

Emory University
States at Regional Risk (SARR)
Interim Progress Report
For the Carnegie Corporation of New York
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Introduction

With its duration approximately 35% finished, Emory University's "States at Regional Risk" (SARR) project has been effectively achieving results in all four of its world areas of concentration: West Africa, East Africa, Inner Asia, and the northern Andes. Given the broad scope of these world areas, it was decided for each region to concentrate and galvanize the project by focusing on a key country and its neighbors in regional context. Our first and very successful SARR conference took place this winter in Liberia. Our second conference, in East Africa, will be held in Burundi this June. The third SARR conference, concerning the northern Andes, is on track to be held in winter 2010, and our fourth conference, regarding inner Asia, will occur in fall 2010. A final global conference concerning regions of state risk in global perspective, including in relation to world superpowers and global internationalism, is planned for spring 2011. The project time-line as outlined in the original SARR proposal is hence on schedule and being effectively implemented. The SARR project will end on August 31, 2011.

In all cases, the SARR project is achieving its objective of bringing together and galvanizing networks of policy makers and key humanitarian practitioners and administrators with engaged academics who have longstanding expertise and experience in the world region in question. We are very encouraged with our results so far, including both the logistical and practical as well as scholarly success of pilot visits and major workshops and conferences. We have generated effective publicity and robust networks of affiliation, and we are pleased by newspaper article coverage in Africa, important newsletters, and our robust SARR website.

West Africa

Following six pilot trips to West Africa by the SARR PI, including in relation to The Carter Center, the first SARR regional conference was held in Monrovia, Liberia, on January 13-14, 2009. Entitled "The Mano River Region at Risk?: Post-Conflict Conversations Within and Across Borders," this international conference brought together thirty-one government officials, international scholarly experts, and key members of civil society from Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Senegal to consider the risks of civil and governmental instability in West Africa. A highlight of the meeting was the participation of Her Excellency, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of Liberia, who emphasized the timeliness of collaborative peace-keeping and development efforts among countries of the Mano River region. She thanked the conference organizers and participants for convening to address these issues saying, "The importance of this Union and what we can do to insure the stability of this region is of utmost importance to all of us. I

do hope that some of the important insights [from this meeting] will be captured and shared with us in an appropriate way as we try to develop our own agenda.” The conference had special significance given the recent death of President Conté in Guinea, followed by a coup that was not supported by the international community. The relationship of relative stability in Liberia to potential unrest in Guinea, with strong implications for Sierra Leone and the Ivory Coast, galvanized discussion at the conference.

The remarks of Madam President Sirleaf, who stayed for the initial session, included her significant policy speech, which was reported in the press and also transcribed and posted on the SARR website. The conference included high-ranking members of the UN West Africa Administration as well as Ministers, leaders of civic organizations, and expert scholars, including Dr. Michael McGovern of Yale University (who co-organized the conference), and Dr. Stephen Ellis of The University of Leiden.

Holding the event in Monrovia foregrounded the viability of having world-class conferences in this city – Liberia being assessed as the “most improved” fragile state in the world in the 2007 States at Risk Index. The Monrovia venue enabled a significant number of local, national, and regional civil society and government officials to attend. Agencies represented at the conference included Liberian Ministries, UNMIL, UN-OCHA, The Carter Center, the University of Liberia, the Smithsonian Institution, and a wide range of NGOs. Invocation of Chatham House Rules following the opening conference session enabled spirited, frank, and earnest conversation among participants. Cross-talk between policy makers, scholars, and human rights advocates led several to remark that their positions had changed and been broadened by what they had learned in the neutral forum for dialogue provided by the conference.

Particularly effective was the dissemination of lead questions and response to these by participants prior to the conference. Rather than presenting scholarly papers -- which tends to prioritize the contribution of academics over those of practitioners, policy makers, and humanitarian administrators – conferees across the entire spectrum of participants responded in advance in written summary and then verbally at the conference itself to the following key questions, which formed the focus of the four conference sessions during two full days:

- 1. Under what conditions are international peacekeeping operations appropriate In West Africa? Looking forward, how should they ideally unfold in the future?**
- 2. Conflicts often unwittingly transform patterns of gender, ethnic, class, and other inequalities. What is the best way to harness and reinforce the potentially positive aspects of these collateral effects of conflict?**
- 3. What would you do with “no strings attached” donor funding?**
- 4. How does a history of porous boundaries and regional movements impact contemporary experiences in constituent nation-states and in the Mano River region? Can international institutions engage in locally relevant regional networks in a meaningful way?**

By all accounts, the SARR Monrovia conference was a great success, including in logistical as well as practical terms, with a high level of sophisticated and informed engagement concerning key issues of stability faced by the West African countries of the Mano River Union. The conference was logistically

facilitated by the national NGO Liberian Democracy Watch (LDW), George Wah Williams Executive Director, as our implementing partner.

Attached and also posted on the SARR website are the conference report, conference statement, press release, list of participants, lead questions and compiled responses, conference schedule, selected conference papers, and full transcript of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's remarks.

East Africa

The East African component of SARR was initiated in March, 2008 through a pilot trip to Eastern Congo, Uganda, and Rwanda by the SARR PI and the Emory SARR East Africa post-doctoral fellow, Dr. Patience Kabamba, who is a native of the Congo, a PhD in Anthropology from Columbia University, and with MAs in Philosophy and in Development Studies from Belgium. During this trip, Dr. Kabamba arranged for three major workshops, one in each of the large cities of Eastern Congo: Butembo, Goma, and Bukavu. In each case, the workshop brought together approximately 30 officials, scholars, and civic leaders – all Congolese, but from diverse constituencies in the conflict – to identify and analyze the greatest challenges to peace and development in East Congo. Issues of natural resource control as well as specifics of political leadership and factional mediation were important issues effectively discussed.

The three SARR East Africa workshops, which comprised almost one hundred Congolese scholars, officials, and activists in total, underscored the vibrant possibilities for engaged discussion including accomplished national scholars – many of whom graduated from Jesuit or Catholic Universities in East Congo -- as well as key humanitarian administrators and policy makers.

During the last twelve months, following the collapse of the Goma accords, the resurgence of fighting, and then the removal to Rwanda of the insurgent commander, Laurent Nkunda, new possibilities for peaceful development appear to be at hand in East Congo. However, the regional tension and conflict among multiple ethnic groups and factions, with different histories of migration and residence across national borders, sometimes for several decades as well as since the Rwandan genocide of 1994, greatly complicate these potentials.

To ensure a neutral conference venue at which competing national and ethnic perspectives can be heard, we are organizing the SARR East Africa conference in Bujumbura, Burundi in June 2009. During two additional trips to the area during the past year, Dr. Kabamba has carefully configured participation by both Hutu- and Tutsi-affiliated scholars and practitioners for the conference. We are excited by the caliber and also the government and university participants who have accepted our invitations. The conference will take place with twenty confirmed participants on June 4-5, 2009 in Bujumbura, Burundi. We are fortunate per the efforts of Dr. Kabamba that the United State Institute of Peace (USIP) is adding funds for our SARR East Africa conference in the amount of \$21,000, allowing us to increase its scale.

Northern Andes

The Andes portion of the SARR project will focus on Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, and their northern neighbors. This SARR segment draws upon the preceding Emory conference, "Off-Centered States: Political Formation and Deformation in the Andes." This international conference took place on September 27-

28, 2007 and included fifteen national and international participants, discussants, and moderators. A book with the same title as the conference is being edited by the conference co-organizers, Professor David Nugent and ICIS SARR Latin American post-doctoral fellow, Chris Krupa.

Drs. Nugent and Krupa are continuing along with the SARR PI to organize the Andes conference, including further pilot trips to Ecuador (this past year) and Peru (this coming summer) to consolidate networks and arrange for conference invitations. Given the robust public intellectual climate in northern Andean countries and our contacts with relevant activists and policy makers, we are enthusiastic to combine practical understanding and scholarship to effectively engage the challenges of governance and civil society in this region.

In recent years, tensions between Andean elites and indigenous peoples have led to significant populist political movements, along with pressures for resource nationalization, on the one hand, and political decentralization, on the other. These trends easily increase conflict around issues concerning political membership, leadership, and governance. The SARR conference will consider these tensions in national permutations across the northern Andes and will examine the resultant “off-centering” of received state formations and the possibility for critically re-thinking the relationship between centers and peripheries across the region. At larger issue is the potential transformation of northern Andean states and the region more generally, including in relation to socialist influence from Venezuela as well as in Bolivia and Ecuador, and countervailing influence from Colombia.

The SARR Northern Andes conference is planned to take place in Peru, in late winter 2010.

Inner Asia

Given divisive political developments in Pakistan since the original SARR project was conceived in 2007, the project has drawn upon Emory’s strengths in Tibetan studies and in the relationship of Buddhism to civil society to concentrate this segment of the SARR project on Inner Asia and the Himalayas. Of particular interest are countries and societies in the region that have prominent Buddhist orientation, including Tibet, Mongolia, Bhutan, Nepal, and Northern India. This creative reconceptualization of regional affiliation includes the striking relationship of Buddhist civil societies to political regimes that are currently ex-Communist (Mongolia), Communist (Tibet, per China), Maoist (Nepal), and Buddhist theocratic (Bhutan).

Our SARR staffer Kathryn Bennett (Ph Ed degree), has strong background in the region and undertook an ICIS-supported pilot trip to Mongolia last summer, where she cultivated important civil society and related contacts. We have consulted widely with Emory faculty, especially Drs. Lobsang Tenzin Negi, Sara McClintock, and John Dunne. The SARR PI will travel to India and to Mongolia this summer.

Our planning for the SARR Inner Asia component has benefitted greatly from a conference held at Smith College this March, 2009, which brought together more than twenty scholars from Mongolia, North America, and Europe to discuss Mongolia in larger regional context. We invited and subvented six of the conference participants – Drs. Jamie Hubbard, Lhagvademchig Jadamba, Hamid Sardar, Richard Taupier, Karma Lekshe Tsomo, and Vesna Wallace – who met with us in a special workshop to discuss plans for our SARR Inner Asia conference.

Following these conversations, our Inner Asia conference is provisionally entitled, “States of Buddhism: Sovereignty, Spirituality, and National Identities in Inner Asia and the Himalayas.” These issues have been most often considered through the lens of political, social, or economic analysis, but less attention has been given to tensions that result specifically from the diverse Buddhist political and civic orientations across the region. In this respect, the well-known challenges that face Tibet are contextualized and thrown into relief by comparative consideration across Buddhist countries and populations that are impinged socially and economically by regional superpowers such as China, Russia, and India.

We are very excited with our progress for this conference. A pilot trip is planned to South and Inner Asia this summer to consolidate contacts for this segment of the project. The SARR Inner Asian conference on “States of Buddhism” will likely be held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, in fall 2010.

Global assessment

The fifth and final component of the SARR project is to assess states at regional risk in global perspective, including in relation to the US, China, and the EU as major superpowers and in relation to the international community. How international policy and intervention, including by world powers, can reduce the unwitting production of states and regions of political risk is a key issue for urgent consideration. This issue is underscored by the challenges posed by the current global economic downturn, including its potential negative impact on foreign policy, diplomacy, international aid, and humanitarian intervention.

In our SARR global assessment conference, to be held at Emory University in Spring 2011, we will bring together major scholars, policy makers, and administrators concerning global political economy, governance, and international aid and intervention to explore creative new perspectives and possibilities for our global understanding of states at regional risk in the 21st century. We anticipate that an important scholarly edited volume will emerge from this conference as a complement and capstone to the various publications and edited collections that we expect will result from the other SARR world area components.

Conclusion

The Emory States at Regional Risk project has been proactive and successful in establishing initiatives in all of its four world areas of focus: West Africa, East Africa, the northern Andes, and Inner Asia. One of our world area conferences, in West Africa, has already taken place; a second, in East Africa, will take place this summer. The final two SARR conferences are likely to be held in Peru and Mongolia in 2010. The mandate of SARR to cultivate creative, earnest, and importantly productive dialogue among regional scholarly experts, international and humanitarian administrators, and key policy makers is being strongly fulfilled. As the project develops, important similarities and differences are coming to light and being thrown into relief concerning state risk in different world areas. We look forward to analyzing these inter-regional contrasts and comparisons and to making global assessments during the project’s concluding segment in 2011. We thank the Carnegie Corporation of New York for making possible the special contributions of the SARR project.