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SMUGGLING IDEOLOGIES

Theory and reality in African clandestine economies

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Introduction

In Africa, clandestine economies get an identity change about once every decade. From the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s they were associated with economic distortions (May 1985; World Bank 1981); from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s they were about indigenous entrepreneurship and regional integration from below (Egg & Igue 1993; MacGaffey 1991; World Bank 1989). From the late 1990s through much of the ‘noughties’ they have been linked with corruption and criminalization of the state (Bayart et al. 1999; Reno 2000); from the late ‘noughties’ clandestine trade was all about real governance and more authentic forms of state formation (Menkhaus 2006/7; Raeymaekers 2010). Recently, a more selective approach distinguishes ‘acceptable’ clandestine trade that creates employment for women and youth, from criminal revenue streams for rebels and global terrorists (Van den Boogaard et al. 2021; Kodero 2020; Maguire and Haenlin 2016; Titeca 2019). With so many changes of character, it is pertinent to ask whether these reflect shifts in the nature and effects of clandestine economies themselves, or shifts in the way they are perceived by international researchers and development practitioners.

A close empirical examination of African clandestine economies (or informal cross-border trade, aka ‘smuggling’) reveals that they have always involved a variety of elements, ranging from responses to economic distortions through indigenous entrepreneurship to criminalization, depending on which countries or regions one is looking at, and when. In some countries, such as Nigeria, clandestine trade has weakened industrialization efforts and undermined the formal economy; in others, such as Benin or the Gambia which derive significant revenue from operating as local import hubs, it is central to the organization of the formal economy (Bach 1999; Golub & Mbaye 2009; Igué 1977; Sall & Sallah 1994). In still other countries, such as Sierra Leone or the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), clandestine economies are bound up with rebels and rogue military forces that ravage the state and society, while in contrasting cases, such as Senegal, clandestine trade has actually contributed to social stability and processes of state formation (Babou 2002; Lindley 2009; Malcolmson 1996; Reno 2003; Renton et al. 2007).

In this chapter, I will consider the role of ideological framing and international policy objectives in shaping and reshaping our understanding of African clandestine economies,

focusing on the ongoing tension between criminalizing smuggling activities and portraying them as developmental sources of state building and poverty alleviation. I argue that prevailing development perspectives on African clandestine economies often obscure rather than clarify the changing effects of illicit trade on governance and development in various African contexts. To trace the gap between smuggling ideologies and smuggling realities, I will focus on informal cross-border trading systems in West Africa during the 1990s and their role in underpinning criminalization discourses, and on violent Eastern African cross-border trading complexes in the 2000s centred on the Great Lakes region, which have been central to hybrid governance narratives of the constructive role of smuggling networks in African state formation. In both cases, the liminality of smuggling and a tendency to pathologize or essentialize African realities provide a palette for theorizing illicit trading activities around international notions of the 'right' kind of order, rather than around the national political and economic processes and popular development aspirations.

African clandestine economies and model shopping

African clandestine trading systems have played havoc with conventional theories of states and economies – they expanded rather than contracted in the face of liberal market reforms, and became entwined with rather than replaced by the formal institutions of the state (Egg & Herrera 1998; Hibou 1999; Meagher 2003; Nabuguzi 1994). By the late 1990s, the recognition that smuggling was neither reined in by liberalization, nor transformed into a seedbed of liberal entrepreneurship turned from disillusionment to alarm as African trading networks began to seize the opportunities of liberalization and globalization to expand their clandestine reach into the global economy (Duffield 2000; Meagher 2003). This set the stage for the rise of criminalization perspectives, which defended the Weberian model of the rational-legal state by pathologizing African clandestine trade as mechanisms of violent predation, 'war economies' and 'shadow states' (Bayart et al. 1999; Collier & Hoeffler 2000; Reno 2000).

A decade later, these Afro-pessimist interpretations have given way to more sanguine views of the developmental capacities of non-state forms of order. Weberian models of the bureaucratic state have been overtaken by models based on Olson's stationary bandit and Tillyan notions of state formation as a violent process. In the process, the developmental implication of Africa's smuggling networks are being rehabilitated across the continent. What is going on? Have African clandestine economies changed the way they operate, or have researchers developed better approaches to understanding their impact on development, or is something else afoot?

Two main processes seem to be at work here, one practical and the other theoretical. On the one hand, a recognition of the poor performance and high cost of conventional approaches to state-building are encouraging a search for alternative means of restoring order in hard-to-govern regions of the continent (Menkhaus 2006/7; Reno 2004; see also Meagher 2012). As Thomas Bierschenk (2010:2) points out, decades of detailed anthropological work on informal and non-state forms of organization have revealed that 'political order is possible without the state,' leading to a rethink of imported Weberian models of the rational bureaucratic state, increasingly regarded as an unnecessary luxury for Africa's fragile regions. On the other hand, emerging theoretical perspectives that focus on the notion of 'hybrid governance' suggest that violence and rival forms of order and authority may be part of more authentic processes of state-formation rather than symptoms of criminality and state failure (Boege et al. 2009a; Hagmann & Peclard 2010; MacGinty 2010; Menkhaus 2008; Vlassenroot & Raeymaekers 2008). Non-state forms of order not only offer better value for money, but a new theoretical packaging suggests

they may be acceptable and even preferable paths to development (Boege et al. 2009a:14). Similar to Keebit von Benda-Beckman's notion of 'forum shopping,' prevailing development thinking seems to have gone shopping for new models of African clandestine trade to fit changing political and developmental objectives (Benda-Beckmann 1981).

In the process, thinking about clandestine economies has shifted away from Weberian models of economic and political institutions, to a realization that the opposite of rational bureaucratic order is not disorder and corruption, but informal forms of order. The image of a 'shadow economy' regulated by a 'shadow state' is giving way to the recognition of a range of indigenous institutions that create local forms of order in the shadow of the state. This has been facilitated by an improved institutional understanding of informal forms of order, and a realization that they can be enlisted to create a measure of stability at lower cost. As James Ferguson (2006:208) argues in his provocative book *Global Shadows*, engaging with informal systems of order and authority means that 'capital investment can be institutionalized in a way that makes it possible to cut out the "overhead" of a national-level societal project and to provide political order "flexibly" on an as-needed basis, to restricted and delimited non-national spaces.' This 'aha moment' has been followed by an explosion of interest in arguments by Charles Tilly and Mancur Olson that violence and protection rackets are not necessarily signs of criminality and regulatory collapse but harbingers of new, more locally-embedded forms of order (Olson 1993; Tilly 1985). While Tilly (1985:170) stresses the interdependence among war making, state making and organized crime, Olson (1993:569) critiques the denigration of predatory states, arguing that 'the metaphor of predation obscures the great superiority of stationary banditry over anarchy and the advances on civilization that have resulted from it.'

While Tilly expressed reservations about the extension of his theories from early modern Europe to contemporary developing countries (Tilly 1985:185–186), recent research on cross-border trade and informal markets has revealed greater confidence in the applicability of these ideas to twenty-first century Africa. Contemporary studies of clandestine trade in the DRC, Uganda, Somalia and various parts of West Africa have all drawn explicitly on the work of Tilly or Olson to suggest that large-scale smuggling activities and violent forms of regulation are not instances of African regulatory pathologies, but represent the replacement of imported and unworkable ideal types with more embedded systems of order and state formation (Boege et al. 2009b:601; Chalfin 2010; Menkhaus 2006/7; Raeymaekers 2010; Reno 2009; Titeca 2011:61).

In addition to bringing new scholars of African clandestine trade to the fore, some more established proponents of criminalization perspectives have shifted gear. William Reno initially associated 'illicit economies' with corrupt 'Shadow States' using corruption and violent predation to dismantle rational bureaucracies (Reno 1997, 2000, 2006). In subsequent work, Reno has turned to Tillyian and Olsonian notions of violence as an alternative source of order, and uses them to show how violence and war economies in contemporary West Africa can lead to 'indigenous ... as opposed to internationally scripted transitions' (Reno 2009:317). He highlights the shift from predation to peaceful economic competition in West African contexts, as networks of violence and plunder built up during conflict are transformed into legitimate political and business relationships, leading to the claim that 'These developments represent the emergence of new forms of governance outside the framework of imported notions of reform and state-building' (Reno 2009:313).

This greater appreciation of local institutional process, warts and all, is certainly to be welcomed. The bizarre twist in this theoretical rehabilitation of African clandestine economies, however, is that they tend to be applied to contexts in which cross-border trading activities are empirically more violent and criminal than those conventionally cited to support the older criminalization narratives. Examples of the criminalization of African states and economies in

the late 1990s tended to be drawn from relatively peaceful informal business systems in West and West Central Africa (Egg & Herrera 1998; Flynn 1997; Grégoire 1992; Gregoire & Labazee 1993; Igue & Soule 1992; Meagher 2003). By contrast, contemporary 'hybrid governance' views of clandestine trade as transformative tend to be drawn from contemporary cross-border trading complexes in Eastern Africa, where violence and criminality have made cross-border trade increasingly inimical to popular welfare (Amnesty International 2005; Eichstaedt 2011; Global Witness 2009; Human Rights Watch 2005). Examining why largely peaceful informal commercial networks were represented as criminal, and largely violent smuggling systems are being represented as sources of stability and political transformation raises important questions about the ways in which prevailing interpretations of African clandestine trade are shaped by ideological agendas rather than by empirical realities.

The criminalization of smuggling in West Africa

Many of the most iconic cases of the criminalizing influence of cross-border trade have been drawn from West African clandestine trading systems, as exemplified in the work of Bayart et al. (1999), Janet Roitman (2004) and Mark Duffield (2000; 2001). Likewise, Daniel Bach's (1999) research on informal trade and regional dis-integration draws heavily on West African examples which dominate the Francophone literature (Egg & Herrera 1998; Igue & Soule 1992), and William Reno's (1997, 2000, 2006) model of the shadow state rested heavily on research in Sierra Leone and Nigeria.

Similar research on clandestine trading networks in Zaire/DR Congo was occasionally featured in criminalization narratives of the 1990s (Reno 1998; Bayart et al. 1999), but was much less prominent, owing in large part to the limited global presence of Congolese trading networks. As recognized by Janet MacGaffey and Remi-Bazenuissa-Ganga (2000), Congolese trading networks of the 1980s and 1990s lacked the institutionalized corporate organization of their West African counterparts, confining them to relatively low-level international trading activities. By contrast, West Africa's dynamic smuggling networks used liberalization for a dramatic expansion of their engagement with the global economy, raising alarm in the international community by their ability to bypass formal regulatory structures and subvert the intentions of economic reforms (Meagher 2003). Yet a closer look at the evidence shows that, despite the perceived threat in international policy circles, the vast majority of West African smuggling activities were neither criminal nor violent. They were dominated by trade in legal commodities through illegal channels, and were much less involved with war, illegal goods, or the creation of peripheral centres of power in the 'borderlands.'

War economies vs empirical evidence in West Africa

Criminalization perspectives of the late 1990s routinely linked the highly organized clandestine trading systems of West Africa to 'violent modes of accumulation' based on war, criminality, and trade in illegal goods. The core actors of cross-border trading networks were frequently represented as 'warlords,' 'mafia entities,' and 'rebels' or armed youth, whether the indigenous commercial groups at the heart of these networks had anything to do with war or not (Duffield 2000; Reno 1998; Reno 2000; Roitman 2004). Reno (2000:434) states bluntly that 'this commerce accompanies armed conflict, and plays an important role in provoking and prolonging much of the warfare in Africa.'

In other cases, the link between transnational smuggling networks and violence has been made by dismissing any meaningful distinction between violent and peaceful modes of

clandestine trade. Roland Marchal and Christine Messiant (2003:100) express exasperation with the tendency of commentators on war economies to create an impression of clandestine trade as a 'belligerent factor by definition.' David Keen's (1996) notion of war as 'the pursuit of economics by other means' has been used widely to merge the notion of clandestine trading networks with war economies, even where there is no evidence of war or violence. Reno (2006:31) contends that smuggling networks 'fuse the exercise of political power to violent predation in informal and clandestine markets ... well before these places come to international attention as conflict zones.' Similarly, Mark Duffield (2000:79–80) claims that

Given the general characteristics of transborder trade, it is possible to argue that there is a similarity between peace economies and war economies ... Even when violence is not visible, similar processes of exclusion and oppression can be in operations but at a lower key ... War and peace are relative rather than absolute conditions.

Many of the criminalization narratives also focus attention on illegal goods as the core commodities involved in smuggling networks. Reno (2000:433), Bach (1999:12), Bayart et al. (1999) and others represent African clandestine economies as a nexus of drug smuggling, piracy, blood diamonds, arms, and human trafficking. Janet Roitman (2004:155) gives a similarly nefarious list of smuggled goods in the Chad Basin. Mark Duffield (2001:156) concedes that African smuggling networks are not necessarily associated with war and illegal goods, but contends that the same networks used for trading medicine and manufactured goods are used for money laundering and arms trading, without providing any supporting evidence for this claim.

Closer empirical examination reveals that the bulk of cross-border trade in West Africa is made up of legal goods, has little to do with conflict, and is centred on a dynamic of currency conversion rather than money laundering (Chalfin 2010; Egg & Herrera 1998; Egg & Igue 1993; Igue & Soule 1992; Meagher 1997, 2003). Numerous studies have documented that the driving force behind the expansion of cross-border trade in West Africa has not been war or the lure of high value minerals, but fiscal and monetary disparities created by the patchwork of Francophone and Anglophone colonies across the region. In particular, disparities in tariff and subsidy regimes in neighbouring countries, and the existence of the internationally convertible CFA Francs side-by-side with the inconvertible currencies of most Anglophone economies have animated cross-border trade (Herrera 1997; Igué 1977; Meagher 2003). A wealth of detailed empirical research conducted by Francophone as well as Anglophone researchers in Nigeria and neighbouring countries has shown that the commodities involved in West African smuggling networks throughout the 1980s and 1990s were dominated by legal goods such as agricultural goods, textiles, cigarettes, used cars, pharmaceuticals, electronics, and other manufactured consumer goods (Egg & Herrera 1998; Meagher 1997; Meagher 2003; Moussa et al. 2010). While drug and diamond smuggling have increased in the region, they are not carried out by the main cross-border trading groups and remain peripheral in terms of value. West Africa is only a transit point for drugs, and diamonds have played a relatively minor role in the value of the region's clandestine trade (Meagher 2003; Reyskens 2012). Even at the height of West African drug smuggling in the mid-2000s, the total value of West African drug smuggling has been estimated at \$2 billion, which is less than 2% of West African clandestine economies (African Economic Development Institute 2013).

The largest cross-border trading complex in West/West Central Africa, centred around Nigeria, is almost entirely made up of states that are not at war, including Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Niger, Cameroun and Chad. Only one of these states, Chad – the most economically peripheral

– could be defined as a ‘conflict state’ in the heyday of West African clandestine trade. Nigeria, the hub of this clandestine trading complex, hosts the largest informal economy in West Africa. Nigeria’s informal economy is estimated at about 60% of GDP in a country that accounts for 60.5% of West Africa’s GDP (Economic Commission for Africa 2007; Meagher 2010). This puts Nigeria’s clandestine economy alone at about 40% of West African GDP. Transit and re-export trade in Benin and Togo have been put at about 75% of their GDP, most of it informal and based on legal goods (Golub 2010:24).

Beyond the Nigerian cross-border trading complex, the next major centre of cross-border trading networks is in the Senegambian region, where again, the core activities revolve around consumer goods and peaceful trading activities (Babou 2002; Diouf 2013; Ebin 1993; Lambert 1989; Sall and Sallah 1994). The World Bank puts Senegal’s informal economy at 60% of the country’s \$14 billion GDP, or about 2% of West African GDP (Golub & Mbaye 2009; World Bank n.d.). The Mouride trading networks that dominate Senegal’s clandestine economy encourage a strict moral code of piety, frugality and hard work, and their expanding involvement in cross-border trade since the 1970s has underpinned one of the most stable democratic states in Africa. The long-standing conflict in the Senegalese region of Casamance has been so low key that some have dubbed its combatants ‘part-time rebels,’ and it has little role in Senegal’s clandestine trading activities (Evans 2003; Foucher 2003). Indeed, Martin Evans (2003) argues that the term ‘war economy’ is inappropriate to the Casamance conflict.

The only parts of West Africa where classical war economies have predominated during the latter part of the twentieth century are in Liberia/Sierra Leone and in Chad, areas largely peripheral to West Africa’s major cross-border trading systems. None of West Africa’s major indigenous globalized trading networks, including the Hausa, Igbo, and Mourides, are based in these areas, though Lebanese networks have been more active. Clandestine economies in Liberia and Sierra Leone involved instrumental arrangements with foreign networks and militias rather than institutionalized commercial networks based on local commercial norms and values. Moreover, the entire combined economies of the Liberia and Sierra Leone is less than half of the clandestine share of Senegal’s economy, and less than one percent of the GDP of the West African region (Global Finance Magazine 2011a; Global Finance Magazine 2011b; Smillie et al. 2000). The same is true of Guinea Bissau, dubbed Africa’s first ‘narco state.’ While drug trafficking is estimated at twice the country’s gross domestic product, this still amounts to less than 2% of clandestine trade in the West African region (Madeira et al. 2011; Reyskens 2012; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2011).

A pluralization of regulatory authority?

Criminalization narratives of West African informal economies have sought to understand not only how clandestine economies restructure flows of goods and resources, but how they reorganize the sources and sites of power in the process of shifting it outside formal regulatory structures of the state. Notions of a criminalized ‘shadow state’ saw power largely exercised through networks of ‘front men’ including corrupt officials, strong men and armed youth, sometimes engaging with global corporate linkages operating outside legal regulations (Bayart et al. 1999; Chabal & Daloz 1999; Hibou 2004; Reno 2000; Reno 2004). Using an ethnography of clandestine trading networks, Janet Roitman (2004) mapped the regulatory transformations taking place, which were said to generate new sites of power operating at the borders rather than in capital cities.

While initiating important debates on the regulatory restructuring effected by large clandestine economies, these representation of clandestine power networks are sorely in need of a

reality check. Those familiar with the structure of smuggling activities in the countries of the 'Chad Basin' know that prior to 2010, Hausa-Fulani commercial groups rather than military or rebel groups have been the central players, and the regulatory centre of these networks is not at the borders, but in the inland commercial capitals of informal trade, such as Kano in Nigeria, and Maradi in Niger (Hashim & Meagher 1999; Grégoire 1992). The same is true of the Mouride trading networks, which are not intertwined with the military or with rebels, and have their informal organizational capital in the inland city of Touba, not at the borders (Babou 2002; Malcolmson 1996). Not only are these main West African trading networks not geographically peripheral, they are not socially or politically peripheral either. Both the Nigerian and the Senegalese trading networks hail from major national power-holding groups within their respective societies. The Hausa-Fulani block have been at the centre of state power for much of Nigeria's post-colonial history, and the Mourides have had close relations with systems of power in Senegal since colonial times (Beck 2001; Dahou & Fouchard 2009; Diouf 2013). Far from creating new sites of power, these networks have played a key role in consolidating state power through socio-political linkages with and dependence on supportive relations with the state.

The key point here is that West African smuggling networks have been represented as criminal, violent and disruptive of constituted authority when the evidence suggests that in most of West Africa they were predominantly peaceful commercial systems that reinforced state power. What is intriguing is that now that the pendulum is swinging back toward a more positive view of African smuggling networks, attention is shifting away from largely peaceful West African networks to focus on much more violent, militarized and politically disruptive smuggling networks operating in Eastern Africa. In short, what was peaceful was represented as violent and disruptive, and what is violent and disruptive is now being represented as developmental.

The ideological rehabilitation of smuggling in Eastern Africa

Since the mid-2000s, Eastern Africa has displaced West Africa as the epicentre of empirical research and theoretical debates on clandestine cross-border trade. In the Eastern African context, I will concentrate on the largest clandestine trading complex operating in the Great Lakes region, involving the DR Congo, Uganda, Sudan and Rwanda, along with Kenya and Tanzania as key entry ports.¹ Recent studies of clandestine cross-border trade in Eastern Africa emphasize the cooperative relations among smugglers, military actors, state officials and popular forces, who have created practical regulatory solutions to the problems of governance created by state predation and collapse. Negotiations among these actors in the Uganda-DRC-Sudan border regions are seen as a source of 'practical norms' that fill the gap between the legal and the possible in difficult circumstances, leading to a shift of regulatory authority from the decrepit structures of weak or collapsing states to 'military-commercial networks' that restore order and reconnect the region with the global economy (Raeymaekers 2010; Titeca 2012; Titeca & de Herdt 2010). In other words, violent clandestine trading networks are being reimagined as 'law makers' rather than 'law breakers.' A closer look at smuggling networks in the region raises questions about the optimistic interpretation of the transformations underway, calling for a more detailed consideration of their association with violence, the role of licit versus illicit goods, and their impact on regulatory authority.

Smuggling in Eastern Africa has a long history dating back to pre-colonial times, involving trading networks that link the Eastern DRC to the global economy through ports in Kenya and Tanzania, via Uganda, as well as interaction with networks in neighbouring Sudan, Rwanda

and Burundi (Meagher 1990; Titeca 2012; Vlassenroot et al. 2012). Since the late 1980s, however, these trading systems have been transformed by constant waves of conflict in the region. Unlike West Africa, violent conflict affecting virtually all of the countries in this cross-border trading complex has raged for much of the last three decades, including the war in southern Sudan, the First and Second Congo War, the Rwandan genocide, the conflict in Burundi, and the Ugandan civil war and enduring low-intensity conflict of the LRA and other rebel groups in northern Uganda.

In the process, clandestine trade has been reshaped by military activity, rebel incursions, and waves of refugees moving back and forth across borders, leading to a significant militarization of previously largely commercial cross-border trading networks. In contrast to West Africa's smuggling networks, military forces and rebel militias are central players in clandestine economies of the Great Lakes. In the DRC, Timothy Raeymaekers and Koen Vlassenroot have documented the collaboration of cross-border traders with local rebel groups (Raeymaekers 2010; Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers 2008). On the Ugandan side, a number of scholars have noted that many of those involved in clandestine trade are rebels, former rebels or soldiers (Titeca 2006; Titeca & de Herdt 2010; Vlassenroot et al. 2012). Titeca (2012:52–53) and others have detailed the increasing involvement of the Ugandan military and state officials in cross-border trading activities in northern Uganda from the late 1980s, leading to a genuine 'military-commercial nexus' that has intervened significantly in the regulation of clandestine trade, collaborating with Congolese rebels across the border to ensure access to the product of Ituri gold fields (Human Rights Watch 2005; Titeca 2011; Vlassenroot et al. 2012). Vlassenroot et al. (2012:5) state that 'during the Congolese wars, these networks' mode of exploitation and commercialization became entirely militarized.' The involvement of Rwandan officials and the military in the cross-border mineral trade in Eastern Congo is well documented, making the conflict in Eastern Congo a 'self-financing war' (Jackson 2002:24). The Sudanese branch of this trading complex is equally militarized, with rebels and soldiers displacing local commercial groups in cross-border trading activities (Shomerus & Titeca 2012; Walraet 2008).

Militarization has been accompanied by the replacement of commercial relations with increasingly violent forms of regulation. While cross-border trading relations in West Africa were regulated by institutionalized commercial practices and reputation-based sanctions, Eastern African clandestine trade is dominated by 'violent modes of accumulation.' In the DRC, militarized trading monopolies have marginalized independent traders, and have developed coercive and often violent relations with society (Human Rights Watch 2005; Jackson 2002; Meagher 2012; Raeymaekers 2010). Accounts from DRC and Uganda speak of forced labour, violent treatment of uncooperative local officials, and the manipulation of ethnic antagonisms for the violent restructuring of production and trading networks (Titeca and de Herdt 2010; Vlassenroot et al. 2012).

The key goods involved in these Eastern African trading networks also show a strong leaning toward illicit rather than legal commodities. While manufactured consumer goods play a role, the driving force behind the trade is conflict minerals and arms. In Uganda, Titeca (2012:2) notes that '[t]he export of manufactured goods to Congo and the import of gold remain the basis of the cross-border contraband trade ...' Plundering Congolese gold and timber are key incentives to cross-border trade in Uganda, where gold now plays a prominent role in the country's official exports, despite the fact the Uganda has virtually no gold mines (Human Rights Watch 2005). In Rwanda, a range of conflict minerals, including tin, tantalum and tungsten ores, are central incentives to continued cross-border trade with the DRC. By the late noughties, tin ore rose to become Rwanda's largest export by value, (Garrett & Mitchell 2009:39; UNCTAD 2010:10). The return trade for these conflict minerals includes arms as well

as manufactured goods (Human Rights Watch 2005; Renton et al. 2007; Titeca 2012). In short, conflict minerals and arms play a central role in Eastern African clandestine trade, in contrast to the central role of legal goods and convertible currency in West Africa.

Finally, the notion that these militarized smuggling networks are becoming new sources of legitimate authority in their respective regions is not supported by the evidence. Raeymaekers maintains that militarized trading networks in Eastern DRC are engaging in 'state-like functions,' owing to their increasing involvement in taxation and the provision of a range of infrastructure and social services, including roads, health centres, schools and electricity. Titeca (2012) notes similar activities on the part of cross-border traders in northern Uganda. However, the assertion that this creates local legitimacy clashes with evidence that relations between militarized trading networks and local people are highly coercive, based on forced labour, fear and violence. Stephen Jackson (2002:35) argues that smuggling networks, once accepted as legitimate sources of popular livelihoods and accumulation, are widely regarded by local populations to have been 'criminalized' by the process of militarization. Indigenous regulatory systems have increasingly been replaced by illegitimate authority based on violence and military might, riding roughshod over local political, social and commercial governance norms (Tegera & Johnson 2007; Tull 2003).

In the context of violent reallocation of power and resource control, Eastern African clandestine economies seem to be shifting regulatory authority away from the state. In contrast to the situation in West Africa, the groups involved in Eastern African cross-border trading activities are peripheral rather than central to national constellations of power. In Eastern DRC, the Nande and Banyarwanda communities at the helm of the main militarized trading networks in the region are peripheral groups in the post-independence national power equation, which has been dominated by the more politically central Lunda, Luba and BaKongo (Tegera & Johnson 2007; Turner 2007). Even within Eastern DRC, the Nande historically have been economically rather than politically influential, and the framing of the Banyarwanda as foreign migrants has made their political standing inherently precarious and dependent on patronage from the centre (Renton et al. 2007; Turner 2007). Both groups have forced their way onto the national political agenda by using spoilers' tactics of violent control of resources in the border regions, leveraging international support to punch above their weight in national politics. Similarly, the Lugbara who dominate smuggling networks in northern Uganda are marginal to the national commercial and political equation in Uganda, (Meagher 1990; Titeca 2009; Titeca 2012).

Moreover, these claims to power from the periphery are dependent in all of these cases on influential external players who use peripheral local groups as proxies for strategies of illicit access to local markets and resources. Neighbouring countries and international political and economic interests are heavily implicated in backing East Africa's militarized cross-border traders in the violent reassignment of property rights and access to global markets (Global Witness 2009; Human Rights Watch 2005; United Nations 2012). Far from supporting more authentic processes of state formation, these smuggling networks are contributing to the hollowing out of the state, both politically and materially, as they seize unaccountable regulatory control over local populations and divert resources from the state coffers into private pockets and circuits of international capital, undermining public accountability and national resource control.

In a further ironic twist, as African clandestine economies become associated with positive transformations, even the peaceful clandestine economies of West Africa are taking a violent turn in the face of chaotic governance, rising poverty and expanding unemployment. Since the

late noughties, illegal oil bunkering linked to militarized networks of former Niger Delta militias represents an expanding share of the Nigerian clandestine economy, and the violent Islamic group known as Boko Haram has relied increasingly on the clandestine fish and pepper trade from the Chad Basin, with increasing involvement of the Nigerian military (Salkida 2020; Wallis 2012). Similarly, the Mourides networks of Senegal became increasingly politicized under the former President Wade, weakening their stabilizing and legitimating influence on governance (Beck 2001; Babou 2013). This makes a shift in the political economy literature toward an increasingly positive interpretation of clandestine economies even more puzzling (Golub & Mbaye 2009; Reno 2009).

Conclusion

The question raised by this chapter is whether prevailing theories about the developmental implications of smuggling networks are driven more by empirical realities or by international policy agendas. The cases of West African smuggling complexes in the 1990s, and Eastern African smuggling networks from the late noughties suggest that ideological agendas from above play a greater role in the way we think about appropriate forms of order and disorder than empirical processes from below, particularly in African contexts. The vast majority of West African smuggling activity prior to 2000 was dominated by legal goods, had little to do with war economies, and in many cases tended to reinforce rather than undermine state power. Yet smuggling was widely represented as criminal networks based on violence and war that were inimical to state building.

By contrast, smuggling networks between East Africa and the DRC have been more widely associated with war economies, conflict minerals, arms trading, and state instability. New development ideologies, however, now deploy economic and political models drawn from Tilly and Olson to represent these violent networks as the beginnings of more authentic processes of African state formation. It is perhaps no accident that these ideologies help to legitimate processes that diffuse power and resource control away from the state, and facilitate efforts by local strongmen to assert contractual control over labour and property rights in the service of direct economic linkages with the global economy.

This raises two key questions about the broader trajectory of research on clandestine economies. The first is about models, and the second is about motives. Regarding models, the use of the Tillyan and stationery bandit models in explaining the developmental implications of contemporary smuggling networks demands closer scrutiny. As Anna Leander (2004) and Charles Tilly (1985) have pointed out, the dominance of external resource flows prominent in many developing country contexts undermine the very dynamics of centralization and civil accountability that turns war making into state making. Likewise, Brenda Chalfin (2010:234) argues that the pluralisation and externalization of regulatory authority retools rather than weakens African states, but acknowledges that the shift 'comes at the expense of accountability and the formulation of clear lines of authority in relation to the public ...' New models of how smuggling affects state formation need to be attentive to the implications of existing international conditions on processes of civil accountability.

Regarding motives, it is worth asking why Weberian ideal types of the modern state have been so unceremoniously dropped in favour of new models of engagement with informal order and authority. The answer seems to lie in a growing sense that the international economy can work with informal institutions, which has liberated worried ideologues from their dependence on states as the key agents for maintaining order in the developing world. Roitman (2004:205) was one of the first to point out that, although clandestine trading systems rested on

“nonliberal” forms of order, ‘the regimes of exchange and non-state-based forms of economic regulatory authority that prevail in the Chad Basin are not averse to free-market principles ...’

Similarly, research on Somalia by Reno (2003) and Menkhaus (2006/7) found that peripheral orders built on clandestine economic networks could, in the right combination of circumstances, be compatible with order, peace-building and global economic integration. This new political economy of clandestine trade seems to offer a solution to vexing development problems by providing mechanisms of stability and market integration that bypass uncooperative states with a growing range of more pliable local regulatory forces. As Reno (2003:40) explains, informal local actors and regulatory systems:

offer at least the possibility of ... successful integration into the world economy on the basis of transnational family and clan cultural networks rather than the centralizing administrative projects that scholars of early modern European state-building describe (and which the World Bank and other officials increasingly prescribe).

This leaves us with a few nagging questions about how ideologies of appropriate order influence the way smuggling is theorized. Do new forms of order and authority emerging from clandestine trading networks in border regions really give rise to more authentic forms of state formation à la Tilly and Olson, or does their appeal lie in their capacity to bypass the state and respond to global market incentives? The contemporary role of smuggling networks in terrorist financing suggests that a responsiveness to free market principles may not always ensure constructive or compliant forms of order. This raises the further question of who decides which types of clandestine networks foster more legitimate forms of governance and which types are oppressive or criminal? Answering these questions in the interest of progressive economic transformation requires greater attention to whose priorities of order and authority are being promoted in the way that we theorize clandestine trade.

Note

- 1 Somalia is also a regionally important player in clandestine trade which fits the East African pattern, but will be excluded for reasons of space.

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