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# Drug Trafficking: European Union's Responses To The Drug Trade In West Africa

## Introduction

The topic of this research is European Union's responses to the drug trade in West Africa. The drug trade in West Africa is growing annually and as a direct consequence the drug markets in the countries included in the European Union are also getting bigger and bigger. Therefore, the EU has a motive to help combat this issues even if it is not inside their borders. The object of the research is to find out what policies and legislations the European Union has in place to fight the inflow of drugs from West Africa. The research question is, what are the European Union's responses to the drug trade in West Africa? This essay will be looking at what there is about the topic in current literature, which theory best links to the research topic, how the research will be conducted and how the data will be analysed.

## Literature review:

The popularity of West Africa as an entrepôt for drug trafficking between Latin America and Europe is increasing year by year. More than a decade ago United Nation officials warned that Guinea-Bissau was slowly of changing into a 'narco-state' and after that drug trafficking in the area has grown annually (The Economist, 2019). For example, 11 tons of cocaine was confiscated trafficking to and from West Africa every year between 2005 and 2008 (Cockayne and Williams, 2009). It is clear that it is a wake-up call globally that something needs to change in terms of international drug policies and legislations surrounding drug trafficking in West Africa.

The market for drugs has gone up double the amount to 124 t in 2009 from 63 t in 1998 in Europe (Stambøl, 2016). Therefore, since the drug trade in Europe is getting bigger year by year, arguably Europe's and therefore European Union's efforts to fight the drug problem needs to double. However, European governments largely rely on vague concepts that are based on the idea that 'outsiders' bring violence and corruption, they have failed to properly assess the threat posed by drug trafficking organizations to their countries (Elvins, 2003). On the other hand the cocaine route programme by the EU has been put in place in the region, which focuses on transnational organised crime and drug trafficking in Latin America, Africa and the Caribbean to Europe (Cocaine Route Programme, 2019). The cocaine route programme's goal is to "establish and enhance trans-regional cooperation between law enforcement, judicial and prosecuting authorities" (Cocaine Route Programme, 2019). Therefore, it is clear that EU is becoming an important actor in fighting the drug problem globally (Stambøl, 2016).

Politicians and national leaders in the EU and across the globe, have tried to suppress trafficking by all means of law enforcement, which is why now it is at a point where any measures taken against drug traffickers are thought to have unquestioned political legitimacy (Elvins, 2003). The fight against drugs has gone on for so long that it is considered to be a distinctive feature of contemporary international relations (Elvins, 2003).

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The three 'ideal types' of state policy towards drugs: complicity, neglect and repression according to Carrier and Klantschnig (2012) for the most part do not work in the way they are supposed to. There are three reasons why, either the policy is not implemented widely enough, the approaches clash with human rights or it works in the opposite way (Carrier and Klantschnig, 2012). Alternatively, due to international negotiation mainly by the United Nations, the EU and states globally have come together to define the parameters for a new set of policy norms with the objective of seriously reducing levels of drug trafficking (Elvins, 2003).

It can be argued that without more effective response from the international community such as the European Union the drug money entering West Africa will have tremendously awful consequences such as: fuelling crime, violence, and sex trafficking as well as negative effects on the economy (Cockayne and Williams, 2009).

## **Theoretical framework:**

I would propose to use the theory of securitisation to research and explain the reaction from the European Union to the fight of drug trafficking in west Africa.

When an issue is first nonpoliticized then transforms into politicized and then to securitized, is the process of securitization. This process makes a concern from a not political to a political concern, that changes to become part of public policy debate and because it is a concern of existential threat, the response can be bigger than normally (Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, 2013). For this particular essay, to link the theory to my research question – What are European Union's responses to the drug trade in west Africa? The essay will be concentrating on two of these sectors; economic and political.

Because a financial crisis has the ability to make it that people do not get their basic needs met therefore, economic security is a security concern and an existential threat that threatens individuals and communities (Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, 2013). Hence, drug trafficking in west Africa is a threat to that security because it also enables the use of illegitimate money and the black market gets stronger. Furthermore, in an impoverished region people might become a part of the security threat because they have no other way to make a living (Crick, 2012).

In the political sector the object of security is the principle of the political unit. In terms of states, the principal is their sovereignty. In an ideologically liberal perspective sovereignty is viewed in terms of the state's ability to control flows across and within its territorial borders (Elvins, 2003). Therefore, a security concern is arguably anything that is a threat to the existence of this principle (Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, 2013). For example, if Guinea-Bissau becomes a narco-state, it arguably the state's sovereignty is not as valid because the drug lords hold the most economical power and the state can become dependent on them. Drug trafficking is considered the second largest threat on the international scale of threats to society and is often seen as a threat to the state itself (Elvins, 2003).

Yet, there are issues with securitization. Since, security is subjective in the sense that how states conceptualize threat deep down depends on who assesses the threat and how they do it (Elvins, 2003) Therefore, there is a possibility the actor that decides about securitizing exploits threats to get attention away from certain issues. In addition, there is a possibility of a state or an actor securitize an issue "for 'tactical gain' rather than because the existential threat is

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immediate (Crick, 2012)". However, arguably securitization is a theory that is the best option for this research. It can explain how and why the European Union (and other international actors) helps to securitize the region.

## **Research design:**

When doing research, research design is the toolbox that allows to construct research professionally (Marsh and Stoker, 2010). It is important to choose a research project that strongly identify with, so there is a passion that is necessary to end up with a project that answers the research question intellectually and is hopefully rewarding in many ways more (Marsh and Stoker, 2010).

The case method is thought as a good way for describing, explaining, predicting or controlling processes associated with a variety of phenomena at an individual, group and organization levels (Gagnon, 2010). Thus, conducting the research by using case method would be a good option. It will help to answer the question- What are European Union's responses to the drug trade in West Africa? Because the object of the research would be drug trade as a phenomena and European Union's, as an organization responses. Therefore, this method would be appropriate for the research. According to Gagnon (2010) describing is the answer to questions who, what, when, how; explaining is to answer the question why, predicting means producing short-term and long-term predictions of future psychological states, behaviours or events, and controlling means trying to influence attitudes and behaviours in and individual case.

The main advantages of case research are that it can produce an in-depth analysis of phenomena in context, support the development of historical perspectives and guarantee high internal validity, which means that the observed phenomena are authentic representations of reality (Gagnon, 2010). The European Union has long standing history about legislations and policies surrounding drug trade. Therefore, a research method that takes that into account and also makes the research applicable into real life is the best method for this topic of research.

However, research based on case studies have been criticised because it is time consuming for the researcher and subjects, for its difficulty to be reproduced, and also the results are very difficult to generalize (Gagnon, 2010). However, when taken into consideration the nature of the research question, the case method is still the most appropriate option for conducting the research.

## **Methodology:**

The research question will be answered by using qualitative and quantitative methods. The research will be concentrating on European Union's responses to the drug trade in West Africa. The data used to answer the research question will be qualitative primary sources. These sources would be official documents, such as the United Nation's world drug report, official documents from the European Commission and Europol. The sources were selected with using the key words 'European Union', 'Drug', 'trafficking', 'Africa' and 'trade'. In addition, looking also at government websites such as ([www.cocaineroute.eu](http://www.cocaineroute.eu)) the website for the programme the EU has implemented, which focuses on transnational organised crime and drug trafficking in Latin America, Africa and the Caribbean to Europe (Cocaine Route Programme, 2019).

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The data would be analysed by conducting content analysis. Content analysis is a method of detailed examination of documents. The analysis reveals what the content says about the phenomenon of interest and generates knowledge that is deduced from content (Gagnon, 2010). The purpose of content analysis is to show meanings, associations and intentions that might not come across just from straight forward reading of documents. Content analysis proceeds through a systematic, quantitative and objective description of the documents being analysed (Gagnon, 2010). Content analysis is made of three stages, coding, classifying the content of the texts, and the third stage is the actual analysis, which is where the researcher dissects the texts using predetermined categories to find out the frequency of each element (Gagnon, 2010). This is largely useful for describing, explaining and understanding the phenomenon being researched. However, the content of the information units and categories also have to be assessed to determine if they have to be checked again in the field, which shows the importance of collecting and analysing the evidence on a frequentative basis (Gagnon, 2010). In addition, cross-case analysis should be performed. This is done by selecting categories or dimensions and then comparing within-group and cross-group differences and similarities (Gagnon, 2010). The content would be analysed by deductive content analysis. Deductive content analysis is usually used in cases where the researcher wants to retest existing data in a new context, and it is based on earlier work such as theories, models and literature reviews (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). Deductive content analysis suits this research best because the research is looking at policies and legislations that are already in place, analysing and critiquing them.

Content analysis is most appropriate way to analyse data on multifaceted and sensitive phenomena (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). Thus, it is also the best way to analyse the data gathered about the topic of research. Drug trade and the policies surrounding it are arguably quite controversial, especially when in the context of the African region. It is thought that the developing countries have to battle the fight on drugs alone and international actors such as the EU are not doing enough. Additionally, the data used to conduct research would be meticulously prepared documents, thus, a quantitative analysis would be the most appropriate. On the other hand, since concept analysis can be used to develop and understanding of the meaning of communication and its critical processes, it is concerned with meanings, intention, consequences and context (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). Therefore, the analysis would also be qualitative because it would also focus on the intentionality and its implications, which is appropriate with analysing the research since it would be conducted by using case studies as a method.

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