

- 6 W. G. Schwanitz, *Islam in Europa, Revolten in Mittelost*, Berlin 2013; idem, *Mittelost Mosaik* 2013, Berlin 2015; idem, *Mittelost Mosaik* 2014, Berlin 2016; D. Motadel, *Islam and Nazi Germany's War*, Cambridge 2014; A. D. W. O'Sullivan, *Nazi secret warfare in occupied Persia (Iran)*, New York 2014; L. Gossman, *The passion of Max von Oppenheim*, Cambridge 2013; St. Ihrig, *Atatürk in the Nazi imagination*, Cambridge 2014; idem, *Justifying Genocide*, Cambridge 2016, see also my review in *H-Soz-Kult* <http://www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/rezbuecher-25762> (19.01.2017).
- 7 E. Özyürek, *Being German, becoming Muslim*, Princeton 2015, see also my review in *Middle East Quarterly*, XXII(09/15/2015)4 (19.12.2016).
- 8 Economics in my articles: Changing or unknown identities? The example of the Deutsche Orientbank AG in Cairo and Alexandria (1906-1931), in: J. Heidrich, *Changing Identities*, Berlin 1994, pp. 401-413 <http://www.trafoberlin.de/pdf-dateien/German%20Orient%20Bank%201994%20WGS.pdf> (17.12.2016); Aziz Cotta Bey, *Deutsche und ägyptische Handelskammern und der Bund Ägypter Deutscher Bildung (1919-1939)*, in: G. Höpp, *Fremde Erfahrungen*, Berlin 1996, pp. 359-384 <http://www.trafoberlin.de/pdf-dateien/Aziz%20Cotta%20Bey%201996%20WGS.pdf> (17.12.2016).

**Patrick Chabal / Toby Green (eds.):
Guinea-Bissau. Micro-State to 'Narco-
State', London: Hurst Publisher 2016,
290 S.**

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Over the last 20 years or so, the general situation in “tiny” Guinea-Bissau¹ has gained considerable attention by academics, politicians, and professional officers of various countries, international agencies and organizations. At the centre of this

attention: continuous “political instability”, characterized by heavy infighting among political and military elites as well as a series of coups, accompanied by “state failure”, incapacitated institutions, and an allegedly outstanding role in the illegal trafficking of drugs from Latin America, through West Africa, to Europe. Thus, a small country, ranking among the poorest in Africa and the world with extremely low human development indicators, very quickly assumed key importance, triggering various interventions by a multitude of different actors (both state and non-state). Against this background, the present volume edited by Patrick Chabal² and Toby Green seeks to offer a collective effort to keep up with developments and “consolidate reflection” (p. 2). To this end, it draws on the intimate knowledge of a set of authors of different academic fields most of which have worked and published on different dynamics in Guinea-Bissau for a long time. Comprising ten individual chapters, as well as an introduction and a conclusion, it is organised into three parts that deal with Guinea-Bissau’s “historical fragilities”, “manifestations of the crisis”, and its “political consequences”. In those, the volume touches upon different aspects relating to ethnicity, political institutions, rural economy and society, religion, gender, as well as to geopolitics and transnational organized crime. Thus, the book sets out to provide a multi-faceted, up-to-date and rather comprehensive overview.

The book is framed by the introduction and conclusion provided by Toby Green. Preparing the stage, Green places Guinea-Bissau at the intersection of different global and local dynamics, including in particular transnational organized crime and

terrorism, an emerging global security infrastructure, as well as both the crises and the remarkable persistence of postcolonial states (in Africa and beyond). It is this context, Green argues, that makes Guinea-Bissau “a paradigmatic case study in the early twenty-first century for the analysis of Africa’s recent past, and of the potential for peaceful and representative states in Africa’s future” (p. 1). Consequently, starting from the observation that, despite all challenges, Guinea-Bissau seems to somehow “work” as a country, the different contributions in this edited volume ask “how, why, and what that actually means” (p. 7). More specifically, Green introduces a couple of particularities, problems in analytical approaches, and questions aiming to provoke more debate and reflection on the situation in Guinea-Bissau. In particular, he challenges received ideas about the labelling and singling out of the country as a ‘narco-state’ and the assumed negative role of the politicised armed forces. Emphasising the need for historicising current crises, Green especially points to the ambiguous role and effect of drug trafficking as well as the armed forces. In fact, when compared to the wider regional context, both may actually have prevented the situation in Guinea-Bissau from deteriorating into full-blown war (see also Forrest’s chapter). What is more, he also directs attention to structural issues that recurring interventions have not addressed (e.g. state illegitimacy, powerful transnational flows and sub-regional interlinkages, rising global inequality) (pp. 10, 14). Drawing on the work of Chabal and Daloz³, Green poses the questions of whom the state in Guinea-Bissau is to work for (p. 12); how its instability links to issues of wider re-

gional and global security (p. 2); and what a stable, successful state would look like (pp. 2, 12).

Following this introduction, a common thread indeed running through all chapters is the historical interlinkage of “external” and “internal” factors. Thus, they all point in one way or another to, on the one hand, a firm embeddedness of Guinea-Bissau in different transnational regional as well as trans-regional (or global) dynamics, with strong “external” influences, and on the other hand to local agency and often remarkable resilience. For example, tensions have emerged around ethnicised identities aiming to mobilise resources especially from “external sources” linked to post-colonial state institutions (chapters by Green and Kohl; see also Temudo/Abrantes’ chapter). However, this stands in stark contrast to common inter-ethnic collaboration and alliances outside formal state structures. As Joshua Forrest’s chapter tells us, these have historically allowed rural societies to resist efforts at political centralization, either by European power or by the post-colonial state, thus explaining its “fragility” (p. 37). Likewise, rural societies (Temudo/Abrantes’ chapter) and smallholder farmers (Havik’s chapter) have shown remarkable resilience and “food sovereignty”, despite state absence and their (precarious) integration in global economic exchanges.

In this context, religion and conversion have (sometimes) functioned as means to access certain resources and services, and to link up to “modernity” as well as transnational networks (Sarró/de Barros, pp. 118-120). The diaspora has played a similar role, as transnational agents with direct local effects in Guinea-Bissau (e.g.

remittances, skill transfer, shaping political opinions) (Nafafé). The chapters on global geopolitics and securitization in Guinea-Bissau (Massey) as well as the effect of the “narco-state” on national institutions and neighbouring countries (Ceesay) also clearly relate to the complex interplay of different global and local dynamics colliding in and around Guinea-Bissau (see also below).

The edited volume by Chabal and Green offers a very welcome and helpful addition to the existing literature, especially coming at a time where the general attention to the situation in Guinea-Bissau appears to be either fading or captive to pre-conceived understandings. On the one hand, the wide variety of issues addressed makes it a great introduction to a wide readership with or without prior knowledge of the country (also helped by the provided glossary, biographical sketches and timeline as well as the comprehensive index). On the other, it helps to decentralize, update, and somewhat substantiate a debate that has overly focused on security, and drug trafficking in particular. Especially the general frame provided by Toby Green (significantly influenced by his close collaboration with Patrick Chabal before his death) introduces some nuance to the general narrative on Guinea-Bissau as a “filed” and/or “narco-state”, posing important questions.

However, there is a certain tension between the aspirations and objectives formulated by Green in the introduction and some of the findings presented especially in the chapters dealing with the “narco-state”. These stop short of effectively moving beyond dominant narratives in the ex-

isting literature. Both Simon Massey and Hassoum Ceesay buy into and reproduce the common narrative depicting Guinea-Bissau as the first and foremost problem with negative effects far beyond its borders. While Massey discards critical voices in the literature, in the face of what he calls conclusive evidence (p. 203), Ceesay considers the question whether Guinea-Bissau is or is not a “narco-state” as purely academic and of little relevance vis-à-vis the “narco-surge” (p. 219) he sees in the country. Thus, both ignore the extremely thin evidential basis and research gaps that by now even some of the prime proponents of this narrative have acknowledged.⁴ As a consequence, along repeated references to the state in Guinea-Bissau as “failed” or “dysfunctional” (e.g. pp. 37, 186, 202), one of the key messages of Chabal and Daloz – i.e. to move beyond deficit analyses, “Africa works” (repeatedly evoked by Green) – seems to be somewhat diluted.

Nevertheless, thanks to the excellent overall organization of the publication, these chapters, informative nonetheless, are nicely counter-weighted and complemented by the broad range of topics addressed in the others, making the book a very interesting and thought-provoking read.

Notes:

- 1 Ed Vulliamy, How a tiny West African country became the world's first narco state, in: *The Guardian*, 9 March 2008.
- 2 Patrick Chabal died in January 2014, when the editing process was still ongoing.
- 3 Patrick Chabal / Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*, Oxford 1999.
- 4 M. Shaw, Drug trafficking in Guinea-Bissau, 1998–2014: The evolution of an elite protection network, in: *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 53(3) 2015, pp. 339–364.