

Emory University  
States at Regional Risk (SARR)  
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Emory University's "States at Regional Risk" (SARR) project has had a very successful year continuing its engagement with diverse world areas of regional state risk, consistent with our project mandate. Drawing on our successful work already completed in West Africa and East Africa, as described in our previous reports, the past year brought to fruition our project work in the northern Andes as well as initiating pilot work in our project's fourth and fifth world areas of concentration: Central Asia and the Himalayas. The no-cost extension of our project that is currently in process should enable us to complete these components fully in addition to a final comparative SARR conference at Emory concerning regions of state risk across world areas and in global perspective.

Northern Andes

The third SARR conference, concerning the northern Andes, took place in Quito, Ecuador this past spring. The Americas component of Emory's States at Regional Risk Project has focused on the northern Andean region of South America, particularly the countries of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. This region has been at the center of hemispheric conflicts concerning oil, coca production, drug trafficking, and paramilitary operations since the end of the Cold War. In recent years, popular social movements of historically minoritized peoples have ousted conservative heads of state and elected new heads of state in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela.

Drawing on pilot trips to the Andean region made by SARR post-doctoral fellow, Dr. Christopher Krupa, the SARR directorate determined Quito, Ecuador to be the most suitable location for the SARR Andes conference. The Quito branch of the prestigious Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (*Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales*—FLACSO) was chosen as the regional conference co-organizer.

The SARR northern Andes regional conference, "**Off-Centered States: Political Formation and Deformation in the Andes,**" was held at the FLACSO campus in Quito, Ecuador, on May 27 and 28, 2010. The conference brought together 21 participants from seven countries, including our focus countries in the region (Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia). The conference was attended by some 50 observers and audience members. Importantly, the conference was fully bi-lingual between Spanish and English, with simultaneous translation available via wireless headsets for all audience members as well as for presenters and panelists.

The goal of the conference was to explore issues of state risk, instability, and transformation from a critical angle that questioned the foundations of state power and presence in the northern Andes since colonial times. The intent was to (1) provoke reflection among international and regional experts about

the sources of current tensions in the northern Andes; (2) assess the possibilities for new and influential forms of governance in the region; and (3) foster dialogue between scholars and those working in state and civil society institutions concerning the insights of the conference.

Summaries from individual papers and robust conference discussion sessions suggest the following:

In **Ecuador**, much of the work of the State after Independence was literally ‘farmed out’ to rural hacienda owners, elite men who were granted private ownership of indigenous territories in exchange for collecting tribute, educating, and evangelizing those living on them. During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, large-scale “outreach” campaigns were devised by central state officials – often via public health campaigns and offers of other welfare services -- in an attempt to wrest governmental authority back from private powers and local rulers. Under more recent and expanded celebrations of multicultural democracy and state decentralization, indigenous leaders have been increasingly elected to Ecuadorian positions of local and even national state power. Results from Correa’s first two and a half years in office have been met with mixed reviews. His self-professed “recentralization” of state programs—which includes a new constitution written by constituent assembly, the nationalization of strategic resources, and a charismatic weekly television broadcast—has extended new forms of social rights and protections to marginalized populations but has simultaneously administered those populations weakly through institutions of government and their proxies rather than through the organic and traditional organizations that are nominally called on to represent them.

In **Bolivia**, elites in two regions of the country, La Paz and Sucre, operated independently as twin national capitals throughout the early twentieth century. Neither center was able to amass as much wealth or political power as the tin barons who controlled mines in outlying departments. Bolivian nationalism for much of the twentieth century hence revolved more around the commodity of tin than the political character of its people or government. Lacking a clear center of political power did not mean that Bolivians were outside the reach of state—only that the practice of government, for many, was taken up by mining companies or by other industrial groups competing for political power with them. Bolivia’s recent high profile conflicts— violent “water wars,” struggles with the U.S. government with respect to coca growing, and rejection by whole regions of Bolivia of its elected president Evo Morales (indigenous and leader of a coca-growers’ union)—trace to these earlier Republican struggles between private and public powers for political power and the relative autonomy of sub-national territories from the central state.

**Peru** has not followed the path of Ecuador or Bolivia in electing professed left-leaning presidents. The Peruvian national government remains committed to a relatively orthodox post-cold war political agenda of neoliberalism. While lacking both the general dominion of the hacienda system that characterizes highland Ecuador’s political history and an industrial power equivalent to Bolivia’s miners, Peru has nevertheless wrestled with the problem of constructing a centralized state with administrative dominion over its so-called margins. Throughout the 19th century, many rural state offices did not follow even the most basic protocols for organizing municipal government. In their place arose hybrid forms of governance that mixed liberal principles of rule with pre-colonial indigenous political structures that had been formally outlawed almost a century earlier. By the middle of the 20th century, much of the work of the Peruvian state involved tracking down and ferreting out a radical underground political

party it was never sure existed. In later decades, movements such as the Shining Path constituted special challenges to the Peruvian government. More recently, Peruvians in the southeast corner of the country have protested for a promised inter-oceanic highway to pass through their community, hopefully reducing their sense of marginalization from national political and economic structures—the very promise the state had made them in its campaign for the road. The state’s violent negation of their request, shifting the road’s course to better serve a Brazilian industry, reflects a broader cycle of hope and despair.

Set in the above regional and historical context, **Colombia’s** current conflicts seem less like deviant exceptions to an otherwise stable system of strongly centralized and functioning states than an enhanced version of political tensions that have long affected the northern Andean region. International attention on Colombia has largely focused on the southern Putumayo region, portrayed as a zone over which the state has lost its sovereignty, where the bulk of its drug producing and processing operations are located and where a large portion of the violence between guerrilla groups and paramilitary organizations continues to take place. Putumayo residents now appeal to the United States as its “proxy citizens” for reparations for the decades-long counter-narcotics operations, aerial fumigations, and security missions that the U.S. has had carried out in the region. In contrast to conventional representations of this region as a stateless frontier zone, it appears that there are too many actors competing to perform state functions in the region, including, as various participants pointed out, the United States government and the development planning organizations it has subcontracted to carry out its Plan Colombia initiatives.

The findings and contributions of the SARR Quito conference can be summarized in four respects that collectively present a novel direction in theorizing Andean political systems and their tensions.

1. The definitive tasks of the State have not been monopolized by the central government in any of the northern Andean countries. Other powerful actors, local and trans-national, have long appropriated or been delegated the capacity to act as state proxies in various contexts. This diffusion of state functions among diverse actors is integral to what the state has been and continues to be in the region.
2. This historic diversification and privatization of state functions makes it difficult to discern zones of strong versus weak state control or to map political centers and margins in conventional terms in much of the northern Andes. Frequently, actors who appear to take on the imprimatur of the State in local worlds are not officially sanctioned.
3. The ‘relative autonomy’ of the state from other structures of power – based on class, race, region, and so on — is very weak. The near inability of Andean states to convincingly present themselves as universal and disinterested modes of government with a natural monopoly on the right to rule easily leads to crises of legitimacy for the official / central state in these countries.
4. The above cycle comes full circle in that local or trans-national actors may be able to legitimize their rule more easily than the central state by providing populations with services long promised but rarely realized by the state -- or by circumventing national-political conflicts between elite factions. This is how guerrilla organizations, paramilitary groups, drug lords, tin barons, hacienda owners, underground political parties, emerging indigenous leaders, coca leaf

union leaders, and others administer various populations under their political orbit and upscale that support to propose of new types of state systems for the Andean future.

Drs. Christopher Krupa and David Nugent are presently compiling the conference papers into an edited volume, which will be published in English by a North American university press and in Spanish by FLACSO. These editions are projected for completion and publication submission in 2011. The publication of the Spanish edition of *Off-Centered States* will provide special impetus to extend the SARR conference findings with state and civil society representatives in Ecuador and Peru and to consider a follow-up, dialogue-centered conference with them shortly after.

### Inner Asia

The inner Asia component of SARR focuses on Mongolia in relation to its neighbors, China and Russia. Often taken as a relative success story of post-socialist development, Mongolia is presently in a mining-induced economic boom, and the country has transformed substantially since its effective independence from the USSR / Russia the early 1990s. Problems of unemployment, reduction in state subvention and welfare services, alcoholism, and stressful reduction in the nomadic/pastoral livestock livelihood that is the full focus of life outside the capital of Ulaanbaatar complement the great growth of wealth and the resurgence of Buddhism – and of shamanism as well as the rise of evangelical Christianity. These dynamic developments intensify the complicated stakes that surround the robust assertion of Mongolian nationalism, which draws upon a historical pride stemming from the legacy of Genghis Khan.

Based on a three-week pilot trip by the SARR director to Mongolia last June, the fourth SARR project conference, on Inner Asia, is scheduled to take place in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, June 27-29, 2011, with the title, “Mongolians After Socialism: Economic Aspiration, Political Development, and Cultural Identity.” SARR is pleased to be co-organizing this conference with the Open Society Forum (OSF) of Mongolia, which will be our implementing partner in Ulaanbaatar. Within Mongolia, we have also established effective collaborative ties with the United States Embassy, the Asia Foundation, the American Center for Mongolian Studies (ACMS), and the National University of Mongolia (NUM). We have also received support concerning conference issues of spiritual and religious development in Mongolia via Dr. Richard Taupier, Vice-Provost at The University of Massachusetts, Amherst, whose part of the conference has received funds from the Rubin Foundation in New York.

The SARR conference in Ulaanbaatar will consider complementary aspects contemporary Mongolian economic and environmental development, political evolution, and cultural/spiritual identity as inter-linked and mutually influencing forces. We have identified some two dozen government and civil society leaders as well as selected expert scholars for our provisional conference invitation list, in addition to others we plan to invite as observers. The SARR director was able to interview most of these individuals in person when he was in Ulaanbaatar last June.

The anticipated sessions in the three-day conference are:

**Session 1: *Politics & Economics: “New Money,” Elected Governments, and Wealth Disparity***

**Session 2: *Contemporary Cultural and Spiritual Identities***

**Session 3: *Mining, Political Economy, and Environmental Sustainability***

**Session 4: *Impact of Socio-political and Cultural Change on Mongolian Lifestyles***

**Session 5: *Mongolia as an Asian Crossroads: Arts, Culture and Ideology***

**Session 6: *Interpreting Mongolian Buddhist History: Why the Past Matters***

As in all our work, the conference is devoted to bring together networks of policy makers, key humanitarian practitioners, and administrators with engaged academics who have deep expertise and experience in the world region.

The Himalayas

The SARR P.I. will conduct a pilot trip to the Himalayan region from May 6-28, 2011 to establish contacts and evaluate venue possibilities for a Himalayas SARR conference in Nepal, Tibet, or Bhutan. A separate trip to northern India for this same purpose is anticipated later in 2011. The Himalayas SARR conference is anticipated to take place toward the conclusion of the project in 2012.

The well-known political challenges that face Tibet are contextualized and thrown into relief by comparative consideration across Buddhist populations and nations of the Himalayas that are impinged socially and economically by India and China. Given the level of political tensions in both Nepal and Tibet, and difficulties of travel for regional participants, current possibilities are for a conference venue include Thimphu, Bhutan; Kathmandu, Nepal; and Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh, India.

Global assessment

The combination of world area breadth and in-depth regional awareness puts SARR in a strong position to make robust assessments of states at regional risk in comparative global perspective. The final component of SARR, toward the end of its project period, includes an international conference at Emory University to assess and evaluate the relative trends and relationship between regional state risk across constituent world areas. The anticipated results should have important practical implications for both understanding and effecting policies concerning state risk, socio-political development, and societal recovery.

Comparative understanding highlights the key and variable relationship between expert understanding and policy intervention in different world areas. This relationship is influenced by the character and strength of regional and global international organizations, including NGOs, as well as the degree and type of state weakness or strength in regional context. The concluding SARR conference will consider these relationships in comparative terms, including in relation to international influences and strategic interests. Regional participants from diverse world areas as well as major international theorists and global analysts of states at risk will be invited to participate. How policy and intervention can practically ameliorate states and regions of political and social risk will be a central focus of our comparative and global assessments.

We thank the Carnegie Corporation of New York for making possible the distinctive and continuing contributions of the SARR project.