What is SARR?
States at Regional Risk (SARR) is an initiative of Emory’s Institute of Critical International Studies. Begun in 2008, this four-year project addresses the causes and remedies of state instability and civil strife in four world areas: West Africa, Central-East Africa, South-Central Asia, and the Andean countries of South America. SARR cultivates dialogue between policy makers, humanitarian practitioners, and scholars. By means of conferences and workshops convened within these world areas and on the Emory campus, the project facilitates informed understanding that can help reduce state fragility and increase effective governance and development in troubled world areas. A larger component of SARR is the assessment of global factors that augment or reduce instability across different world areas. SARR receives generous support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. (www.carnegie.org)

What are States at Risk?
As stated on the Carnegie Corporation web site, “More than a quarter of the world’s states are considered at risk of instability and collapse. Such states—in regions of the developing world where national borders are particularly porous and under constant stress—not only imperil lives at the local level, but also threaten security, stability and prosperity around the world. . . A new generation of experts is needed to deal with this daunting but crucially important problem.”

What are States at Regional Risk?
Instability in one country often has a substantial impact on crisis or threat in neighboring nations. Globally, the distribution of “states at risk” is highly concentrated in certain areas of the world. The SARR project foregrounds this fact by addressing the causes and consequences of state fragility in four key world regions. This diversity illuminates the distinctive features that characterize and also link states at risk across different world areas.

What is SARR’s history to date?
SARR was preceded by a “States at Risk” pilot project in 2006 and 2007 that was also supported by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. That initiative included major conferences and symposia at Emory concerning inequity and politics in Sub-Saharan Africa, in South Asia, and in the Northern Andes. These programs included: “Intervening in Africa: Interrogating International Operations in West Africa” (March 2007); “Subaltern Citizens and Their Histories” (October 2006 and December 2007); and “Off-Centered States: Political Formation and Deformation in the Andes” (September 2007).

During 2007 and 2008, exploratory fieldwork and the development of networks of cooperation have been undertaken in both Central-East Africa and selected parts of West Africa in preparation for upcoming SARR conferences.
What’s next for SARR?
The first SARR conference will focus on four countries in war-torn West Africa and is scheduled to take place in Monrovia, Liberia on January 13 and 14, 2009. This event will bring together government officials and members of civil society from the Mano River region of West Africa along with international scholars with expertise in this area. Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and the Ivory Coast have experienced a history of state fragility related to conflicts that have crossed state borders. The January conference, “Mano River Region at Risk?: Post-conflict Conversations Within and Across Borders,” will provide a rare opportunity for group dialogue focused on the relation between regional, national, and sub-national stability.

SARR’s second major conference is planned to take place in Kampala, Uganda in early summer, 2009. Organized principally by ICIS Visiting Scholar, Dr. Patience Kabamba, this conference will bring together scholars, NGO workers, and government representatives from Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in a unique series of conversations on the theme, “The Great Lakes Region and Eastern Congo: Beyond Emergency Responses.” A native of the Congo, Dr. Kabamba has been traveling extensively in volatile areas of East Africa and developing networks of cooperation in preparation for this event.

The remaining two conferences will be held in major cities in the Andes region of South America and in South Asia in 2010 and 2011.

Who is already involved?
The SARR initiative has developed contacts and collaborations with hundreds of individuals living within and/or interested in all four of its world area concentrations. The Project Director of SARR is Bruce M. Knauft, Executive Director of ICIS and Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Anthropology. SARR is staffed at ICIS by Art Linton (404-727-5352; alinton@emory.edu) and Kate Bennett (404-727-4663; kate.bennett@emory.edu).

It is governed by a steering committee of distinguished Emory faculty, the director of the Institute for Developing Nations, and three ICIS world-area visiting scholars: Gyanendra Pandey, Arts and Sciences Distinguished Professor of History; Joanna Davidson, ICIS/SARR Post-doctoral Fellow; Patience Kabamba, ICIS Visiting Lecturer; Bruce Knauft, Project Director; Christopher Krupa, ICIS Visiting Lecturer; David Nugent, Professor of Anthropology and Director, Latin American and Caribbean Studies; Sita Ranchod-Nilsson, Director, Institute for Developing Nations; Pamela Scully, Associate Professor, Women’s Studies; Director, African Studies.

How can I get involved?
SARR invites comments, collaboration, and co-support from scholars, practitioners, policy makers, and leaders or administrators from international organizations, foundations, and national civil-society groups or governments. SARR speakers, workshops, and conferences on the Emory campus are free and generally open to the public. Support may be available for advanced students and faculty, with relevant research interests and background, to attend SARR conferences in other countries.

For further details, see the ICIS website at www.icis.emory.edu.