assistance, awaiting runs into Europe. There, the street value eclipses alternative markets such as the United States and far exceeds the annual gross domestic product of countries such as Guinea-Bissau; this makes it easy to see how institutions may easily be coopted into this illicit trade.

While I was conducting ethnographic fieldwork in 2007, Bissau-Guinean residents would bring me unknown detritus, asking me to identify what had washed up on shore after a storm in hopes that it might be cocaine. In the previous year, rumors had circulated about payoffs to local fisherpersons who had recovered cargo from an abandoned ship found offshore. Locals began to dream about their own potential windfall, the proverbial “ship coming in!” Reports spread of mysterious planes landing at abandoned airstrips, and rumors circulated that Guinea-Bissau’s military was exchanging stockpiled small arms to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) as a buy-in to the lucrative business. The idea of a “Narco-State” had pervaded the local as well as international consciousness about this small West African nation.

The edited volume *Guinea-Bissau* explores this crisis in relation to significant historical, cultural, political, and economic developments. This work is a fitting tribute to the life and legacy of the late Patrick Chabal, who worked tirelessly to portray honestly the history, politics, and people of Guinea-Bissau. Editors Patrick Chabal and Toby Green’s provocative subtitle, *Micro-State to 'Narco-State'*, was intended as an empirical challenge, inviting debate around the highly-circulated and externalized label, *narco-state*.

These adept editors bring together eleven authors whose combined expertise spans decades, assembling twelve chapters that address this issue from many angles. The book is divided into three parts: treating historical fragilities (Green, Forrest, Havik), manifestations of the crisis (Temudo and Abrantes, Sarró and de Barros, Ly, Nafafé), and political consequences of the crisis (Kohl, Massey, Ceesay).

Green acknowledges that the impulse for this book came from Chabal’s 2011 comment about the future of the country: “There is no point in hiding the truth any more” (ix). Yet, that inexplicable truth is that the impoverished population somehow achieves resilience in the face of overwhelming structural barriers to wellbeing.

This is also the major contribution of this volume: each of the authors tracks meaningful structural currents and thoughtfully engages with the implications of these currents in relation to “the crisis.” For example, Green begins by tracing Guinea-Bissau’s “crisis of legitimacy of the post-colonial

state” (1) as an outcome of structural failures and as a counterpoint to long-term demonstrations of resistance to outside influence, making it clear that the country and its citizenry do things their way (7).

Each chapter elucidates important topics used to address the narco-state straw man, its internal logics, and its external inconsistencies. For example, beyond blatant politicking and postcolonial factionalism, inter-ethnic collaboration (Green) and the mistrust of centralized authorities (Forrest) remain normative throughout the country. Coalitions, rural defiance, and direct actions are shown to have largely thwarted the colonial enterprise; “cooperation and peaceful interaction in civil society reflects a similarly long-standing historical tradition” (46). According to Philip J. Havik and reinforced by Temudo and Abrantes, the pillars of Guinea-Bissau’s resilient society are its rural smallholders. However, the “functional complementarity” (90) of these tenuous rural livelihoods faces many new challenges, such as competing land management systems.

Sarró and de Barros address linguistic and religious diversity. For these authors, the crisis and occasional solution is liminality and change, with this “middle ground” (123) leading to imaginative solutions. Managing this “ambiguity” (122) can result in new options such as challenging the gerontocracy. Ly presents yet another dilemma, with emergent identity categories resulting in either empathy or conflict. Ly’s treatment of gender in Guinea-Bissau shows just how pervasive inequality has become. These structures of violence that allow drug trafficking to take root also exacerbate deepening social and economic inequality.

Christoph Kohl reminds the reader that the country’s entanglements in drug trafficking are a symptom of “increased political instability” (161) since the 1998–99 civil war. Kohl warns that the ethnicization of politics remains Guinea-Bissau’s most pressing challenge. Furthermore, a shift to securitization discourse as international aid repositions its mission in the country intensifies already-simmering competition between civil and military elites as they compete over reform decisions (Massey), with the diaspora lending their voice (Nafafé). Unresolved political instability suggests that this crisis will not only continue to affect Guinea-Bissau, but it may also destabilize its neighbors (Ceesay).

Anyone interested in the intersections of West African history and geopolitics should read this book. Chabal and Green create a work that connects a colonial legacy, precolonial identities, and postcolonial competition through issues of “governance, security and state-building” (229). As many of the authors in this collection show, there are clear internal and successful logics of perseverance, collaboration, and openness which indicate that Guinea-Bissau remains a country that “works” even in the face of significant socio-economic and political pressures (Chabal and Daloz, *Africa Works* [IUP, 1999]).

Brandon D. Lundy  
 Kennesaw State University  
 Kennesaw, Georgia  
 blundy@kennesaw.edu

doi:10.1017/asr.2018.62