

Emory University
States at Regional Risk (SARR)
Interim Progress Report
For the Carnegie Corporation of New York
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Emory University's "States at Regional Risk" (SARR) project continues to expand results in all four of its world areas of concentration: West Africa, Central-East Africa, Inner Asia/Himalayas, and the northern Andes. The decision to concentrate and galvanize the project by focusing on key countries and their neighbors in regional context has proved to be effective. Following our first and very successful SARR conference in Liberia in January 2009, our second regional conference, in East Africa, was held in Burundi June 4-5, 2009. The third SARR conference, concerning the northern Andes, will take place in Quito, Ecuador this coming May 20-21, 2010. Plans for our fourth segment, regarding inner Asia and the Himalayas, are still pending. A final conference concerning regions of state risk in global perspective, including in relation to world superpowers and internationalism, will finalize the project.

In all cases, the SARR project is achieving its objective of bringing together networks of policy makers, key humanitarian practitioners, and administrators with engaged academics who have deep expertise and experience in the world region in question. We are 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.

The largest challenge this past year has been the closing for budgetary reasons of the parent institute within which SARR functioned: Emory's Institute for Critical International Studies (ICIS). A casualty of the economic and budget crisis at Emory, ICIS was closed in spring 2009 along with other non-departmental institutes and programs within Emory College. The SARR project continues under the direction of its PI and former director of ICIS, Professor Bruce Knauft, with reduced staff and facilities. Emory University has maintained its contracted commitments to SARR, and the project is continuing successfully, albeit at a slower pace. Unless a no-cost extension for the project is requested and granted, the SARR project will end on August 31, 2011.

West Africa

The West Africa portion of SARR is now potentially complete. Following 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. The conference was importantly timed given the recent death of the President and political turmoil in neighboring Guinea, which lent urgency to the regional perspective of security and cooperative development.

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 under the present period of uncertainty. The conference was logistically facilitated by the national NGO Liberian Democracy Watch (LDW), George Wah Williams Executive Director, as our implementing partner.

In addition to the SARR West Africa project's posting of the conference papers, proceedings, and the text of Johnson-Sirleaf's speech, SARR PI Dr. Bruce Knauft along with co-organizer of the conference, Dr. Michael McGovern of Yale University, undertook a fact-finding trip including with respect to security sector reform in Liberia. The results of this research were published by Dr. McGovern as a report of the International Crisis Group (ICG), "Liberia: Uneven Progress in Security Sector Reform," ICG Africa report No. 148 (2009) (see <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5867&l=1>.) Further work in Liberia based on substantial networks and collaborations already established is highly desirable and would be very beneficial -- but depends on additional funding.

Central-East Africa

Following several pilot trips, The SARR East Africa conference "The Great Lakes: Beyond Emergency" was held with implementing partnership by the University of Burundi 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, Burundi, and Rwanda -- as well as the Head of the UN's largest peacekeeping mission in the world, Alan Doss of MONUC, and several ministers and ambassadors.

The conference had four priority goals: (1) Cultivate a regional perspective concerning the implications of state fragility -- historical, political, and economic -- across the region of Eastern DRC, Burundi, and Rwanda; (2) Bring together participants from the region itself, with an equal representation across the DRC, Burundi, and Rwanda; (3) 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; (4) Find practical implications for 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 completely accomplished. 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 under UN auspices 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. 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.

(2) Equitable participation 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 the head of the Great Lakes Regional Council . However, only one of five Rwandans who had accepted invitations – a Ugandan journalist who presently teaches at the University of Rwanda – attended as a conference participant.

Our visit to Rwanda revealed the causes and difficulties of Rwandan regional participation. The Rwandan government has strict controls on participation in international conferences, including those occurring across the Rwandan border in Burundi or 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 submitted to the conference. The review of these materials can be prolonged, can raise suspicions that impact professional status in Rwanda when approved, and may only be granted at the last minute. This increases self-censure of scholars and others who do not want to risk raising suspicion with Rwandan authorities, who are very concerned that non-official representations of Rwandan history, politics, and economic and military interests at home and abroad be consistent with government views. Given the history of the Rwandan genocide in 1994, this control is to some extent understandable though surprisingly strong if not chilling in the present.

(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. Introductions to the conference included major statements by Alan Doss, head of MONUC, as well as the Burundian Minister of Information and the Rector of the University of Burundi – as well as Dr. Knauft as SARR Director. Participation by the Executive Secretary of the Great Lakes Conference and various ambassadors was most welcome. Congolese SARR post-doctoral fellow Patience Kabamba did a superb job organizing this conference.

(4) Producing concrete suggestions that may be followed up by policy makers and practitioners is a significant challenge for conferences that draw significantly on research and scholarly understanding. In the present case, 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.

During the week following the conference, the four members of our executive arranged for an in-depth fact-finding trip with the assistance and hosting of MONUC to some of the more contested and problematic areas of north Kivu, the epicenter of the regional conflict, to assess the situation. Upon interviews with a range of persons, including MONUC staff, villagers, INGO workers, and including the perspective of Rwandan-affiliated persons and Congolese (including two members of our executive team itself), we submitted a confidential report to the UN MONUC leadership and to Carnegie.

Official statements from both DRC and Rwanda about the dissolution of the Rwanda-affiliated CNDP in East Congo, and the integration of its soldiers into the Congolese army (FDRC) appear to have little

factual basis or near-likelihood of being actualized. Rwanda-associated and Tutsi-speaking ex-soldiers and their leaders appear tightly if not securely integrated into the local exploitation of minerals and the substantial profits that accrue with their illicit transport for sale via either Rwanda or Uganda (and, to a lesser extent, Burundi). UN soldiers and administrators, many of whom are of south Asian extraction, are often complicitous if not actively engaged in this trade and have little motivation to stem the conflict or resolve it given the lucrative nature of their positions in both professional and informal sector terms. MONUC sided almost openly with the Rwandan-backed CNDP during its formal existence despite its killings and atrocities, and the former UN base commander at Kiwanja, where CNDP killings took place just outside the base without MONUC intervention in October, 2008, was said to have visited the CNDP leader's house and compound in a public show of support.

The public discourse of optimism concerning developments in North Kivu appears to belie a status quo of conflict continuation to the detriment of the local population.

SARR is well positioned to arrange for a follow-up conference in Gisyeni, just inside Rwanda across the border from the DRC, which would effectively bring together Rwandan as well as DRC, Burundian, and Ugandan parties. This possibility depends on additional funding.

Northern Andes

The northern Andes SARR conference, "Off-Centered States: Political Formation and Deformation in the Andes," will take place May 20-21, 2010 at the Hotel Quito in Quito, Ecuador following the planning of Drs. Chris Krupa and David Nugent as SARR faculty affiliates at Emory. Our implementing partner is FLACSO, the Ecuadorian organization of Latin American social scientists. Twenty-one international and regional scholars will attend this conference in addition to local participants. The proceedings will critically reexamine processes of state making in the Andes, past and present, including the everyday, extra-official, and frequently invisible or concealed permutations of rule in the lives of Andean people. In doing so, the conference foregrounds in Andean understandings the work of various theorists who have understood the state primarily as a claim upon legitimate domination, including assemblages of social relations that variously compose, disassemble, and recompose around such claims. Given the generally positive relation between critical scholarship and governmental reform in Ecuador under Correa's Presidency, we anticipate the possibility of significant positive political implications from the conference.

In particular, the conference will consider how acts of governance involve institutions of government without being entirely determined by them or bound to their authorized agendas. Conference papers will examine concrete cases to understand the more privatized, localized, and internalized manifestations of state that are not simply add-ons to politically sanctioned and bureaucratic institutions that bear the seal of state. This orientation is critical to understand the practical and often unofficial ramifications of ostensible state development in northern Andean countries in recent years, including socialist- or indigenous-leaning governments in Ecuador, Bolivia, and Venezuela.

As such, the conference examines Andean states both as off-centered political fields and *from* off-centered locations of analysis. What kinds of actors have sought to carry out political projects under the umbrella of 'state'? How are these attempts legitimated (if at all), and what challenges or competitions

arise from them? How do local performances of statecraft coordinate or conflict with national political structures and articulate with newly enhanced regional and municipal governmental institutions? This approach importantly expands in practical terms the mainstream Anglo-American social scientific analyses of recent northern Andean state and socio-political developments.

Inner Asia and the Himalayas

This component of SARR focuses on the theme, “States of Buddhism at Risk: Sovereignty, Spirituality, and National Identities in Inner Asia and the Himalayas.” This 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), Buddhist theocratic (Bhutan) and strongly democratic (India).

In August, 2009, the SARR PI made a pilot visit to Buddhist enclave areas of northeastern India. This will be complemented by a pilot trip to Mongolia this summer to investigate the other end of the Buddhist state-risk continuum in Inner Asia. Dynamics across this region 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 key but also diverse Buddhist political and civic orientations across the region. 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. Given the level of political tensions in both Nepal and Tibet, and difficulties of travel for regional participants, current possibilities are for two moderate-sized conferences, in Thimphu (Bhutan) and Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia) prior to the end date of the overall project. Plans for the SARR Inner Asia / Himalaya conferences have been slowed by the dissolution of ICIS at Emory.

Global assessment

As the SARR project has developed, key similarities and differences have been thrown into relief concerning state risk and its amelioration in different world regions. Cultural and historical awareness of differences provides an exciting comparative dimension of the project that can have major larger impact that increases both understanding and policy efficacy concerning of state development and societal recovery. In practical terms, the optimal role of our scholarly understanding and analysis itself varies depending on the strength of intellectualism within the world region in question. In direct relationship, the impact of so-called expert understanding on policy occurs in specific relation to the respective role played in the region by international community (and NGOs) as well as the degree and type of state weakness or strength in individual nations and also, importantly, in their own regional context. We look forward to analyzing inter-regional contrasts and comparisons, including in relation to international influences and strategic interests, in the project’s concluding segment. We anticipate that regional participants from all world areas as well as major international theorists and global analysts of states at risk will participate. How policy and intervention can ameliorate states and regions of political and social risk is a key issue for urgent consideration, and we thank the Carnegie Corporation of New York for making possible the distinctive and continuing contributions of the SARR project in this regard.