

States at Regional Risk (SARR)
East Africa Regional Component

Executive Summary

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The East Africa component of Emory's States at Regional Risk Project has focused on protracted violence in East Congo – a conflict which has resulted in the greatest human-caused loss of life since World War Two -- in relation to regional instability, civil society, and government.

DRC Workshops

In March, 2008, an SARR pilot trip to East Congo was undertaken by the SARR Director and SARR Congolese Fellow, Dr. Patience Kabamba. Drawing on Dr. Kabamba's extensive previous research in the area, the trip included fact-finding investigations in North and South Kivu Provinces and three workshops that included more one hundred Congolese scholars, humanitarian organization leaders, and local officials in the East Congolese cities of Butembo, Goma, and Bukavu. Local perspectives on the conflict and on the greatest challenges to peace and stability emphasized several themes. These included:

- the relation between diverse armed factions, coercion of local populations, and the lucrative extraction and illicit trade of mineral resources from East Congo
- ethnic history and the incitement of ethnic conflict by national and international interests as well as in the colonial past
- insufficiency, inefficiency, and corruption of governmental and also international humanitarian services, including concerning military protection and security, education, nutrition, and health
- the regional nature of the conflict, including vested interests by Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi in Congolese material resources and in minimizing effective Congolese state presence and control – in addition to the interests of international traders and the financial and governmental as well as humanitarian presence of the international community.

Regional conference

Drawing upon the findings, and robust contacts of the initial trip, a major SARR regional conference was planned for June 2009. During two further pilot trips to the Great Lakes region, Dr. Kabamba solidified

contacts among diverse constituencies and determined that the most suitable neutral location for the conference was Bujumbura, Burundi.

The SARR regional conference “The Great Lakes: Beyond Emergency” was held at the Source du Nil Hotel in Bujumbura, Burundi on June 4-5, 2009. The conference was attended by some one hundred persons, including those from all three of our focus countries in the region -- The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Burundi, and Rwanda – as well as several ministers and ambassadors.

The conference took place in a context of continuing conflict and destabilization in East Congo but with signs of fragile peace following the repatriation of Rwanda-associated military commander Laurent Nkonde to Rwanda in early 2009. Amid high levels of immediate humanitarian attention, the conference aimed to develop a longer-term vision for the future of the region based on a candid analysis of the underlying reasons for the conflict. These causes include links between armed conflict and global trade in natural resources; the political questions of border securities including the presence in East Congo of militias who are blamed for the 1994 genocide in Rwanda; surrogate rebel groups; and the question of peaceful cohabitation between ethnic faction.

This conference was the first time regional and international experts met under independent auspices in the region itself to understand root causes of the conflict and to facilitate long-range perspective for a more productive future for the region. Following a keynote address by Alan Doss, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and head of MONUC, the world’s largest UN largest peacekeeping force, in the DRC, the conference provided an extended opportunity for collaboration, dialogue, and reflection among an important and informed group of experts from Burundi, the DRC, and Rwanda as well as Europe and the U.S. The conference was generously supported by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) as well as by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which is the primary supporter of Emory’s full SARR Project.

From an executive perspective, the conference had four priority goals:

- cultivate a regional perspective concerning the implications of state fragility – historical, political, and economic -- across the region of Eastern DRC, Burundi, and Rwanda
- bring together participants from the region itself, with an equal representation across the DRC, Burundi, and Rwanda
- combine the understandings of national and international scholars with the perspectives and understandings of policy makers and practitioners, including from national governments, regional organizations, and the international community, including the UN
- cultivate practical implications for positive action and policy-making beyond scholarly analysis and identification of problems.

The first and third goals of the conference were very effectively accomplished; the second and fourth were approximated but not sufficiently accomplished. The reasons for this and the potentials for making a very important further contribution to ameliorating regional problems of state instability in the Great Lakes region of East Africa were thrown into relief by the fact-finding trip that our executive team undertook in East DRC and Rwanda during the week following the conference.

(1) A regional perspective on both political and economic features of regional state risk was effectively developed during the two days of the conference. Presentations by East African and international scholars were very well configured, and all presenters submitted a full written paper or PowerPoint presentation, most of which are suitable for posting on the SARR website. The sense of equality of presentation and discussion among in-region as well as international scholars was palpable, distinctive, and important. Presentations of the conference will be available in the near future at <http://icis.emory.edu/projects/sarr.php>.

Of particular interest was the broadly contrastive relation between major state weakness in East Congo, moderate state weakness in Burundi, and major state *strength* in Rwanda. Across different definitions and perspectives on state weakness, these contrasts seem generally to hold. Moreover, the relationship between these three countries in terms of state weakness or strength appears to be mutually dependent and reinforcing rather than independent or tending toward a single trend in the region as a whole.

State strength in Rwanda includes a highly functioning and accountable state bureaucracy and effective of delivery public services in areas of education, health, infrastructure, and financial management. Extending its state reach and regional capacity, however, Rwandan economic and military influence extends strongly into East Congo, in particular, through control over illicit extraction and smuggling of Congolese minerals through Rwanda. In this sense, Rwanda has a vested economic as well as political interest in keeping Eastern DRC weak and destabilizing it through both formal and proxy military presence and incursions.

Rwanda legitimately resents the continued refuge that Hutu former perpetrators of the 1994 Rwandan genocide (*Interhamwe*) have taken in remote areas of the eastern DRC and is pledged to eliminate them, including by force. The situation is complicated because some Hutu refugees are innocent, some have intermarried with or otherwise associated with local Congolese communities, and many were young children or have been born in Congo during the fifteen years since the genocide and can hardly be considered culpable. Less distinction is commonly made than is warranted between these Hutu refugees and the armed force remnants of Hutu *Interhamwe*, now called FDLR, which alternatively coerce and attract local support, including against Tutsi-affiliated influence and military presence in East Congo.

On the other hand, the central Kinshasa government of the DRC is so geographically removed and effectively isolated from communication with and control over its populous and resource-rich eastern Kivu provinces that it has often allied with Rwanda in the past, including its effective military forces, either formally or informally, to control breakaway factions or rebellious subjects in these distant provinces. At present several thousand Rwandan soldiers are formally authorized to help the Congolese army (FRDC) to attack and eliminate FDLR forces in the eastern Kivu provinces of DRC. De facto, FRDC cedes military control in parts of East Congo to forces allied with or sympathetic to its much smaller but more governmentally robust eastern neighbor as well to MONUC, the world's largest peacekeeping force, also concentrated in East DRC. Congolese state services in north and south Kivu are minimal-to-

nonexistent; such services as there are tend to be provided by international relief organizations and NGOs.

Interestingly in the immediate regional context, it is Burundi that may be on the best present path among the three countries to a viable multiparty democracy with a moderate state – that is, in contrast to both the authoritarianism and severe restrictions on free expression by the Kagame regime in Rwanda, on the one hand, and the kleptocratic dimensions of electoral democracy based on clientalism rather than governmental efficiency and instrumentality in the DRC.

(2) Concerning the equitable participation by those from all three countries, this was accomplished for DRC and Burundi but not for Rwanda. On the positive side, we did have in attendance the Rwandan ambassador to Burundi and Tanzanian Liberata Mulamula, Executive Secretary of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region. However, only one of five Rwandans who had accepted invitations – a Ugandan journalist who presently teaches at the University of Rwanda – arrived and participated in the conference.

Our visit to Rwanda revealed the causes and difficulties of Rwandan regional participation. The Rwandan government appears to exercise strong control over Rwandese participation in international conferences, including those occurring just over the border in Burundi or the DRC. The application process is onerous and must be taken long in advance, including the submission of the actual paper or presentation that will be given at the conference. The review of these materials can be prolonged, may raise suspicions that impact one's professional status in Rwanda, and, if approved, may receive authorization only at the last minute, making advance travel plans difficult. There appears to be significant self-censure by scholars and others who do not want to risk irritating or raising suspicion with Rwandan authorities, who are concerned that non-official representations of Rwandan history, politics, and economic and military interests at home and abroad be monitored. Given the history of the Rwandan genocide in 1994, this is to some extent understandable even if surprisingly strong at present.

After an important meeting in Rwanda with Professor Shyaka Anastase, Executive Secretary of the Rwanda Governance Advisory Council, and an additional conversation with Hon Juliana Kantegnawa, Rwandan MP, it was agreed that a follow-up conference would be most productive if arranged with Rwandan official co-sponsorship with SARR and held at the Rwandan city of Gisenyi, the "twin city" of Goma as the capital of North Kivu, DRC, and also the head of MONUC and many other INGO operations in East Congo. Liberata Mulamula, The Executive Secretary of the Conference of the Great Lakes Region – the region's most important international organization – was also in favor of a follow-up conference that could generate greater Rwandan participation.

(3) The degree of co-participation between some fifteen in-regional national and five international scholars as well as several major government and international organization officials was impressive. In addition to major remarks by Alan Doss, introductions to the conference included thoughtfully written remarks by the Burundian Minister of Information and the Rector of the University of Burundi as well as by the SARR Director. Concluding remarks by the Executive Secretary of the Great Lakes Conference and other ambassadors were most welcome.

(4) Generating practical suggestions for concrete follow-up by policy makers and practitioners presents a significant challenge for any conference that draws significantly on research and scholarly understanding. In the present conference, frank airing of different scholarly perspectives across political and national points of view was a first critical step but it was not possible to reach implications with strong practical import.

We have considered how to move co-participation across academic, governmental, and INGO perspectives toward more policy-oriented results in a future conference at Gisenyi, Rwanda. Typically, dignitaries in attendance say for only the opening of a conference rather than remaining as full participants for ensuing dialogue. In the SARR Liberia conference this past January, the structure of participation was equalized by asking *all* participants to supply a short (2-3 pages) statement in advance of the conference that specifically addressed one of the conference focus questions. We hope to employ this strategy in a proposed follow-up conference in Gisenyi. In particular, we hope to organize the conference to include the equal participation of government ministers and deputy ministers from Rwanda, DRC, Burundi, and perhaps Uganda along with relevant scholars and civil society leaders to consider how major issues of conflict, governance, and economic development can be practically and effectively addressed in regional perspective.

Connections are presently being further cultivated, and support is being sought, for this follow-up conference in Gisenyi, Rwanda in 2010. This conference will expand upon the major accomplishments of the June 2009 SARR conference in Bujumbura. Our goal in this regard is, first, to extend the reach and representation of the gathering to include a full complement of Rwandan as well as Congolese and Burundian perspectives, second, to structure and focus the agenda to connect informed understanding with concrete matters of pragmatics and policy, and, third, to involve higher level government officials as well as scholars and civil society leaders in the full scope of discussions concerning linked issues of security, social services, and economic development in the Great Lakes Region.